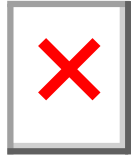


From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on the U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Dialogue
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 30, 2021 10:30 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2021

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on the U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Dialogue

On Friday, April 2, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will welcome National Security Secretariat Secretary General Shigeru Kitamura of Japan and National Security Advisor Suh Hoon of the Republic of Korea for a trilateral dialogue at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

This trilateral meeting, which follows the visits of Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Japan and the Republic of Korea, provides an opportunity for our nations to consult on a wide range of regional issues and foreign policy priorities, including maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and combating climate change.

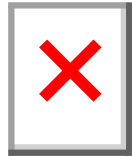
This meeting with Japan and the Republic of Korea is the first National Security Advisor-level multilateral dialogue of the Biden Administration, reflecting the importance we place on broadening and deepening our cooperation on key issues and advancing our shared prosperity across a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Gaggle by Principa Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre Aboard Air Force One En Route Pittsburgh, PA
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 31, 2021 7:00 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2021

Press Gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

3:00 P.M. EDT

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, as you guys know, in Pittsburgh today, President Biden will unveil his American Jobs Plan, which will create millions of good-paying jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position the United States to outcompete China. This is a once-in-a-century capital investment in America to transform our current and future infrastructure and fundamental change -- fundamentally change life for Americans.

We will tie these investments to creating good-quality jobs that pay prevailing wages in safe and healthy work places -- jobs that ensure workers have a free and fair choice to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively. And we are not going to leave behind communities of color and rural communities that have been systematically excluded for generations. Our investment will also allow us to take on the climate crisis and transition to a clean energy economy.

The plan has four parts, all of which will affect our everyday lives. The first is how we move investments in our roads, bridges, rail, and other elements of our transportation infrastructure. The second is how we live at home -- investments in broadband, water, power, housing, and buildings. The third is how we care for one another -- investments in home and community-based care for older family members and people with disabilities. The fourth is how we make -- how we make investments in manufacturing, next-generation research and development, high-quality workforce development, and critical supply chains.

To pay for this historic investment in our nation's infrastructure, the President is proposing to fundamentally reform the

corporate tax code so that it incentivizes -- so that it incentivizes job creation and investment here in the United States, stops unfair and wasteful profit-shifting to tax havens, and ensuring that large corporations are paying their fair share.

The President is proud of the plan he has laid out and looks forward to a conversation over the coming weeks about what we can do to invest in our infrastructure, boost our competitiveness, and make our tax code easier.

And one more announcement for you today: Tomorrow, the President will convene his first full Cabinet meeting, just a day after rolling out his American Jobs Plan, which will be a key topic of discussion.

The President will lift up his deeply qualified, historically diverse Cabinet as a key decision ma- -- as key decision makers and voices for his administration's agenda and key priorities.

The focus of the meeting will be working together to continue implementing and communicating about the American Rescue Plan and how it continues to deliver for working families; discussing the role Cabinet members will play in advocating for the American Jobs Plan; and ensuring we accelerate our federal COVID-19 response and that Americans don't let their guards down. The Cabinet will be gathered in person, in the East Room, to follow social distancing and other COVID protocols.

All right. Go ahead, Jonathan.

Q Karine, on the -- thank you so much. On the infrastructure proposal: So, on the American Rescue Plan, the President had his non-negotiables -- right? -- like the \$1,400 stimulus check that had to be in there. What has to be in there, in this infrastructure and tax program, for this President? What is he going to insist, even as negotiations begin with the Hill, must be included?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, Jonathan, you know, this infrastructure bill is -- infrastructure, as we know, has been a bipartisan issue -- right? -- when it comes to Democrats and Republicans. We even saw, you know, a poll -- a Morning Consult poll showing how -- it was a poll that they did on a hypothetical \$3 trillion plan with -- had a margin of 2 to 1 with registered voters. I mean, this is -- this is a piece of legislation that is -- or a plan that is popular, even in a hypothetical sense.

But we've also seen Republicans who have been for this. You know, we've seen, like, in polling -- like 80 percent of Republicans who have supported this infrastructure type of plan.

So, you know, we are going to continue moving forward. This is a once-in-a-generation -- right? -- type of opportunity that we have here. This is about creating jobs. This is about creating millions of jobs for Americans. You know, we talk about the American Rescue Plan; it was a plan to meet the moment. Right? We were in an emergency. Now we're at a different moment.

And so he has said this -- and we're going back to Pittsburgh -- right? -- where he was. He's going back to Pittsburgh, where he was two years -- two years ago when he launched his campaign and he talked about how he wanted -- he was running to rebuild the middle class.

And so this is it -- right? -- when we're talking about rebuilding the middle class. This is the American Jobs Plan: to rebuild the middle class, to invest, to do this historic investment into this country, and also just create jobs into the -- to the American people and creating jobs.

Q Is he -- is he prepared to go -- push this through Congress without Republican votes?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, right now -- as you know, the President was a senator for 36 years. He knows how to reach to the other side and make things -- big things happen. He did that as Vice President as well.

So this is something that he wants to have bipartisan support. He's willing to have those conversations with Republicans

and, clearly, with his Democratic colleagues, and really trying to work this through because this is so critical and important for the American people.

And so -- but here's the thing: This is going to -- this is about the American people, right? This is who he's going to put first for -- first in all of this.

And, you know, we're talking about, you know, roads. We're talking about -- you know, we're talking about highways. We're talking about investment in this country that has -- we haven't seen since the 1960s. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about children being able to not drink water that has lead in it. We're talking about, you know, caregiving for families who really need to be able to take care of ailing parents who they can't get caregivers for. I mean, this is what we're talking about to help families during this time.

Q Does -- excuse me, does he have a timeframe on when he would like to get this passed and --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, as you know, this is -- so, as I mentioned, the American Rescue Plan was to meet that moment -- that crucial moment. And along, you know, with the help of Congress, he was able to do that. We passed that. It's -- we're seeing already the effects, in a big way, of how that one point -- trillion-dollar plan is affecting American families as far as getting shots in arms, COVID response, and people getting that \$1,400 check.

With this one, he's -- you know, it's going to take some time, and we're willing to, like, go with the process and have those conversations on the Hill, which we were already having. We've already been having those conversations with Republicans and Democrats. And so we're just going to see how this goes. But he is zeroed in, laser-focused on this plan. You're -- that's what you're going to -- you'll hear him talk more about this later today.

Q What's the message to Democrats who, right now -- some progressives who are saying "This doesn't go far enough"? And are you concerned about keeping Democrats together on this?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Like I said, this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that we're seeing here to invest in our country, invest in America -- you know, to invest in the American -- the American families, the American people; to create millions of jobs; to actually fix our roads; to actually, you know, have a commitment to manufacturing and all of the things that he has been talking about for the last two years. And so this is what we're talking about.

And so, look, he put his plan forward, and now we're going to have that conversation -- right? -- with Democrats and Republicans. And if they have something to propose, we'll have those conversations with them as well.

Q Do you know (inaudible) estimate of how many millions of jobs this plan will create?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don't have that number with me right now, but in the coming days --

Q Is there a reason why the administration didn't roll out a big number like that at the beginning? I believe that they did during the campaign with the Build Back Better program?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I think this is -- no, it's a good question. I think this is part one -- right? -- of the plan. As we've mentioned, there's going to be a second plan coming up in the next couple of weeks that the President will talk about. And so this is the beginning of the process. We'll have that for you.

Q Leader McConnell said that he spoke with the President yesterday. Can you provide some more information about what they discussed? And did the President have any other conversations with Republican senators?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I can't -- I -- you know, we don't preview conversation that's had, especially with folks on the Hill.

Q And is he planning to have Republican leadership over to the White House to try to discuss this?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: As you know, the last couple of weeks, he had meetings with both Republicans and Democrats on infrastructure. And so he did -- there was outreach that was had. There's outreach that's done by staff, as we know. And so we're just going to continue, kind of, that cadence and making sure that we're reaching out and having those conversations -- because this is a critical bill for the President.

Q I wanted to ask one question on the immigration front. Reporters did just get into one of these detention facilities and the conditions were pretty bleak. It's at, I believe, 1,700 percent capacity. Is there a plan to alleviate this overcrowding? And by what point should conditions down there be better?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah. As we have said repeatedly, you know, a Border Patrol facility is no place for a child. And we have been working around the clock, in coordination with HHS, to quickly move unaccompanied children out of these crowded Border Patrol stations and into the care of HHS so they can be placed with family members or other sponsors. We've -- we even put the ORR staff and HHS staff embedded into D- -- into CBP to make this happen, to expedite that process.

We deployed FEMA to help HHS quickly build additional capacity to shelter unaccompanied children. We also developed and deployed a plan for HHS to more quickly place unaccompanied children with family members.

We are seeing progress, but it's going to take time. And so, you know -- but let me be clear: We are tr- -- we are putting out the message, "The border is not open. People should not make the dangerous journey. And we will continue to expel individuals and families."

Q Hey, Karine, is he -- is -- on the Derek Chauvin trial, is the President watching it up there like we're watching it back here? Does he plan to reach out to Floyd's family? Has he had any conversations with them since they were at the DNC?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So I don't have anything to read out on if he's going to reach out to him, but, you know, the President has spoken in personal terms about the death of George Floyd, as you know.

It affected him in a way that it affects so -- affected so many Americans last year, and he redoubled his commitment to advancing racial justice. You know, he -- everything that he has done as President -- when you look at even -- when you look at the American Jobs Plan, when you look at the American Rescue Plan -- has had equity at the center of it.

And when he signed the executive order, back on January 6th, on racial equity, he said, "Those 8 minutes and 46 seconds that took George Floyd's life opened the eyes of millions of Americans and millions of people...all over the world. It was the knee on the neck of justice, and it wouldn't be forgotten. It stirred the conscience of tens of millions of Americans, and, in my view, it marked a turning point in this country's attitude toward racial justice."

So he's watching just like millions of Americans are, and, you know, we're keeping an eye on it.

Q You had said you were going to do part two coming soon, that this is part one. Why should -- why do it in two parts? And should people look at that as: These are the most critical priorities right now and this is what the President wants to get done, and you're less confident about part two?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: There are multiple pillars in this, and one is not -- you know, one is not more important than the other. This plan -- the American Jobs Plan -- is critical, as I've mentioned before, and it's important. It's going to -- it's an investment, as I've said, into the country and American workers and American families.

So there's -- no one is more equal or better than the other. And just like the -- in a couple of weeks, he will talk about the second part of his plan.

Q When Jake Sullivan meets with the Japanese and South Koreans on Friday, in Annapolis, is he going to brief them on

the President's policy review toward North Korea?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So this was -- this was released by NSC last night, so let me just inform everyone what's happening on Friday.

So this Friday, April 2nd, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will welcome his counterparts from Japan and from the Republic of Korea for a trilateral dialogue at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

This trilateral meeting, which follows the visits of Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Japan and the Republic of Korea, provides an opportunity for our nations to consult on a wide range of regional issues and foreign policy priorities, including maintenance -- maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and combating climate change.

This meeting with Japan and the Republic of Korea is the first national secretary/advisor-level multilateral dialogue of the Biden administration, reflecting the importance we place on broadening and deepening our cooperation on key issues and advancing our shared prosperity across a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Q So I -- is the review done on North Korea? Is it completed?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Let me see if I have anything for you on that.

So we are in the final stages of our intensive multi-stakeholder North Korea policy [sic] -- policy review. This has been a thorough interagency review of U.S. policy towards North Korea, including evaluation of all available options to address the increasing threat posed by North Korea to its neighbors and the broader international community.

This process has integrated a diverse set of voices from throughout the government and incorporated inputs from think tanks and outside experts. We have consulted with many former government officials involved in North Korea policy, including several from the previous administration.

So we look forward to discussing our review with the national security advisors of South Korea and Japan at our trilateral dialogue in Annapolis, on Friday. So there you go.

Q Thank you. (Laughter.)

Q So the President's plan includes taxes over 15 years to pay for spending over 8 years. Would he be open to, you know, not paying for some of this -- for some of this to be, you know, deficit spending? Is that something that he's open to if that's what Democrats, in particular, want to do, as we're already hearing from some progressives?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, he believes this should be paid for, which is why he included this in his plan.

AIDE: The airplane has (inaudible) for landing.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, all right.

AIDE: So brace yourselves, I guess.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: All right. (Laughs.)

Q Grab hold of something.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, my gosh.

(Air Force One lands.) (Laughter.)

(Cross-talk.)

So, Jen, he basically has always said that this should be paid for.

Q Yeah.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: You know, an investment like this, it should be paid for. I mean, that's what he believes, and he's willing to have conversations with Congress -- clearly that's what he wants to do -- and to see what they can offer.

But then the question would be to them: Then how do you pay for it? Right? And so that's why he has the -- in this first plan, he has the corporate tax reform, which is a way to pay for this. And this -- there's fairness, right? If you think about it, there's fairness in this -- in this piece of legislation, which is why, you know, they -- we put in the corporate tax reform. It's important for that process to happen as well -- the fairness part of it.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you so much.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: All right, thanks guys.

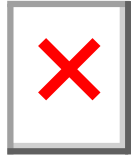
Q Appreciate it.

3:17 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with National Security Advisor Hermogenes Esperon of the Philippines
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 31, 2021 9:04 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2021

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with National Security Advisor Hermogenes Esperon of the Philippines

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with National Security Advisor Hermogenes Esperon of the Philippines. The National Security Advisors discussed their shared concerns regarding the recent massing of People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia vessels at Whitsun Reef. Mr. Sullivan underscored that the United States stands with our Philippine allies in upholding the rules-based international maritime order, and reaffirmed the applicability of the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty in the South China Sea. The National Security Advisors agreed that the United States and the Philippines will continue to coordinate closely in responding to challenges in the South China Sea.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, April 1, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 1, 2021 5:30 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, April 1, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:44 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone.

Q Hi, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Good after- -- good morning. Good afternoon, good morning.

Okay, a couple of items for you all at the top. Yesterday, the President laid out a once-in-a-century capital investment in America that will meet our current infrastructure needs; invest in manufacturing, research and development, and the care economy; rebuild our economy; and create good-paying jobs for American workers.

Since then, we've seen praise for the President's vision from across the political spectrum -- from business to labor, to economists and climate leaders -- in addition to support from bipartisan majorities of the American people.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce said, quote, "We need a big and bold program to modernize our nation's crumbling infrastructure, and we applaud the Biden administration for making infrastructure a top priority."

The CEO of Ford Motors said that, quote, "Ford supports the administration's efforts to advance a broad infrastructure plan that" provide -- "prioritizes a more sustainable, connected, and autonomous future."

The President of the League of Conservation Voters said, quote, “Today is a great day for jobs, justice, and climate action.”

And the International President of the SEIU called the Jobs Plan, quote, “a game-changer for tackling racial, ~~and~~ economic inequality.”

And early polling underscores the overwhelming bipartisan support for components of this plan. Just yesterday, a Morning Consult poll showed that by a 2-to-1 margin, registered voters backed a hypothetical \$3 trillion infrastructure package.

And a Data for Progress poll showed that by a 35-point margin, voters wanted to pay for this plan by asking the wealthy and big corporations to pay their fair share, just like the President is calling for.

Two other items for all of you. Today, the Biden-Harris administration is launching a nationwide grassroots network of local voices and trusted community leaders to encourage people to get vaccinated. We’ve talked in here quite a bit about how effective and impactful we’ve seen having community voices, trusted voices be the voi- -- the people who are getting the information out to communities. So this is a reflection of that.

Some of the 250 founding members include NASCAR, the American Medical Association, NAACP, UNIDOS, the Chamber of Commerce, and Catholic Charities. Collectively, the group of founding members has the ability to reach millions of people and deliver critical public health information.

This morning, the Vice President and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy spoke with some of the Community Corps founding members about the unique efforts that communities across the country are taking to get more shots in arms, including by hosting virtual town halls, giving workers paid time off, and conducting direct outreach to people within their community. And a lot more work, of course, to come from there.

Sorry, two more short items. President Biden, as a part of the American Rescue Plan -- we have another development to convey -- he promised, of course, to get healthcare costs down for families. And through a number of steps he’s taking, and beginning today, Americans can go to HealthCare.gov to take advantage of reduced premiums, increased savings, and quality, affordable coverage.

Americans currently enrolled in marketplace coverage will see their premiums decrease on average by \$50 per person per month and \$85 per policy per month. So that certainly is a positive development.

Last thing. Finally, as part of our commitment to transparency, I wanted to let you know that the President was tested for COVID-19 this week. COVID-19 was not detected. He is tested every two weeks as a part of regular screening.

Darlene, why don’t you kick it off?

Q Thank you, Jen. A couple of questions on the infrastructure bill. Can you give us a sense, now that the President has announced the details, what comes next from the White House in terms of travel -- by the President or the Vice President or any other members in the Cabinet -- in terms of selling the plan? And will we see something similar to “Help is Here” for the COVID bill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you can certainly expect that the President, the Vice President will be involved in making calls; doing outreach; communicating with members of Congress, with governors, with elected officials, and, of course, with the American people.

I will say, the piece that’s slightly different, or in addition to, is what the President announced at the Cabinet meeting, which is that he has asked some key members of his Cabinet to serve in a “Jobs Cabinet,” to be front-and-center voices in engaging with members of Congress, with leadership in Congress, with governors, with elected officials, with the American public through media and through other direct communications, also traveling around the country to communicate about this plan that he’s proposed. So that’s another piece of it that you will see grow over the coming weeks.

Q And former President Donald Trump says that the tax increases that are in -- the corporate tax increases that are in the plan will shift more companies and jobs overseas and that China will be the big winner there. It also depends on getting countries to stop a race to the bottom on corporate taxes. And we're just wondering, how do you get those other countries to go along with that idea of, you know, not racing to the bottom on corporate taxes?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a little chart -- maybe we can pull up on the screen here. Hopefully. We'll queue it to come up, just to show.

Q The one that was up before?

MS. PSAKI: Was it up before? Well, we'll bring it up again because it's a relevant one for people to take a look at that just shows the journey of corporate tax rates over the course of the last several decades.

The fact is, the corporate tax rate at 21 percent is lower than it has ever been in the past. What we're talking about is raising it to 28 percent, which is lower than it's been in the past several decades for most of that period of time. And it goes back to a rate -- that was the case during part of the Bush administration.

See, as you can see here. Now, during the '60s, it was up over 50 percent. Obviously, that's incredibly high. And it's gone down progressively. And it was in the mid '30s, as you can see, through about, you know, 2015 or right before then. And then it went dramatically down.

What we're talking about is just raising it to a rate that is lower than it has been through the majority -- the vast majority of time over the last 70 years. And we think that's an incredibly reasonable proposal.

I will say that in the wake of the 2017 tax bill -- tax giveaway to corporate America, I should say, 91 of the Fortune 500 companies paid no federal taxes. No -- zero -- zero federal taxes. That is not something that the American people believe is fair, that we believe is fair.

And what we're talking about here is making adjustments to the tax code to make it more fair to invest in our infrastructure, invest in American workers, so that we can be more competitive over the long term.

Q And then lastly, today in Kentucky -- earlier today in Kentucky, Senator McConnell was talking and said that the package, quote, "is not going to get support from our side." He opposes the undoing of the 2017 tax cuts, and said that, quote, "I'm going to fight them every step of the way." So, how do you respond?

MS. PSAKI: I think there's some more questions to be asked. Does he disagree that our nation's infrastructure is outdated and needs repair? Does he disagree that we need to do more to put American workers back to work and to invest in industries that have growth potential over the long term? Does he disagree that one third of the country who doesn't have broadband access should have access to broadband? There are a lot of areas where there is agreement with -- across the political spectrum, from investment and infrastructure, doing more to be competitive with China.

And what we're really talking about here is how to pay for it. And so what we're looking for is proposals of alternatives. If you don't want to raise the corporate tax rate -- still lower than it's been over the last 70 years and umph, you know, across decades -- if you don't want to do that, if you don't want to put in place a global minimum tax, what are the alternatives? We're happy to hear those proposals.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday, when President Biden spoke about corporate taxes, he specifically named Amazon out of the, kind of, the Fortune 500 companies that have paid zero federal taxes. Why did he just name Amazon?

MS. PSAKI: It's just an example. As I noted, there were actually 91 companies who didn't pay any corporate taxes in 2018. So there are many to pick from.

Q And about the Baltimore plant, we understand that there's a contamination of about 15 million doses. When did this happen? And when did the administration find out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the issue was identified as part of rigorous quality control system checks. And HHS made us aware late last week.

Q Late last week. And so, we understand that this supply is headed to Europe and not for the United States, but how does that really overall, sort of, change J&J's supply plans? And were they planning to use this plant to deliver the 24 million doses they had planned to deliver by the end of April to the United States?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the issue doesn't impact, one, any of the J&J doses that are available; of course, they're already in the market. Johnson & Johnson has made clear that they expect to deliver 24 million doses in April and that they expect to meet their commitment of 100 million doses by the end of May. So we are looking forward to that.

Obviously, these are doses that the U.S. government has purchased, but we also have plenty of doses from Pfizer and Moderna regardless.

Q So there is no supply disruption caused by the Baltimore plant for U.S. supply?

MS. PSAKI: For U.S. supply -- for the supply that we are anticipating through the course of May, we have been assured that we -- that they expect to meet those deadlines.

Q Okay. And one more about Hong Kong. As you're aware, there were seven pro-democracy veterans who were advocates -- pro-democracy advocates who were arrested yesterday. And this is, obviously, you know, a continuation of Beijing trying to quash pro-democracy protests in the country. Do you have a comment? Is the administration monitoring that situation even now?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly are. Today's politically motivated convictions in Hong Kong of seven pro-democracy activists once again shows the degree to which Beijing seeks to crush all forms of peaceful dissent in the city.

These activists were taking part in a peaceful demonstration of over 1.7 million Hong Kongers protesting for the autonomy and freedom -- freedoms promised to them by the PRC. Their conviction is yet another example of Beijing eroding Hong Kong's freedoms and failing to live up to its international obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Did the company -- did the -- once the company informed the administration about the timing of the problems at the plant -- there's so much focus from this White House about transparency. Was there an obligation to speak about this earlier than acknowledging today that you knew last week?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important for people to remember that this plant has not been FDA approved. It's still going through a rigorous review. And J&J is, of course, working through that process to bring the facility online and gain authorization. So HHS updated us -- in fact, this is probably the process working as it should. HHS updated us on J&J's manufacturing, including where things stood with the facility, at the point where they learned about the issue. It wasn't going to impact our supply. It wasn't going to impact the supply to the American people. And, of course, J&J is working through this with the FDA, so we'd certainly refer to them on the process.

Q On the infrastructure climate jobs plan: The President also talked about inviting Republicans to the Oval Office.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Given the comments from his longtime friend, Mitch McConnell, do we have that on the books yet? And do you anticipate that there is any legitimate room to move? Or is the White House really settling into the idea that this will be a Democrats-only push in order to accomplish this big priority?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we just announced the proposal yesterday. There's a long history of agreement on infrastructure and the need to invest in infrastructure -- the need to take steps to be more competitive with China. We feel there are a lot of areas of agreement.

And the President will certainly be inviting Republicans and Democrats here to the Oval Office to have discussions and meetings about the path forward to hear their ideas.

There are some differences between the ARP. The ARP -- the American Rescue Plan -- was an emergency package. We needed to get it done as quickly as possible to get the pandemic under control, get relief, direct checks out to Americans. We've got a little bit more time here to work and have discussions with members of both parties.

We want to see progress by Memorial Day. We'd like to see this package passed by the summer, but I certainly expect, when Congress returns, that the President will be inviting members to the Oval Office.

Q And when you consider that timeline, certainly there are Democrats, and especially the most progressive Democrats, who would like to see the ability to get this done quickly in order to touch on some of the other priorities that are in different topic areas.

Is there a real sense, though, that you can work with Republicans when the Leader says, "There will be no support"; when the House Republican Leader, Kevin McCarthy, says, "We love infrastructure, but we don't like this tax idea"? Is there any room left?

MS. PSAKI: I think that's a question for them. They support investment in infrastructure. Right? They believe we need to do more to compete with China. Maybe they don't believe we should pay for it. If so, they should say that. Maybe they have different alternative ideas.

There have been some proposals out there about user fees or gas taxes, essentially. We don't agree with that. We don't believe that the cost should be on the backs of the American people. We believe that corporations should be able to bear the brunt for investing in America's workers. But they can come forward with their ideas.

We believe we can start from a place where we agree -- agree.

Q And given that the COVID economy has been hard on so many businesses, is this the time to try to increase taxes when they are not really out of the COVID slide of the economic impact of the pandemic?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what we're talking about here -- that's exactly why we shouldn't be increasing taxes on the American people, on people making less than \$400,000 a year; why we shouldn't be putting in place user fees -- because people are still trying to get through this period of time.

Corporations who have had their tax rate lowered to 21 percent -- lower by a great margin than it's been ever in history; corporations that didn't pay any taxes in 2018, we think they can afford to help rebuild our workforce, help invest in industries of the future, and make sure our infrastructure makes us competitive with China.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Thank you, Jen. You just repeated what the President was talking about yesterday. You want corporations to bear the

brunt of the \$2.25 trillion over eight years. But there are these calculations now that the corporate tax hike is not going to raise that much until 2036. So I'm curious where the rest of the money comes from.

MS. PSAKI: Well, as was outlined in detail on our plan, we're talking about paying for an eight-year investment over the course of 15 years. And that, given that the investments are short-term investments -- investments that are temporary -- we actually would more than make up for the cost of these investments over time.

Q And one of the most colorful examples that the President used yesterday -- he asked if people remembered a bridge going down. But only 5 percent of the spending in this package goes towards roads and bridges, and I'm curious why that number is so low in something that is being sold as an infrastructure package.

MS. PSAKI: We're actually selling it as a once-in-a-century or once-in-a-generation investment in partly our infrastructure, but partly industries of the future, American workers in the workforce.

And there are areas like broadband, which maybe is not a physical bridge, but one third of the country doesn't have access to broadband. So that impacts workers -- workers who have been working from home; kids who are trying to learn at home; parts of the country where they can't have jobs where they're working remotely.

We feel that that is an area where we can improve, expand access, and as a result, be more competitive with the country -- with other countries, I should say.

Q And then, on immigration, has the White House considered beefing up border security now that there is video of a three-year-old and a five-year-old being thrown over the wall in New Mexico?

MS. PSAKI: Beefing up border security?

Q Well, there are -- there's video now of a three-year-old and a five-year-old --

MS. PSAKI: I've seen the video, and I think any of us who saw the video were incredibly alarmed by the steps of smugglers -- ones that we have been quite familiar with, that we've spoken out about our concerns about.

As Secretary Mayorkas said, "The inhumane way smugglers abuse children while profiting off parents' desperation is criminal and morally reprehensible." The President certainly agrees with that. And these kids, I believe, were rescued from -- by individuals who are working at the border.

Q Yes, but they still got close enough -- as you guys are talking about addressing root causes in the region -- for a smuggler to throw them over a wall into the desert. And I'm just curious what the White House is doing to stop that from happening.

MS. PSAKI: And are you concerned more about the kids' safety or are you concerned about kids getting in? Or tell me more about your concern here.

Q Kids' safety is, as you just mentioned, the main concern.

MS. PSAKI: Well, of course it is, which is why I'm often surprised by some of the line of questioning here. But I will say that our concern and our focus is on sending a clear message to smuggler -- to the region that this is not the time to come. You should not send your kids on this treacherous journey. That these smugglers are preying on vulnerabilities in these communities. There's a lot of issues and steps we need to take to address root causes.

So, of course, our concern is for the safety of these kids. These Border Patrol agents who save these kids deserve our thanks and our gratitude for ensuring their safety.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. It's not just Leader McConnell, of course, and Republicans who are taking issue with some of this plan. We've seen some Democrats also voicing some concerns. So what is the President's message to these progressive members who say this plan doesn't go far enough?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we would say this is a two-part proposal. One, it's an enormous investment in our infrastructure -- in our roads, our railways, our bridges, our broadband, our waterways; in ensuring people have access to clean water. It accounts for -- I think the number is about 1 percent of our GDP, so it certainly is a significant attempt to address that. It's also a two-part proposal.

And the President will be speaking more in the coming weeks about how we can do more to help our caregivers, to help our -- well, some of that was in this package -- but help address the needs of childcare, help lower the cost of healthcare, and help do more to ensure we're easing the burden on families across the country.

Q Is the President confident that he can get Democrats united behind his plan?

MS. PSAKI: I think the President believes that Democrats, that independents, that Republicans -- as we've seen in polls across the country -- believe that we should do more to invest in our infrastructure.

And infrastructure means ensuring there's access to broadband. Infrastructure means ensuring that we rebuild our roads, our railways, and bridges. That's something that Democrats, Republicans, independents have talked about -- the fact that it's long overdue for some time now.

Q And why are you splitting this into two parts? Is that a sign at all that you think the infrastructure portion -- this first part is something that you have a greater chance of getting passed?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't overread into it in that way. We don't know what the legislative functioning or process will look like at this point. We're actually quite open to congressional committees moving forward on certain components. We're very open to members of Congress coming back with different ideas about how we can achieve the objectives outlined. It's an opportunity to lay out, in a speech, what our objective is, which is to compete with China; invest in infrastructure; and, separately, lay out in a couple of weeks what we need to do better as a country and as a government to help families, address the needs of childcare. And -- and that's why he's splitting it up.

Q And you've made clear -- you've reiterated here, the President has also said, you know, you're open to alternatives -- alternative suggestions for how to pay for this. But just to be clear, is the overall price tag here open for negotiation or just how to pay for this?

MS. PSAKI: Look, the President proposed, based on the advice of economists and economic experts, how he feels we can achieve these objectives. We'll see what others come forward with in terms of different proposals or different ways to rebuild our infrastructure and ensure we're competing with China and better positioning ourselves in the world.

Q And just one last question on the impact of this: The President said, yesterday, that along with the stimulus bill, an estimated 18 million jobs could be created with this plan. We've seen a recent S&P forecast estimate that more than 2 million jobs would be created. What's the range that the White House thinks in terms of how many millions of jobs will actually be created by this plan?

MS. PSAKI: We expect there'll be a number of outside economists who will -- and economic forecasters -- who will do projections in the coming days. We'll see what those look like. We expect them to be right in the ballpark of what the President said yesterday.

Q But why not put out your own suggestions here? I mean, you're asking for \$2 trillion. Why not put out an estimate of

how many jobs will be created?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly expect there'll be a range of numbers that you all can refer to that are done by outside analysts and that -- that's a really effective way to give a sense to the American people of what can be expected from this package.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks Jen. Since Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has already said that Republicans aren't going to play ball -- she kind of took my question a little bit. But if Republicans came back with, kind of, a skinny infrastructure package -- maybe brought back something that didn't include the \$400 billion it gets for in-home health for people -- disabled people -- so, maybe, include it in the second package that you're working on, would the White House be open to that -- to looking at a different package?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to negotiate from here, obviously. We're certainly open, always, to hearing from -- hearing ideas and proposals from Democrats and Republicans. We certainly put in the caregiving component of the package -- the President did -- because he believes that there is a huge impact on our workforce of the -- caregiving has a huge impact on our workforce -- the cost, the time, the energy, the effort -- and it is something that is keeping people from -- out of the workforce, keep -- preventing them from progressing in their jobs. So that's why he included it in there.

If Republicans disagree and don't think that that's an issue in our society, then they should come forward and certainly convey that.

Q And does President Biden support ending the Trump-era limit on state and local tax deductions, otherwise known as "SALT." One Democrat saying, "No SALT, no deal on infrastructure." Where does the President stand on that?

MS. PSAKI: If Democrats want to propose a way to eliminate SALT -- which is not a revenue raiser, as you know; it would cost more money -- and they want to propose a way to pay for it, and they want to put that forward, we're happy to hear their ideas.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I know this is a follow-up to the last question, but just specifically: Are there red lines in the first phase of the infrastructure bill on things like the -- on the money that's earmarked for racial inequality -- excuse me, racial equity -- the pot of money for the \$400 billion for seniors? You know, are those "musts" when it comes to the first phase of the bill?

MS. PSAKI: The President's focus is on the objectives he's trying to achieve, which is rebuilding our infrastructure so we can compete around the world; putting millions of Americans back to work; easing the burden, as you've noted, on -- of caregiving, which is impacting millions of Americans who are not in the workforce in the way they would like.

So I'm not going to give you red lines from here; only to convey that he designed this bill -- the administration designed this bill with an effort to meet the moment and to do it in a way that ensures we are looking at addressing challenges in our country through a lens of equity; that we're doing it in a way that helps cities and rural America; that we're doing it in a way that meets the moment and meets the moment of the needs for a once-in-a-century investment.

But we certainly understand that there will be a difference of views. There will be a discussion about how to achieve these objectives. So he looks forward to members making their own proposals.

Q Is he willing to narrow the first phase of the bill at all for, you know, things that the Republicans deem to be truly critical infrastructure?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't seen a proposal from them for specific areas to narrow and what the impact would be. And if they want to propose that, I'm sure he's happy to have a discussion, but we're not going to negotiate from here.

want to propose that, I'm sure he's happy to have a discussion, but we're not going to negotiate from here.

Q I want to pivot to another topic. Earlier this month, the administration delivered an intelligence report to Congress.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q It warned out of the rising dangers by militia groups, extremists, white supremacists. Is -- does the President feel that it's time for the U.S. to adopt a domestic terrorism statute?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, Zolan, he talked about that a bit on the campaign trail. What he has asked his administration to do is do a 100-day review on domestic violent extremism because there is such an expansive impact and threat around the country of domestic violent extremism.

We have a couple more weeks of that review that are underway -- the policymaking component of that -- and I expect once it's concluded, there'll be some recommendations on how to best address this threat.

Q I have a quick immigration question, just --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You know, the administration has often cited that, you know, they continue to expel single adults, families -- or intend to expel families back south across the border. I mean, those migrants are going to some of the same areas that they were returned to under MPP as well. The administration unwound MPP and criticized it pretty sharply.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q And CDC officials have also reportedly opposed Title 42 when it was implemented by the Trump administration. So, how does the continued use of that rule square with President Biden's campaign pledge to resor- -- to restore asylum at the border? And secondly, what is the CDC assessing when it comes to deciding when to lift that order?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we're still in the middle of a public health crisis. There's 1,000 people a day, approximately, dying of COVID-19 still. And, of course, the CDC and others -- and I would defer to them on what their criteria are and their timeline -- but they look at that and, of course, the impact. So I don't anticipate any near-term change, but I would defer to them on their timeline.

Go ahead.

Q On the list of the most urgent infrastructure projects that you have identified as an administration, when will the White House put out a list of those projects, as outlined in the plan? And which agency is in charge of this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there'll be -- there's a Jobs Cabinet and Council -- or "Jobs Cabinet," I should call them -- that will be playing a variety of roles, including in the internal policy development process; you know, engagement with Capitol Hill; engagement with governors; engagement with the American public.

Once the bill passes, there'll be a competitive bidding process.

Q So the five -- to clarify, the five individuals that the President named today as being in charge of the --

MS. PSAKI: In terms of the --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: They will be in charge of -- sorry to combine the things. They will be in charge of communicating with the

MS. PSAKI: They will be in charge of -- sorry to combine the things. They will be in charge of communicating with the public, communicating with Congress, communicating with mayors and governors, having discussions about different components of the bill -- whether it's broadband or different infrastructure components -- the impact on businesses.

These are the Cabinet members who will all play a role in this engagement. But the -- the competitive bidding process obviously wouldn't start until the bill is passed.

Q Okay. On the President's budget, or the discretionary guide -- can you give us an update on why it's delayed? I think we expected it to be out today.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on the timeline. I know it will be out soon. But I don't have any more specifics for you.

Q And then one, lastly, on the President's interview with ESPN last night. He was obviously very critical of the Texas Rangers reopening their stadium at full capacity in the middle of a pandemic. Apart from urging people to wear masks, wash their hands, socially distance, is the President planning to take any other measures to try to slow the pace of the reopening and engaging with governors, especially as we see a rise of cases in a number of states?

MS. PSAKI: Well, his focus is on action. And so, you've noted some of them, but it is -- when he saw an urgency in the rising cases, we took some urgent action, including doubling -- more than doubling the number of pharmacies that will have the vaccine, increasing our commitment and our investment in mass vaccination sites and community health centers. His view is: The more people we can get vaccinated more quickly, the better positioned we will be. So that's where his focus is.

Q Are you worried that reopening and rising cases will out, sort of, pace the vaccination pace?

MS. PSAKI: I would leave it to our health experts to make predictions of that kind. I would say that what we have control over here is how rapidly we can get the vaccine out, how many locations we can ensure the vaccine is available to the public in. We can continue to do more to meet people where they are. That's where our focus is.

I'd also note that, though some governors have rolled back public health guidelines -- something obviously we wouldn't support given the public health guidelines are in place -- a number of mayors, local elected officials, businesses have kept them in place even in a number of those states, because it's not a political issue, and they are -- have taken those steps in order to keep the people in their jurisdictions safe.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So during the campaign, the President signaled his support for expanding Paid Family and Medical Leave. I know the provision that was enacted during the camp- -- or during the pandemic expired and paid leave wasn't in the stimulus package. Is paid leave something that the President will commit to including in the second part of his infrastructure proposal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's naturally still ongoing discussions about the final pieces of the package. You know, he does believe that -- that it is -- he did include, actually, emergency paid leave in his Rescue Plan, so that component was included.

And it was President Biden who signed into law, this month on -- this month an extension of a paid leave credit that more families, right now, have access to paid leave. So those are all steps he's taken immediately, given his view that this is important to families across the country, especially as they're trying to make ends meet. And he's been clear about his support for permanent paid leave and medical leave -- paid and medical leave. But I don't have anything to predict for you in terms of the next package.

Q And then, on a different topic. The shooting in California is the latest in a series of several high-profile gun tragedies over the past few weeks. Is the President ready to start issuing executive orders?

over the past few weeks. Is the President ready to start issuing executive orders?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first let me say that the disturbing news of gun violence in Orange, California, that resulted in the tragic loss of lives -- innocent lives -- last night is yet another example of senseless gun violence that occurs all too frequently, and underscores the need for legislation to expand background checks -- something that's worked its way through the House, that the President certainly supports -- to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and remove liability protections for gun manufacturers.

The President -- there is an ongoing review of executive actions, and something that he is certainly personally committed to, and hopefully we'll have more to say on that soon.

Q And a quick follow on that. It's my understanding that a number of gun violence prevention advocacy groups have requested a meeting with the President. Is that something that he is willing to do? Is he going to meet with them? And if so, do you have an idea of when that meeting might happen?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any predictions for you in terms of a meeting. I will say that the President has worked hand in hand with a number of these groups for decades.

As somebody who fought to get the Brady Bill passed; who fought for an assault weapons ban and getting that into law in the '90s; who led the effort to put in place 20 -- nearly two dozen executive actions while he was Vice President, he's certainly been a partner and will continue to be an advocate as President for additional commonsense gun safety measures.

I will say that there is, in the American Jobs Plan -- and there is a lot in there, so this was a piece that didn't receive as much focus -- a proposal of 5 million -- a \$5 billion investment over eight years to support evidence-based community violence intervention. And, you know, this is a step that, of course, would be -- would help on gun violence and community violence.

We also know that violence is a public health crisis disproportionately impacting Black and brown communities and Americans. And a key part of community violence intervention strategies is to help connect individuals to job training and job opportunities. So it's part of his job effort, but certainly another effort that many of these gun safety organizations feel is important, addressing community violence in order to reduce that across the country.

Go ahead.

Q Just one follow-up on SALT. You're saying that if Democrats are able to negotiate something, they have to find the revenue somewhere else? Is that -- because as you say, it's a "revenue reducer." That they need to find -- they need to balance the books some other way?

MS. PSAKI: Unless they think that a package doesn't need to be paid for -- or that doesn't need to be paid for. So we're open to hearing ideas and proposals. I just think for clarity purposes with -- you know and a lot of people know -- but eliminating SALT obviously is a revenue -- not a revenue raiser. And it is something that either would have to be paid for or not.

But, you know, our focus right now is on ensuring that we are getting relief to the broad swath of the American people who are most impacted by the downturn: the 10 million Americans out of work, people who are looking to be a part of growing industries of the future. But we understand that many Democrats -- or some Democrats, I should say, are focused on that and interested in discussing it. We're happy to discuss it with them.

Q So my colleagues at the Miami Herald have been talking with undocumented immigrants who've struggled in South Florida to get vaccinated because they don't have a driver's license or other federally issued ID. I know that the federal government doesn't want to set those standards. But what can you do to -- is there anything the administration can do to set guidelines or to advocate on their behalf? And are you concerned about undocumented immigrants not receiving the vaccine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly the more people who are vaccinated, whether they're undocumented or not, the safer we are as a country. And that's certainly the President's point of view. And as you noted, that is not our federal guidelines. I will have to check if there's anything we can specifically do in South Florida or parts of Florida where this is having an impact. And happy to follow up with you on it.

Go ahead.

Q President Biden earlier today just spoke to faith leaders and talked about how concerned he was that Americans are becoming too cavalier about safeguarding against COVID, and on top of that, issues around skepticism with the vaccine. And, you know, and then we also have these variants. Is there some way that you can characterize how worried Americans should be right now about the severity of another COVID wave?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not here to scare people. I think, though, we have been saying from the beginning that we need to be vigilant and that we are still at war with the pandemic. And that has been our consistent message from the federal government.

One of the reasons why the President did the meeting with faith leaders today is that we've also seen that it is -- the most powerful voices, the most impactful voices in communities are those who are leaders in their communities; sometimes those are faith leaders, civic leaders, local doctors.

And that's why a big part of our investment is -- as we look to the next stage of this, which is a focus on vaccination -- is in those communities. So I think that was the purpose of the meeting today.

But I think, to be clear from here, we've seen progress around the country. We've seen, of course, the data of the number of people who are vaccinated, but we also need to remain vigilant. And that's why the President repeats that message at every opportunity.

Q You said you're not here to -- you're not here to scare people. It's been Biden's message, you know, "I will always be frank with people." And do you think that the administration is doing that?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. We are conveying and we've conveyed consistently, nearly at every opportunity, that we need to remain vigilant. People need to still wear masks. They need to social distance. They need to hand wash. That even as more people get vaccinated -- you know, even as people are vaccinated -- you know, if you're -- if you get vaccinated with Pfizer, you get your one -- first dose; three weeks later, you get your second dose; and it's not until two weeks after that that you -- it has the full impact. That's five weeks after the first dose. So even as more people are vaccinated, we need to remain vigilant.

That's been our crystal-clear message from the beginning from this -- and consistently, even as people have felt that we did not need to abide by the guidelines in some parts of the country.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. The administration is praising its results in terms of the vaccination campaign, but when it comes to the vaccine diplomacy, it remains clearly behind China or Russia. Is the White House considering any measure, apart from the (inaudible) COVAX, to catch up with those countries before the entire American population is vaccinated?

MS. PSAKI: Our focus remains on ensuring the American people are vaccinated. And we, of course, remain open to a range of options of helping and being a part of the global community moving forward. But that remains our first focus.

Q So there will be no export before the end of (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: We exported some doses of AstraZeneca to Canada and Mexico, so not -- no export. We obviously will consider a range of options, but our focus remains on vaccinating the adult -- American adult -- adult Americans in this country.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. We reported earlier today that Senator Joe Manchin has privately expressed to some co-sponsors for the Equality Act that he is not yet on board with voting for that legislation, which obviously makes this path to breaking the filibuster even more difficult.

If that ends up happening, if it ends up being thwarted by the filibuster, has President Biden given any thought to considering support for the Fairness For All Act, which is being floated as sort of a compromise measure by moderate Republicans?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check with our legislative team on that. It's a great question. I can follow up with you after the briefing.

Q I do have, like, sort of, a follow-up.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q If -- because some community leaders that I've spoken with about the Fairness For All Act have pointed to specific carve-outs -- like allowing some businesses with fewer than 15 employees to deny service to someone for being LGBT -- as being really tough pills to swallow. Would he commit, or could this administration commit, at this point, to not signing legislation that would create carve-outs like that?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think the President supports the Equality Act. He's been clear about that. I don't think I'm going to get too far ahead down the rabbit hole of this while it's still being negotiated through Congress.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Oh, yes. So, thank you, Jen, by the way. The fourth key element in the American Jobs Plan is invest in R&D, and one of that in there is bringing critical supply chains back to the United States. What specific incentives is the administration going to give companies? Are we talking about tax breaks, direct payments?

And then there would be -- would there be disincentives, meaning tariffs, put on items that are not brought back or critical supply chains that are not brought back?

MS. PSAKI: It's a really great question. I know there's a supply chain, kind of, meeting coming up that is being hosted by our NEC Director and our National -- our -- Jake Sullivan, who's our National Security Advisor, where I'm sure they'll discuss a range of issues. And I'm sure this will be a discussion with members of Congress, as they're engaging with our jobs cabinet. So it sounds like there's more to discuss on this topic.

Q So you can't tell -- you don't know if it's tax incentives at this point (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I can -- I'm sure I can get you more specific on it after the briefing.

Q On -- on one other subject. In Georgia -- talking about the voting bill that was just signed from the governor -- community organizers have threatened boycotts on big companies like Delta, Coca-Cola, Home Depot, in part from some of the information that's come from the President.

In his last news conference, he said that the bill requires voting to end early, at 5:00 p.m. And you've said, and some others have said, that words matter. The bill actually standardizes voting hours by counties and adds Saturdays and

Sundays voting, and it also allows the extended hours from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. So is there going to be a correction issued for --

MS. PSAKI: It standardizes the ending of voting every day at five, right? It just gives options?

Q Seven -- seven to seven is what it --

MS. PSAKI: It gives options to expand it -- right? -- but it standardized it at five. It also makes it so that outside groups can't provide water or food to people in line. Right?

Q Yeah, but the --

MS. PSAKI: It makes it more difficult to absentee vote. Are those things all correct?

Q The voting on the day of is seven to seven, and early voting -- it can standardize adding Saturday and Sunday. So my question is: Is the tone going to change out of the White House? Or --

MS. PSAKI: The tone for a bill that limits voting access and makes it more difficult for people to engage in voting in Georgia?

Q No, that's actually not what the governor of Georgia has said.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that is not based in fact what the governor of Georgia has said.

So, no, our tone is not changing. We have concerns about the specific components of the package, including the fact that it makes it harder and more difficult for people to vote by limiting absentee options; by making it not viable, not possible for people to provide water to people who are in line; by not standardizing longer hours.

So, if you're making it harder to vote, no, we don't support that.

Go ahead.

Q A quick one. Is the President considering giving an address to a joint session of Congress near the 100-day mark?

MS. PSAKI: He is definitely considering giving a joint session address. I can't wait until we finally announce this because I know all -- you all really want a date. We're working with leaders in Congress to finalize that. I just don't have a date quite yet for you.

Q Gotcha. And then, a quick follow-up. Why haven't refugee flights continued at this point? Last month, the President did announce that he intended to raise the refugee cap before the typical, you know, end of the fiscal year --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- where it traditionally happens. That hasn't seemed to happen yet. Why haven't those flights continued?

MS. PSAKI: He remains committed, but I don't have an update on the timing of the flights.

Q Does it have anything to do with the fact that resources are going towards the border at this time? Or --

MS. PSAKI: No, no, it's not related to that. No.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, everyone.

2:27 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Background Press Call on the Upcoming Trilateral Meeting with Japan and the Republic of Korea
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 1, 2021 9:00 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2021

Background Press Call on the Upcoming Trilateral Meeting with Japan and the Republic of Korea

Via Teleconference

4:20 P.M. EDT

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us. A reminder that today's call will be on background, attributed to a senior administration official. The contents of this call will be embargoed until 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time tonight.

Our speaker today is [senior administration official]. We'll have some opening remarks at the top, and then we're happy to turn it over for a few questions.

Over to you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. And thanks, guys, for your patience. And I'll try to just give you guys a little bit of an overview of what we're expecting in terms of next steps in some diplomacy.

Tomorrow, Jake Sullivan, our National Security Advisor, will welcome the National Security Secretary, Secretary Kitamura, of Japan and National Security Advisor Hoon of the Republic of Korea for a trilateral dialogue. And we're going to host that at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. And we've been preparing for this session for some time.

This meeting -- it, you know, obviously follows on from the trips of Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Defense Austin to Japan and the Republic of Korea for reciprocal two-plus-two meetings -- so-called "two-plus-two" meetings -- in both countries.

This is our first trilateral meeting among the three countries, and we believe that this partnership is increasingly important in a complex environment in the Indo-Pacific going forward.

We have a number of topics that we're going to want to discuss over the course of a full day. And I want to say that not only will we have trilateral sessions and participants will have a chance to meet some of the cadets -- and we've got cadets, I believe, from Japan and, I believe, from South Korea. And there'll be an opportunity to engage with some of the naval personnel.

We'll also have an opportunity for bilateral meetings between each of the countries to ensure that we're on the same page on the issues that we're dealing with. I expect us to talk primarily on issues associated with the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. We're going to talk about respective views and efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic. And we'll obviously talk about next steps associated with climate change.

As I indicated, this is the first meeting of its kind -- trilateral meeting -- of the Biden administration, and it follows on a number of diplomatic steps that we've sought to take since assuming power in January.

We've already talked about many of these, but, more recently, we had an intensive discussion this week between the United States and NATO about shared perspectives and areas that we can potentially work together on out-of-area challenges in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

I think the most important reason for this trilateral is it will give Jake and our team the opportunity to review and discuss our policy review on North Korea. And I think, as you all know, it's in its final stages. We've -- we've done extensive consultations both across the U.S. government, in Congress. We've consulted previous individuals and teams that have been involved in diplomacy with North Korea. And we're prepared to now have some final consultations with Japan and South Korea as we go forward.

I think it'd be fair to say that each of these countries are intensively interested in our planned way forward, and we intend to discuss that in some detail.

In addition to North Korea, I think we will also discuss other strategic and regional and economic goals. We're going to talk extensively on technology, including on semiconductors, supply chains, and biotechnology.

I think it'd be fair to say that our three countries hold many of the keys to the future of semiconductor manufacturing technology. And we will seek to affirm the importance of keeping these sensitive supply chains secure while also working together to uphold upcoming norms and standards discussions.

We'll also have discussions about next steps, as I indicated, on COVID-19 and the summit next month here in Washington -- I guess, later this month -- that Secretary -- President Biden and Secretary Kerry will hold on climate. And both Japan and South Korea have been invited to that. And we'll discuss those issues in some detail.

Obviously, we'll talk about other regional issues: the very serious concerns, collectively, we all have on the tragic developments in Myanmar; concerns about broader regional security issues in the South China Sea and elsewhere. And we're looking -- we'll look forward to taking steps to advance our trilateral cooperation as we go forward.

Why don't I stop there, and I'm happy to take some questions. Thank you.

Q Thank you for doing this call. Two quick questions. You talked about how this is, you know, obviously going to be very focused on North Korea, and you guys are, you know, in the final stages of conducting that policy review. Is it fair to say that this will be the final meeting with U.S. allies before the administration rolls out that policy?

And then my second question is just with regard to the Singapore Declaration. Does any of that still stand?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yeah, thank you, Kylie. Good questions. First of all, I would say that I -- we don't view this, in any way, as a kind of final meeting in the United States then departs on to engage without partnership.

We believe that this is an iterative process that we will be working constantly as we go forward with both Japan and South Korea on shared goals of denuclearization and reducing tensions and the like across the Korean Peninsula and Asia more directly. So I'd view this as part of a process and not as an end result.

And we, you know, take note of your question generally. The report does go into detail about how we intend to go forward. I think I'd leave some of those details -- or I understand the significance of the Singapore Agreement, and we'll have more to say about the next couple of days.

Q Thanks.

Q Thank you for taking my call. I just have a quick question. Is there going to be any kind of joint statement or press availability following the meeting tomorrow?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think -- I think this will be a private meeting. I do not believe there will be a press availability after. We're -- we'll be in -- we'll be in -- the area, which is closed down -- it's, you know, COVID-controlled around the academy. And I think it was agreed that we will basically conduct these discussions privately.

Q Hello, thank you for taking my call. I have three questions to ask. As you mentioned that you -- the talks will focus on North Korea policy, I wondered whether there will be a slogan or a short outcome explanation on tomorrow's meeting.

And, as for the topic, would the discussion, kind of, take part by a distinguishing topic, such as North Korea, human rights, and denuclearization?

And my third question is: Currently, Korea is discussing whether Biden administration's North Korea policy will be focused on engagement or sanctions or other pressure options, and we really would like to balance this. So, will we be able to picture the -- how the proportion of engagement and pressure will be after this discussion?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, thank you for the very detailed question. Let me take the second one first. And I think our intention is to discuss every aspect of North Korea policy -- protect -- prospective arenas of diplomacy, nonproliferation issues. We will probably review some of the recent missile provocations that we have seen. We'll talk about the domestic circumstances in North Korea -- what we've seen in terms of COVID response -- and some of the diplomacy of late that we've seen, particularly between China and North Korea.

So I think our intent is to have a deep review that will inform our process forward with respect to the review more generally.

I don't think there will be any -- somehow, you know, sort of, a nameplate or a title coming out of the meeting tomorrow. I think the primary goal is to ensure that we have a deep, shared understanding of circumstances that are taking place on the peninsula in North Korea -- that our goals and assessments of what we want to achieve are in alignment -- and that's of critical importance -- and also for us to brief both teams on what we believe are the essential elements of our strategy going forward.

So I don't think it can be easily condensed into a headline, but our hope will be that they will see the work that has gone into the overall effort.

And then, your third question -- can you repeat that again? I'm sorry. I got the first two.

Q Would you be able to picture the proportion of engagement and pressure after this discussion?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think -- I think all sides will have a sense of what we're contemplating in terms of the way forward. And again, I think I'll just leave it at that at this juncture.

We also want to make clear that, although these are some preliminary findings, this is the most senior consultation we've had with Japanese and South Korean friends. And so we are very much open and prepared and engaged to take that feedback.

And so this is not going to be a one-way conversation. I anticipate this being more of a dialogue in which we'll get feedback and suggestions and iterations on the process. And again, this is not the end. This is more of a beginning as we go forward.

Anything that we do with respect to North Korea, we believe we need to do in partnership and in harmony with Japan and South Korea.

Q Hi, thank you for doing this. So, I have two questions. First is: You mentioned in the trilateral tomorrow that COVID-19 will, of course, be one of the topics. So will the discussion of South Korea join the Quad's effort to push for vaccine production distribution in the meeting as well?

And second question is: I'm assuming China offers North Korea their vaccine, but maybe North Korea would consider, United States always say, a safer and more effective option. Will that be a leverage for the Biden administration's engagement with North Korea? I mean the vaccine.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, look, on the -- on the second question, I think the President and other senior representatives in the U.S. government have made clear that our primary mission right now is to ensure that the U.S. population is vaccinated and that we are also beginning to work closely with partners and others. And that's a critical matter going forward.

I don't think I have anything further to add with respect to possible engagement on health-related issues in North Korea. I think at this juncture, I would view that as premature.

And -- but I think we're also interested to hear what are the assessments about the nature of COVID-19 in North Korea. Some reports indicate the country is in a state of virtual lockdown. And I think we will want to assess what is the impact that is having on the economy, on the leadership, on its thinking about the outside world. And that will be important going forward.

Can I ask you to, again -- sorry, I'm getting so bad at the multiple questions. What was your first -- I think that was the second question. Can you repeat the first one very quickly? And I apologize -- I should be writing these down.

Q Of course. So the first question is, we know Japan --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Oh, on the Quad, yes. Yeah.

So, look -- so the Quad is an informal grouping, and it's an open architecture. And it is an attempt to gather together like-minded states that have an interest in maintaining and supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific.

We've had very close consultations with Korean friends. We've made clear that there might be opportunities for unofficial engagement in a number of initiatives we've launched: as you know, working groups on technology; we're working closely on a COVID plan to deliver up to a billion doses to Southeast Asia. And we would welcome at any point a closer consultation and engagement with South Korean friends in the process.

Q Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you.

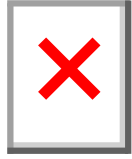
SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All right, I think that's it. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. A friendly reminder that this call was on background, attributed to SAOs, and that the contents are embargoed until 9:00 p.m. tonight. Thanks, everyone. And have a good evening.

4:37 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Press Statement
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 2, 2021 5:23 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2, 2021

United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Press Statement

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan of the United States, National Security Secretariat Secretary General Shigeru Kitamura of Japan, and National Security Office Director Suh Hoon of the Republic of Korea (ROK) met for talks on April 2, 2021 at the United States Naval Academy to consult on the United States' review of its North Korea policy and to discuss issues of common concern including Indo Pacific security. The national security advisors reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to working together to protect and advance their shared security goals.

The national security advisors shared their concerns about North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and reaffirmed their commitment to address and resolve these issues through concerted trilateral cooperation towards denuclearization. They agreed on the imperative for full implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions by the international community, including North Korea, preventing proliferation, and cooperating to strengthen deterrence and maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. They discussed the importance of reuniting separated Korean families, and the swift resolution of the abductions issue. The United States reaffirmed its steadfast alliance commitments to both the ROK and Japan; Japan and the ROK underscored the importance of their bilateral ties and trilateral cooperation to the security of our citizens, the region, and the world.

The national security advisors discussed the value of working together to address other leading challenges, including COVID-19, working to prevent future pandemics, combatting climate change and promoting an immediate return to democracy in Myanmar. They agreed to strengthen their ties, and to advance a common vision grounded in our shared democratic values.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic of Croatia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 5, 2021 10:00 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2021

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic of Croatia

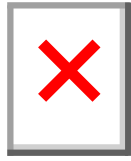
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic. Mr. Sullivan expressed the Biden Administration's appreciation for the strong U.S.-Croatia relationship and commitment to strengthening transatlantic ties. Mr. Sullivan congratulated the Prime Minister on Croatia's recent inauguration of its Krk Island liquefied natural gas terminal and its progress on meeting the requirements to join the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. Mr. Sullivan and Prime Minister Plenkovic also discussed coordination on shared priorities, including the COVID-19 pandemic, energy diversification, and the Western Balkans.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, April 7, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 7, 2021 4:45 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 7, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, April 7, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:21 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi. Good afternoon. Okay. Joining us today is another member of the President's Jobs Cabinet, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. As you all know, the Secretary was the first woman to be governor of Rhode Island, where she kick-started the state's economy and achieved a record number of jobs and the lowest unemployment in a generation thanks to investments in infrastructure, education, and job training.

As governor, she prioritized creating jobs, supporting workers, and improving the quality and availability of services in the care economy, including supporting wage increases for care workers.

She also chair -- served as chair of the Democratic Governors Association in 2019. In 2010, she was elected General Treasurer of Rhode Island, receiving the largest number of votes of any statewide candidate. When she took office as General Treasurer, she tackled the state's \$7 billion unfunded pension liability.

The Secretary is focused on a simple but vital mission: to spur good-paying jobs, empower entrepreneurs to innovate and grow, and help American workers and businesses compete.

As always, she can stay for a few questions. I'll be the bad cop. And with that, we'll turn it over to the Secretary.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you, Jen. Good afternoon, everybody.

Q Good afternoon.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Nice to see all of you. And it's an honor for me to be here to talk a little bit about President Biden's American Jobs Plan.

At its core, the American Jobs Plan is about making sure every American has the opportunity to get a decent job. A decent, well-paying job, with dignity and has opportunity.

It's a historic investment in America, intended to create tens of millions of jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position the United States to outcompete China.

Many have commented that it's large, it's bold. It's necessarily large because, frankly, we're behind, and we've neglected for too long important investments in our infrastructure.

We need to ensure that investments in infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, workforce development, and our care economy are made -- are made at the scale we need and are made in every single community in America.

And as the President has -- has led us to -- is leading us to build back better, that means we need to do so more inclusively and ensure that these investments that we are making -- in broadband, in housing, in the care economy, in water -- are in every community in America: rural, tribal, urban, communities of color, and reaching everyone across America.

The fact is, we have failed for a long time to invest. And as a result, we have fallen behind. So why does that matter? It matters because it makes it harder for small businesses to compete. It makes -- it matters because it makes it harder for American companies to compete, and it makes it harder for the average American to get a decent job and to get the skills they need in order to get a high-paying job in the industries that are growing today and tomorrow.

And the fact of the matter is, we know that lack of investment, particularly in public transportation, transit, water, housing, has hurt low-income folks and people of color the most. And it's time to finally rectify that systemic inequality and build back better and more equally.

As Jen said, my job as the Commerce Secretary is to do everything I can to enable American businesses of all sizes to compete. And at its core, the American Jobs Plan is about investing in American competitiveness, strengthening our workforce, rebuilding infrastructure, and leveling the playing field so all Americans have a shot at a good job.

Now, prior to being Commerce Secretary, I was governor for six years. Prior to that, I was in the private sector. And so over the course of my career, as an entrepreneur and as governor, now as Commerce Secretary, I have had many, many, many discussions with businesses, from the biggest to the smallest. And over the years, there is something that we all seem to agree on, which is that we need to make massive investments in our infrastructure if we are going to compete and ensure America's global competitiveness.

And most recently, I have spent a lot of time in the past few weeks talking to business leaders, and I can report to you that there's a broad level of enthusiasm for big investments in infrastructure. And I think there is a recognition that President Biden is doing the right thing in pushing us to conceive of infrastructure as broad, as including investments in STEM, research and development, investments in basic research, investments in broadband, investments in training our workforce. And the truth of it is, that's what it's going to take to compete.

A key component of the American Jobs Plan is training our workforce. This is a reality. The changes in the American economy, many of which have been massively accelerated by COVID, are very scary for millions of Americans. It's a scary place to be to need a job and not have the skills to get a good job.

And so that's why this package calls for big investments in training our workforce. Now, as Jen said, this was a priority of mine when I was governor, and I saw it work. I know it works. We saw it work.

When I ran for governor, my state, Rhode Island -- if you haven't been, I want you to go -- had the highest unemployment rate in the country. Number one in America. It was sad -- very sad. The unemployment rate in the building trades when I took over was over 20 percent. Think about what that does to a community.

When I -- before COVID, after a lot of our work, Rhode Island had more jobs than at any time in our state's history, because we leaned into it in a broad fashion, similar to what this package calls for: investments in infrastructure, working with business, and big investments in work or training.

So, the fact of the matter is, in order to compete, we have to have investments in apprenticeships, community colleges, STEM education, job training.

My view is: If you have the guts, in the middle of your career, to go out and get some job training to retrain yourself to get a new job, then we need to be there for you to provide high-quality, demand-driven, affordable -- if not free -- job training.

The American Jobs Plan also is about strengthening our supply chains, making things in America, making critical goods in America, creating good jobs in the process, and increasing the security that we have, knowing that we aren't overly dependent on other countries for critical supplies. We saw that on full display in COVID. Every governor knows what it's like to be up in the middle of the night -- can't get your hands on PPE or ventilators or medicine because they aren't manufactured in America.

We also need to invest in domestic manufacturing, particularly for critical industries like semiconductors. We all know semiconductors are the building blocks of our future economy. And as we go through the data and digital revolution, semiconductors underpin so much of the new technology where we'll see job creation.

So we've -- we are living through now a global chip shortage. We're seeing that hurt businesses in every sector, and so we need to strengthen our domestic supply chains. The American Jobs Plan calls for a \$50 billion investment in semiconductor manufacturing and research, as it's called for in the bipartisan CHIPS Act.

Finally, we need strong investments in our broadband infrastructure. We've seen more clearly than ever before that high-quality, affordable broadband isn't a luxury, but it's a necessity for education, jobs, and healthcare. But millions and millions of Americans don't have access to broadband, particularly in rural communities.

I finally want to address one last component, which is the investments in the care economy. You might say to yourself, "Why is the Commerce Secretary talking about investments in the care economy?" Because it matters. It is core to our competitiveness. In order for you to be able to go to work, you need to know that your loved one is being taken care of.

And also, we have millions and millions of women, mostly women of color, working full-time, caring for our loved ones, living in poverty. It's time to make those investments so they can have a dignified job and so that we can shore up our communities.

As Jen said, I did a lot of work of this as governor. And it's something that I'm very proud of President Biden and to be on the team of a president who's investing in the care economy.

So, fundamentally, this plan invests in American workers and businesses, small and large alike, so they can compete and win in the global marketplace. And I'm psyched to talk to you about it and proud to be on the team that's going to get this done.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Kristen.

Q Thank you, Jen. Thank you, Secretary Raimondo, for being here. As you know, some Republicans have looked at this plan and said: If you increase the corporate tax rate overall in the long run, jobs could be eliminated. They cite one study,

the Tax Foundation, that says that increasing the corporate tax rate will eliminate 159,000 jobs over the next 10 to 30 years. How do you respond to that criticism that in the long run this plan kills jobs?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I don't agree with that assessment. So, a few -- a few points.

First of all, every business leader I talk to, big and small, agrees we must make these investments in infrastructure in order to compete. If we don't invest in semiconductors, we're going to fall further behind. If we don't invest in job training, we're not going to have the workforce that businesses need to compete. So it's essential that we make these investments.

With respect to taxes, there is not a shred of evidence to show that the cuts in 2017 increased growth or productivity. Actually, very little of it went into additional R&D.

So, the fact of the matter is, the corporate structure today is broken. Many, many companies don't pro- -- large profitable companies pay no corporate taxes. So I'd like to think we can all agree that it needs to be improved, level the playing field, close the loopholes, and have a discussion around how we do this together to improve competitiveness.

Q If it is raised to 28 percent, though, that would put the U.S. at one of the highest in the world. Does it have to be 28 percent? Would you go lower? Could you accomplish the same thing if the tax rate weren't raised to 28 percent?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, there is room for compromise; that is clear. The President has said a few things: We have to get this investment done. He's charged us to work across the aisle and in a bipartisan way, and to -- and we need to pay for what we're doing. Like, our proposal is to invest in 8 years and pay it back over 15.

Now, we can have a discussion about that. Should we pay it back over 20 instead of 15? Is the rate not quite 28? Is it something, you know, lower? So we're -- we want to compromise.

What we cannot do, and what I am imploring the business community not to do, is to say, "We don't like 28. We're walking away. We're not discussing." That's unacceptable. Come to the table and problem-solve with us to come up with a reasonable, responsible plan.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Mario.

Q Thank you, Madam Secretary. Two questions for you. On the infrastructure side, how do you target and make sure that those projects help minority communities? I'm thinking of the situation in Jackson, Mississippi, for example; Flint as well.

And then my other question is: How do you make sure that minorities are the beneficiaries of these jobs. Right? There's been a long history of programs that were built to help minorities -- I'm thinking of Opportunity Zones with the last administration -- that didn't ultimately help minorities.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah, really good question. Two things. So, again, the President has been very clear in this; this is about equity in everything we do. And I'm going to -- I can promise you as Commerce Secretary -- like, right now, we have \$3 billion from the rescue package to invest in communities -- I promise you now, equity is front and center. And that's why I was saying we have to get the money everywhere -- rural, tribal, urban -- and prioritizing those who have been left behind.

With respect to the job training -- you know, I can fall on my own experience -- we did a back-to-work Rhode Island job training initiative, and we said we're going to tar- -- we're going to make sure it's equitable. More than half of the people trained were women; more than 25 percent were people of color. If you commit yourself to it, which is what we will do under the President's leadership, we will make sure to make up for the fact that, as you say, in the past that hasn't been

done.

MS. PSAKI: Alex.

Q Thank you. What is the status and direction of the China tech policy review? And more specifically, what about TikTok?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah. So, this -- I'll say quickly: We need to play offense and defense. The jobs package is offense: invest in America competitiveness so we can play offense. A lot of the tools that Commerce has are defense: the entities list, tariffs, et cetera.

So we are -- you know, led by Jake Sullivan and our team interagency review -- we're in the process of doing it now. A lot of people have said it's probably going to stay on the Entity List. I have no reason to believe that they won't, but we're kind of in the middle of the overall review of the China policy.

Q How close is that to being completed?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I would actually defer that more to the White House. But I would say we're -- we're in the thick of it right now. Like we're working as aggressively as we can. We're not wasting time on it.

MS. PSAKI: Zeke.

Q Thank you, Secretary. I was hoping to draw on your experience as governor, with regard to the virus. The White House and the President have been calling on governors across the country not to roll back virus restrictions, business capacity limitations, and the like. Yet, many, including many Democratic governors, have rolled back those policies steadily, even as cases have risen. You faced some of these struggles as governor. Can you speak to a little bit of what those governors are facing? And how would you advise them to balance their, you know, maybe their pressures at home versus the federal guidance here to keep those restrictions in place?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So it's a tough spot. To be a governor in America today is a challenge, and everyone is, you know, trying hard. I would say, first of all, they are so lucky that President Biden is in office now, after what we went through last year.

Secondly, follow the President's lead around vaccinations. The administration is doing a fantastic job getting vaccinations out the door. And I think that it's a balance. Listen, every governor knows what's going on in their community. And I think we have to respect that. They -- you know, they see what's going on in their community.

Having said that, I would say, you know, the administration -- the Biden administration is focused heavily on vaccinations. It has a fantastic strategy. And I would just encourage governors to lean into that, vaccinate people as quickly as possible, and don't -- just don't jump the gun. I am not going to tell governors what to do. I just have lived it, and every time you jump the gun, you live to regret it.

So, vaccinate. Put the pedal to the metal on vaccinating more than lifting restrictions.

MS. PSAKI: Ed.

Q Madam Secretary, thank you for being here. You oversee a big department -- everything from the Weather Service to the Fisheries and the Census. Have you been briefed on the status of getting the results of the 2020 Census?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yes, I have.

Q When's it coming?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Well, we think -- we have said that the redistricting data will be available no later than September 30th. If it's available before that, in a -- you know, when we feel comfortable about it, we'll put it out then, but we need a little bit more time.

Q To state elections officials, secretaries of state who are sitting there, you know, scratching their head over which lines they should be using for elections this year --

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah.

Q -- and next year, what do you say to them?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I say: I know it's tough, but be patient. You know, last year was a -- was a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. The Census professionals had to do the Census in the middle of a global pandemic with COVID, civil unrest through the summer. So, we're behind. You know, we are behind.

But my direction to the team is: We have to get it right. So I -- having been a local politician, I hear -- look, I hear them. But the fact of the matter is, it is so much better to wait a little longer and have accurate data that we all can trust. So I -- we're -- rest assured, if it's ready before the 30th, we'll put it out. But we are prioritizing accuracy over rushing it out.

Q There's one wonky bit of this, though, and it's the subject of lawsuits -- differential privacy, where the idea of using essentially funky math to sort out some of this. Have you been briefed on that? And do you think that was a good idea at this point to have done it that way? Would you just recommend doing it that way in the future?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, in this regard, I have to rely on the experts. The experts at the Census Bureau are top-notch -- career, top-notch statisticians and demographers.

Here's the reality: That -- what you're referring to is a statistical technique that is intended to protect people's privacy. It's the first time we've used it.

Today, the way quantum computing and computing is such that we -- there can be privacy hacks today that weren't technologically available 10 years ago. So in order for us to keep up with that and protect people's privacy, we have to implement new techniques, and this is one of those new techniques. So, yes, I think it's justified.

MS. PSAKI: Cecilia, you're going to be the last one.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: But we'll invite her back. We'll invite her back.

Q Thanks, Madam Secretary. Two quick ones on infrastructure for you. A friend of this White House, Senator Chris Coons, said today that he thinks it's more likely that Democrats ultimately will end up with a less robust -- this is his words -- infrastructure package. He says it's -- could end up looking one that's -- like one that's more directly targeted at what he's calling "hard infrastructure." Is that an accurate prediction to you at this stage?

And then, my second question -- I'll just tack it on here: The President -- you're one of the five Cabinet secretaries that President Biden tapped to, kind of, go out and sell this -- his words -- to engage the public. What has that entailed at this point, specifically as it relates to getting these Republicans on board with this plan?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Talking to them. You know, sitting down, listening, engaging them. As I said before, we have put forth a bold proposal and a reasonable way to pay for it. There are other ideas.

So what I'm going to do -- and all the Cabinet is doing and the White House -- is sitting down with our Republican friends and Democrats and business leaders and saying, "Okay, if you don't like this, what's your idea? How do you think we ought to pay for it?" If we -- you know, "We are proposing paying for it over 15 years. What do you think?"

So I think, again, it's all about finding that compromise and actually delivering for the American people. So that -- anyway, I think broad engagement.

Q How many Republicans have you had face-to-face conversations with?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: If you include Zoom as face-to-face --

Q Yes.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: -- I would say very many. Only a few actually face-to-face, but a lot. You know, a lot. And I plan to do even more of it. Like, we're serious about this. We want to get this done. There's a lot of different ways to do it. The President does what a leader does: puts forth his ideas. Now let's get to work. Let's talk about it. Where do we tweak it? Where do we change it?

With respect to Senator Coons, I am not going to disagree with his assessment because he's been up here longer than my four weeks. But, look, I think it's early to say. The President put his plan out a week ago. Let's give it a shot; let's go big.

I can tell you this: Every single business leader I've talked to applauds the fact that this package is more than just roads, bridges, and water. Like, come on, 35 percent of Americans in rural areas don't have broadband. You cannot have a modern economy without that. We have a crisis in semiconductor manufacturing. You cannot have a modern economy without that.

So I hope that that isn't where we settle because we'd be shortchanging the American people -- workers and businesses.

Q Could you take one more?

MS. PSAKI: All right, Jeff. You're so convincing.

Q Thank you. Secretary, just to follow up on Alex's question about TikTok: Can you just clarify what your position is on whether TikTok needs to be sold by the Chinese company ByteDance that owns it now? And can you also give us a broad view of your advice to President Biden on tariffs with regard to China?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, I would say -- here's my broad view, and I don't want to get into details on any particular company. My broad view is: What we do on offense is more important than what we do on defense.

To compete in the long run with China, we need to rebuild America in all of the ways we're talking about today -- and, by the way, do that with our allies. You know, we have to work with our allies and find common ground where we can.

With respect to tariffs, there is a place for tariffs. You know the 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum have, in fact, helped save American jobs in the steel and aluminum industries. So what do we do with tariffs? We have to level the playing field. No one can outcompete the American worker if the playing field is leveled.

And the fact is China has -- China's actions are uncompetitive, coercive, underhanded. They've proven they'll do whatever it takes.

And so I plan to use all the tools in my toolbox, as aggressively as possible, to protect American workers and businesses from unfair Chinese practices.

MS. PSAKI: Yamiche, I don't want to leave you hanging. And you were the last one hanging. At the risk, Yamiche.

Q No, this is great. (Laughter.) Thank you, Madam Secretary.

MS. PSAKI: Hopefully the Secretary will come back after this, but go ahead.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: It depends what she asks. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q Right. (Laughs.) Now it's a lot of pressure. But thank you for taking my question, Madam Secretary.

What do you say to a business owner who's looking at the U.S. and wondering, "Why should I start a company here when I could possibly do so in another country more cheaply?" How do we stay competitive, as the United States, for that business owner's company?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, I'd say a few things. One, you cannot get better than American workers, American ingenuity, American innovation. Two, this Jobs Plan will enhance American competitiveness. You know, I know from being governor, businesses want to locate in communities with good infrastructure, good public transportation, clean water, excellent public schools. That's where businesses want to be. That's where their employees want to work.

So, if we pass this package, it will massively -- businesses will want to be here -- will want to be here more than they do now.

Also, the whole point of the tax reform as proposed by the administration is to get rid of the loopholes, level the playing field between big businesses and small businesses. I don't know any small businesses in Rhode Island who are shielding their profits in tax havens around the world. Like, it'll level the playing field, raise more money, and allow us to invest in job creating, infrastructure, and job training.

So, as a former business owner and as a former governor who recruited businesses, I think it's a winner for business.

Q Is there an alternative other than the 28 percent? It sounds like it's a little open.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yes.

Q What else could the White House come up with to pay for the infrastructure bill?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Let's have the discussion. Let us have the discussion. We put a plan out. Tell us what you think is an alternative, reasonable plan. But I would say: Don't shortchange America. Don't come back and say we only need a half a billion dollars of infrastructure, because we don't; because if we do that, we'll be in the same place or a worse place 10 years from now.

So, yes, we're wide open -- reasonable people can disagree; we'll find compromise. But let's go big, and let's do what's required.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Thank you so much for joining us.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you. Bye. I can't believe that you do this every day. (Laughter.) I always wanted to know.

Q You don't. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: You're here, right? Lots of questions about COVID and Iraq

MS. PSAKI: You're here, right. Lots of questions about COVID and Iran.

A couple of other items for you all at the top. A new survey, just yesterday, from Invest in America and Data for Progress found that 73 percent of voters backed the American Jobs Plan. That includes the support of 57 percent of Republican voters. Dig into -- digging into the numbers shows just how broad the support is: 68 percent of independents, 64 percent of Republicans back the President's proposed investment in the care economy -- something the Secretary just talked about quite a bit. And all of the investments the survey looked at -- from roads and bridges, to housing, clean energy, and manufacturing -- have the support of over 60 percent of voters and a majority of independents.

The evidence is unanimous that the American people support the President's vision of rebuilding our economy and his plan to pay for it by asking big corporations to pay their fair share.

A Morning Consult poll, just last week, showed that 2-to-1 registered voters back a hypothetical \$3 trillion infrastructure package. And an earlier Data for Progress poll showed that by a 35 percent margin, voters want to pay for this plan by asking the wealthy and big corporations to pay their fair share.

Another update: Today, we can proudly say that in addition to the 150 million shots in arms, we have successfully sent over 150 million relief checks to the American people. The fourth batch of the American -- of the economic impact payments from the American Rescue Plan totals more than 25 million payments, which brings the total dispersed so far to more than 156 million payments, totaling \$372 billion since the plan was signed into law less than a month ago.

The largest block of these latest payments went to Social Security beneficiaries who didn't file a 2020 or 2019 tax return and didn't use the non-filers tool last year, which is consistent with our, you know, view that it would be more challenging -- the easiest would be those who had information that the IRS had, and it would become more challenging. So this is a more challenging group, but this is certainly good news.

Within two weeks of the American Rescue Plan becoming law, the IRS and Treasury had started dispersing 170 million payments. At a similar point during the first round of economic impact payments authorized a year ago, the first payments had yet to be completed. So just to give you a point of comparison.

It's also important to note -- and I know there's been some coverage of this -- the IRS has consistently underfunded -- has been consistently underfunded with 20,000 fewer staff available to help Americans. That's over the last 10 years -- 20,000 fewer. And our commitment is also to working on this problem and hiring more personnel at the IRS.

The President's Rescue Plan secured an additional \$1.5 billion to help the IRS get checks out -- out checks and modernize. And we are pleased that, since the beginning of this administration, the inherited backlog of 2019 returns has been cut in half.

One other update -- two others, sorry. "Good news you can use" -- I'll put it in that category. Health and Human Services Secretary Becerra announced that more than 500,000 Americans have already signed up for coverage on Healthcare.gov since the beginning of the Special Enrollment Period. Nearly 15 million Americans who currently lack health insurance and many current enrollees are eligible. An average of four out of five consumers currently enrolled in Marketplace coverage can now find a plan for \$10 or less a month after the tax credits.

Finally, the First Lady announced earlier today -- was joined by -- virtually by U.S. military families, advocates, and stakeholders from around the world, as she set forth the priorities of Joining Forces. She spent the last few months hearing directly from military families, caregivers, survivors, and visiting military installations across the country.

The mission of Joining Forces is to support those who also serve. The work and priorities of Joining Forces will center on the needs of military families in the areas of employment and entrepreneurship, military child education, and health and wellbeing. It was important that she relaunch this initiative within the first 100 days.

With that, Zobe

with that, Zeke.

Q Thanks, Jen. A couple foreign policy ones to get started. First, there was some confusion yesterday about the U.S. policy with regard to the Beijing Olympics next year. Is it the U.S. policy now that American athletes will participate in those Olympics? And is the U.S. government going to encourage American spectators to travel to China to view those games?

MS. PSAKI: Well, these are the Winter Olympics of next winter, I should say. So some time away, as it relates to the second part of your question. And certainly our hope is that we are at a point where enough people across the country -- and hopefully around the world -- have been vaccinated. But we will rely on health and medical experts on that particular piece.

Our position on the 2022 Olympics has not changed. We have not discussed and are not discussing any joint boycott with allies and partners. We, of course, consult closely with allies and partners at all levels to define our common concerns and establish a shared approach, but there's no discussion underway of a change in our plans regarding the Beijing Olympics from the United States' point of view.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions on timelines: One, with regards to the ongoing talks in Geneva right now regarding the JCPOA. What is the time -- timetable for bringing Iran back into compliance in terms of the breakout time for the (inaudible) potential of nuclear weapon?

MS. PSAKI: The timeline for getting them back at the table for direct --

Q Yeah. What is the ultimate timeline in terms of getting them back to the table? Not the timeline for this specific round of talks, but longer-term timetable to get them back into compliance.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, first, I would say, you know, the talks are continuing today in Vienna. It's only the second day of talks.

You may have seen a tweet from one of the European officials attending who called this -- said, "There's unity and ambition," and that was their description of the conversations.

This is just a constructive early step. We're at the early part of the process here. The primary issues, as you know, that will be discussed are both steps that would need to be taken for Iran to come back into compliance and the sanctions relief steps that the United States would need to take.

But we expect this to be -- these conversations to be difficult. We expect this to be a long process. And we're very much at just the beginning period.

Q There is time, from the U.S. perspective, for these talks to continue. Is that months? Is that years? What's -- you know, what are we ta- -- what scale are we looking at?

MS. PSAKI: I can't put a timeline on it, Zeke. We do feel, of course, that diplomacy is the right way to approach this -- this -- these challenge -- this challenge; that doing that in coordination and close cooperation with our partners is also exactly the right approach. That's what we're doing and what we're focused on now.

It is a good sign and a good step that we are engaged in, even though these conversations are not direct at this point in time. But, again, we're at the beginning of the process. I expect they may have more to read out once they complete this round of talks.

Q And a second timetable question. We heard the President talk a lot about when Americans will be eligible to get vaccinated. What is the President's timetable by which point all Americans should have already been vaccinated? Is it -- what is his goal his deadline for Americans to actually get the shot in arms?

what is his goal, his deadline for Americans to actually get the shot in arms.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a role that the federal government can play -- led by the President, of course -- increasing the number of vaccine supply we have. He's done his job in that regard. We're going to have enough vaccine to vaccinate -- more than enough, I should say -- every adult American by the end of May.

He has increased and invested in the number of people we have as vaccinators, increased the number of vaccination sites around the country, more than doubling the number of pharmacies, investing in mass vaccination sites, investing in community health centers.

It is now incumbent upon the American people to do their job and continue to mask up, get the vaccine when they're eligible.

We, of course, just launched a massive public campaign that is both paid media as well as investment in community organizations, but I can't make predictions for you here. That is going to be determined in large part by the American public.

Q And so is the President's timetable of July 4th activities, gatherings in the backyard, independent from the rate of vaccination of the American public?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what you were asking me is when he expects -- if I heard the question correctly -- the vast majority of the American public to be vaccinated. And what I'm conveying to you is that there's a role for the government to play -- many roles for the government to play.

We are moving forward on all of those fronts. But there is also a role for the American people to play, and that question will be answered in part by whether people get the vaccine when they are eligible.

As it relates to July 4th barbecues, I mean, you can see the numbers that are reported regularly on vaccinations, the percentage of the public that's vaccinated, where we've seen success in different communities; those are all numbers that are reported.

What he's talking about is the ability to have a barbecue in your backyard with other people who have been vaccinated. That is not mass gatherings. That's not the same as having the entire public vaccinated.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Jen, can you confirm the Biden administration plans to restart aid to the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: I expect the State Department is going to have more specifics on this later this afternoon or right about now, so I will leave it to them to lay out the details for you.

Q Okay. We talked a little bit about taxes with the Secretary.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Amazon said yesterday that it supports an increase in corporate taxes, which was interesting because the President had singled Amazon out specifically. Has the White House reached out to Amazon and/or has it reached out to other companies in corporate America to try and boost support for this plan?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have certainly reached out to a range of groups -- obviously, elected officials; large businesses; small businesses; rural and agricultural stakeholders; climate groups; local chambers of commerce; faith leaders; Black, Latino and AAPI leaders; community college groups; and more. We've done a lot of calls -- a lot of Zooms around here and across the administration.

It s my understanding Amazon did join a call with 20 other groups, carriers, and businesses as part of our outreach to a range of companies of many sizes across the country about what was being proposed and about the specifics of our proposal to pay for it.

Q Okay. Last one, which is a little wonky.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q A South Korea company called SK Innovation is threatening to pull its construction of a battery plant in Georgia over a trade dispute -- if you re familiar with that. The President has an April 11th deadline to intervene, and I m curious if he plans to.

MS. PSAKI: I will probably have to take that question and talk to experts. I love wonky questions, but I will talk to the people who know more about it than I do.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Reports popped just before the briefing started that the President is going to announce a series of executive actions on guns tomorrow. Can you confirm that? And anything that you can preview?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have anything to preview. I can convey that I expect the President will have more to say tomorrow.

Q Okay. And will it involve those ghost guns -- potential extended background checks on ghost guns?

MS. PSAKI: I m just not going to preview more from here. I expect we ll have more -- we will probably do a background briefing call for all of you later today.

Q Okay. Just a follow-up on something Secretary Raimondo said. She was very clear that there is room to compromise on increasing the corporate tax rate to 28 percent. As you know, Senator Manchin is saying he wants it to be as low as 25 percent. Is there a scenario where the President would go that low?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, here s -- here are our principles: Debate is inevitable, compromise is inevitable, changes are certain, and our main bottom line is inaction is not an option.

And so we see it as a positive that Senator Manchin, that others -- Republican members, other Democrats -- have come forward and said, "I like these pieces. I like a different -- I propose a different component on the tax piece." We re happy to have that discussion.

And what we are seeing, though, is broad agreement about the need to invest in and modernize our infrastructure.

Q Could you get everything you wanted in the bill at 25 percent?

MS. PSAKI: Well, just like any discussion or negotiation, there s lots of factors. It s like a Rubik s Cube; I don t know if that s the right analogy. But if you are proposing a lower tax rate, then you have to make some decisions.

Q What would you compromise on that? What would you be willing to cut?

MS. PSAKI: We re going to have -- we re going to have those discussions with members of Congress. Expect the President will welcome members of both parties here when they return next week, and he ll have those discussions with them. We re having them with committee staffers, with staffers on the Hill, to see what the push and pull can be.

Where there is agreement, let's start there. Where there are alternative ideas, additional ideas -- remember some -- some members are proposing to make the package smaller. Some are proposing to make it larger. That's all a part of the discussion.

Q And you said yesterday, Jen, "The President continues to believe... that there is a bipartisan path forward." Is that realistic given the backlash that you've seen so far from Republicans? And if the President can't win over any Republicans, is he staying true to that promise of ushering in a spirit of bipartisanship?

MS. PSAKI: Well here's how the President sees it: Democrats and Republicans will have ideas about what they like or don't like about the plan. That's a good thing. That's democracy in action. That's the American way.

Our view -- his view is we don't just fix what is broken today, we build for tomorrow. And his idea of infrastructure is evolving -- is that it should evolve to address the needs of the American people. We believe there is a fair amount of opportunity for agreement -- that we are open to compromise, we welcome the debate, and we'll look forward to having those conversations when members return.

Q But you would pass it along party lines if you needed to?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we're quite there yet. The President believes there is an opportunity to work with Democrats and Republicans -- that there is agreement on the need to modernize our infrastructure, there is agreement that we need to do more to compete with China. Let's start with areas where we agree and have a discussion from there.

Go ahead.

Q Two things. And thanks for confirming the timing on guns specifically. First, in a COVID-related matter, there are reports that during the transition, the incoming administration received a June 2022 report from Trump officials concluding that Emergent BioSolutions -- that plant in Baltimore than spoiled some J&J vaccine doses -- had oversight and quality assurance issues. Is that accurate? And if you guys had this report before taking office, why were steps not taken sooner regarding that facility?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first let me say that the facility is not approved by the FDA. That's, in fact, the process working, in that the FDA is taking a look at whether any manufacturing facility meets the standards that would be required to produce and put out doses that will go into the arms of the American people. There are not a broad swath of options for manufacturing facilities across the country.

So HHS and others can give you more specifics of what the options are that are available, but our focus is on getting vaccines produced, distributed, in the arms of the American people, and to relying on the process that is in place by the United States government.

We have one of the most stringent set of review processes in the world. So, in our view, this is the process working. We remain on track to have the number of doses -- enough doses to vaccinate the entire -- all adult Americans by the end of May. This has not impacted that.

Q I don't hear you though confirming or denying that report?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specifics of the receipt of a report. But, again, it was -- it's still not approved by the FDA -- the manufacturing facility and the site.

Q And then, Amnesty International says that Aleksey Navalny is being incarcerated in conditions that amount to torture and may be slowly killing him. Is there any reaction from here regarding that?

Also, you said on February 23rd -- I think you said it a few times since -- that it would "be weeks, not months" before the

Biden administration responded to the SolarWinds hack, and other Russian misconduct. I also recall you telling us some of it would be seen, some of it would not.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Any updates on all that?

MS. PSAKI: "Weeks" -- there's lots of ways to define it. It's still weeks.

Q There are lots of ways (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: It is still -- it is still weeks, not months away. I don't have an update on the exact timeline.

I will say, on the reports you referenced of Mr. Navalny, we are disturbed by reports that Mr. Navalny's health is worsening, that he is on a hunger strike to demand -- demand access to outside medical care. We urge Russian authorities to take all necessary actions to ensure his safety and health. So long as he is in prison, the Russian government is responsible for his health and wellbeing. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

I would also reiterate that we consider Mr. Navalny's imprisonment on trumped-up charges to be politically motivated and a gross injustice. And we stand with like-minded allies and partners in calling for his immediate release, as well as an end to the persecution of his supporters.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Quick one on Senator Coons's comments from this morning. He also said today that if it's clear by Memorial Day that Republicans aren't willing to get on board with this, that, at that point, Democrats perhaps just roll this into a big package and move on.

So, is that the timeline for this White House as well? That Memorial Day is the decision -- the deadline to sort of make this decision to fish or cut bait?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not here to set a new deadline from here. We would like to see progress by Memorial Day. We would like to see the bill passed this summer, in order to get this -- these vital investments out into our economy and out into, you know, rebuilding our infrastructure across the country.

I will note that there are a range of points of view, as I said in response to Kristen's question. Some feel this package should be smaller, some are calling for a larger package, some believe that it should be paid for in different ways.

Senator Coons is one of -- one of those individuals who will certainly have a role to play in having these discussions, but it's important that we allow the process to play itself out, have those ideas put forward, have debates, have those discussions, and we'll see where we go from there.

Q I have a couple of questions on immigration, if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is the administration considering restarting some construction on the border wall to plug in holes in gaps of areas where the construction -- construction stopped after the President took office?

MS. PSAKI: Well, wall construction remains paused. There is a review in underway taking a look at the funds that had been allocated.

When the administration took office, as you know -- but funds had been diverted from military construction projects and other purposes toward building the wall. That was not something we, of course, supported. There are some components of the wall that had already been allocated -- the funding to continue building by Congress. So we're working within what is allowable.

But our focus is not -- we don't believe the wall is an answer. We have never believed the wall as an answer to addressing the challenges -- immigration challenges at the border. That's why we're proposing an investment in smart -- investments in smart security at the border, why we're driving 20 -- what we see as 21st century solutions for border management, and why we believe we should build a functioning immigration system.

There's a review underway of, kind of, where this funding had been allocated and not, but it's currently paused and -- for the most part.

Q But the President had said he wouldn't build one more foot of the wall, but you're saying some monies could still be used to fill in the gaps on construction on the wall?

MS. PSAKI: No, I'm saying that some had been allocated already, previously. We're working within what our limitations are by law. But we believe -- we -- we have never believed that putting -- building more of a wall -- the President doesn't believe -- is a way to address our immigration challenges at the border.

Q Okay. And then a quick clarification on Special Envoy to the Northern Triangle Ricardo Zuñiga, who is in Guatemala right -- was there yesterday talking about this. He said, "The White House is looking to create legal ways for Central American migrants to reach the... U.S." Is that what -- could you explain more on, if you know, what he was talking about? Is that what President Biden has said -- has talked about allowing folks to apply for asylum in their home countries? Or is -- are there other options being considered?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the -- more immediately, we've reinstated the Central American Minors Program, which I would -- I would think he is likely referring to -- which, when it was stopped in 2017, there were about 3,000 kids who could have applied. I don't have an updated number on how many might be eligible now. That's one piece: so that kids can apply from country and won't take the treacherous journey.

But we also believe that there needs to be reforms to the whole process: Make it more efficient, more effective, in terms -- when families, when children come to the border. That's part of what we want to discuss [sic] -- discuss through legislation. So he could have also been referring more broadly to the longer-term changes that need to take place.

But more immediately, there, of course, is the Central American Minors Program.

Go ahead, Mario.

Q Thanks, Jen. The UK variant of the virus is now the most common in the U.S. We're seeing things like outbreaks in high school sports. Does the White House consider that to be more dangerous for schools and kids? And also, what does that mean for the goal of reopening schools?

MS. PSAKI: Well, in terms of the impact of the variant, I would refer to our health and medical experts to give their assessment of that.

We remain focused on and committed to our objective of reopening schools five days a week and having kids in school, learning. We believe that the mitigation steps that have been put out by the CDC give a good guideline for doing exactly that.

There was actually some data that was put out that is a little outdated, as these things sometimes go -- because it's more from February -- that showed that we are close to, even at the end of February, reaching [sic] -- reaching that mark of 50

percent of schools open five days a week.

Q And then, kind of similar to that, we're seeing people, who work in the retail industry, increasingly afraid for their lives, their health and safety, as customers refuse to mask up. What's the White House looking to do to protect them? Are you looking at revisiting, you know, legal authority for a national mask mandate? I mean, what's, kind of, in the toolbox there to help these workers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say one of the steps we can take from the federal government is ensuring there is vaccine supply available across the country to ensure Americans are vaccinated; that these individual workers, that these employees in these businesses, in stores, every one of them will be eligible on April 19th to get a vaccine. That is, they will get -- be able to get in line at that point in time. That provides clarity and hopefully it provides some certainty on their own safety.

We also, of course, work with businesses and convey directly to businesses, just as we do to leaders across the country, about the importance of abiding by public health guidelines, and whether that is ensuring that masking up, hand washing, are seen -- are used as models in these locations. You know, these are also entities and businesses that we're in touch with around the country as well.

Go ahead, Ayesha. This is your first time in the briefing room -- right? --

Q This is my first time.

MS. PSAKI: -- since the Biden administration.

Q Yes, since the Biden administration.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Yes.

Q And it's my wedding anniversary, so it's (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Oh, happy anniversary. (Laughter.) And here you are with us. (Laughter.)

Q And here I am with you guys.

MS. PSAKI: Ed brought you a cake. That was so nice of Ed.

Q I know you'll allow me a lot of questions (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Q So, starting off on the issue of North Korea: Think tanks like Beyond Parallel and other North Korea watchers have observed yesterday that North Korea moved a submersible missile test stand barge. And along with that, there has been activity at other sites, related to weapons, in North Korea. Is the administration concerned that North Korea may be ramping up for more testing, more provocative actions? And if so, what would be the response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I've seen those reports. I would send you to the Department of Defense. I'm just not going to be able to get into more details from here.

Q Is there -- with sanctions already in place -- very heavy sanctions already in place on North Korea -- is the U.S. limited in how it could respond to potential provocations from North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: You know, again, I would send you to the Department of Defense for that if you're asking about specifically

military action or military considerations.

I would say, broadly speaking, we have a clear objective as it relates to North Korea, which is denuclearizing the North Korean Peninsula -- the Korean Peninsula, I should say. We're, of course, continuing to enforce sanctions. We're consulting with allies and partners. We are prepared to consider some form of diplomacy if it's going to lead us down the path toward denuclearization.

So that is broadly how we view. There's also a review that's underway within the administration. But on the specific reports, there's just not more I'm going to be able to convey from here.

Q On a separate issue, President Biden, when he was a candidate, pledged that within the first 100 days, there would be a commission on policing oversight set up. I know that we still have some more time in the first 100 days, but what is the status of that? And, you know, where do things stand with that commission?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on the commission, but I would convey to you that from our consultation with Congress, with the groups, our focus right now is on the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. We believe we must continue to press ahead to pass meaningful police reform.

The President would love to sign a piece of legislation; would love to have it on his desk. We're encouraged by some of the engagement we've seen -- pleasantly surprised in some cases with -- in the Senate. And that is where we feel we can have the most impact at this point in time.

Q So is the commission still on the table, or is that something that is not being thought of right now?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have an update on it. But we are focused on working with members, with advocates on many sides of this debate on how to move things forward, and we feel the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is the most constructive, effective, impactful way to do that.

Q And just really quickly, the President is talking more openly about sharing vaccines with the rest of the world. Why is that? And how soon does he think that the U.S. will be at a point where he feels confident sharing more of the vaccines -- vaccine doses with the rest of the world?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that our focus remains -- his focus remains on ensuring that adult Americans are vaccinated. We also plan for contingencies, including the fact that there's ongoing research. We've seen some reporting, of course, on which vaccine is most effective with children. As we've seen in the rece- -- even in recent weeks, things happen and we have to plan for contingencies as well.

But when we are confident about our supply, about our ability to provide for the American public, the President is absolutely committed to playing a constructive role in being a part of the global community's efforts to get the pandemic under control. That includes through COVAX. It also can -- it could include direct conversations with countries. You've seen we've already lent doses to Canada and Mexico.

So we remain committed to that. I can't give you an additional timeline at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Back to immigration and particularly the Northern Triangle. The Vice President's assignment to try to, you know, address the root causes of migration, what -- how do you get a measure of success?

MS. PSAKI: How do we measure success?

Q On that issue, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that we know that addressing the root causes means working with these countries to help create a collaborative and a cooperative approach to addressing what the circumstances are on the ground, whether that is economic challenges, a response to challenges related to hurricanes that have impacted a lot of these communities.

And what we're trying to do is work with them to determine how we can get to these root causes to reduce -- to disincentivize travel from the region.

Q But, I mean, will you have a numerical measure, any kind of tangible measure of success, benchmarks, that sort of thing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think as everybody who's followed this for some time knows, this is about addressing these causes over the long term. Unless we address root causes in these countries, we are going to see the same cycle of rushes to the border year after year, as we have seen in 2014, in 2018, in 2019.

So we're going to look to how we can work with these countries through diplomatic means. The President has also proposed \$4 billion in assistance and aid through his immigration package. And, of course, the Vice President and our diplomats will be engaged with these countries to determine how we can best help to prevent these rushes at the border in the future.

Q But there's no benchmark specifically, like, you know, "We curved by X or Y percent over some..." -- a timeline period?

MS. PSAKI: We're talking about how we address this over the long term and how we reduce the incentives -- incentivize -- disincentivize travel over the long term to the border.

Q And you mentioned the money.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you work with these governments? There's a -- you know, one of the major issues --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- is a lack of rule of law and corruption.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, you're absolutely right. And the President has talked about this as well, and the need to sometimes work with organizations, work with local groups, find ways to avoid getting the funding in the hands, in some scenarios, of corrupt governments. And that will certainly be part of our approach.

Go ahead. Yeah, go ahead. Yeah, go ahead.

Q Depending on what poll you look at, about half of Republican men say they won't be getting the vaccine. Experts say that a major reason that any group would be hesitant -- vaccine hesitant would be because of trust. I think it's probably fair to say that President Biden and the administration has a long way to get this, kind of -- this group to trust him.

Two questions: What has the administration's research found about why this group is so entrenched in vaccine hesitancy? There's a lot of talk about Black and brown people. We found that that's not exactly true; they're not more hesitant than anyone else.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And outside of the "We Can Do This" campaign, how does the administration plan to reach this group?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we recognize that the President, that all of us may not be exactly the right messengers for some of these audiences. And what we've actually seen through our data and research is that it's not always famous people -- and often not famous people -- like the President or athletes or former elected officials who are going to reach any group who are hesitant or have concerns about the vaccine -- hesitancy or safety.

So this is the reason why a big part of our funding and our approach to our public campaign is actually for local groups and organizations. Some of those may be civic groups, some are clergy -- there's a role that clergy and different faith groups and organizations can certainly play -- and some of these are just simply local doctors and medical experts who are more trusted voices in different communities.

So what we're working to do is empower local sources, empower local authorities, medical experts, civic leaders, clergy, in some cases, to be the communicators about the effectiveness and the efficacy of the vaccine.

I will say one of the things that is sometimes not understood, or people don't see in the data but we've seen in the data, is that the issue -- we've seen a reduction in hesitancy as it's defined. And you referenced Black and brown communities -- certainly a reduction in hesitancy.

The issue is now access. This is true in whether you're talking about conservative white people or you're talking about communities of color. It's now at the point where people are saying, "Look, I -- I'm confident in -- or I feel comfortable in taking the vaccine." In many cases, "I can't take a day off of work." "I don't know where to go." "I don't know what health center to go to to get the vaccine."

So we're looking at that, and our focus is on addressing the access issue -- mobile clinics -- making it easier and more accessible to get the vaccine.

Q And you've also said the President is being updated on the trial of Derek Chauvin. We're probably weeks away from a verdict. But regardless of the outcome of the trial, does the President plan to address the country upon its conclusion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would never -- and not that you're asking me this, but we would never, of course, prejudge the outcome. The President has spoken about the death of George Floyd, the impact on him personally, quite a bit over the course of the last year. It certainly impacted his own -- redoubled his commitment to addressing racial injustice in the country and throughout the government.

I certainly would expect we'd have a statement, but I'm not going to get ahead of what the outcome may be or the timeline. We just don't have insight into that.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I'd like to pick up the line of questioning on immigration and the border --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- and ask you two rather quick follow-up questions about some other topics.

MS. PSAKI: You always like "yes" or "no" questions. I don't know if they're "yes" or "no."

Q Well, I'm --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Answer as you will.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q So on immigration and the border, as we discussed here today, Vice President Harris has been put in charge of addressing the root causes of the border crisis. Last Tuesday, she spoke with Guatemala's president, but she hasn't visited the border or Central America or spoken to the leaders of El Salvador or Honduras.

She was traveling this week. Took time to visit a bakery in Chicago. I'm wondering, is she still working on this? And can you address the perception that she's, kind of, quietly backing off while Secretary Mayorkas is pursuing some Trump-era policies, such as potentially building new border barriers and potentially prosecuting people who illegally cross multiple times?

MS. PSAKI: There was a whole lot packed in there, so let me just see what I can do here.

First, I would say the Vice President was visiting Chicago actually to talk about COVID and the importance of communities getting the vaccine when it's available and accessible to them. And so, while she was there, like many Americans, she got a snack. I think she's allowed to do that.

But she was there to talk about COVID and play a role -- as she's playing a significant role on our efforts to address vaccine hesitancy, communicate with the public about how we can do this, and it's -- it's imperative to get the vaccine once available.

Second, I would say that yesterday -- and this was actually a statement put out by her team -- USAID announced the deployment of a DART team -- we only have these in a couple of places in the world, so this is fairly significant -- to respond to urgent humanitarian needs in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. This is meant to help address the immediate humanitarian needs, whether it's drought, food insecurity, ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. And this is in communities that are still recovering. So that is actually an announcement made by the Vice President's team earlier today.

This is absolutely an issue that she is -- remains committed to, is in the lead on. The Northern Triangle, which I'm sure you're aware of, but is not the same as the border. They're all related to each other, but addressing the North -- being responsible in the lead on the Northern Triangle is working with these countries in the region, addressing the root causes, working with them on how we can address issues like long-term food insecurity, drought, the COVID-19 pandemic, hurricanes, et cetera. That's what she's focused on.

I don't have an update on when she'll travel. I'm sure it will be soon.

Q But she's still working on this issue very much?

MS. PSAKI: Well, they wouldn't be putting out a statement this morning if she wasn't, would they?

Q And my two other questions -- I'd like to circle back to something that a colleague asked in this room a few weeks ago.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q They asked about a request by about three dozen Democrats in Congress for President Biden to relinquish unilateral nuclear launch authority. I believe, at the time, you weren't aware of that request, and I was wondering if you've been able to get an answer from the President on that.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you on that.

Q And my third question, if I could.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q According to a report yesterday in Axios, we may soon have a prominent transgender gubernatorial candidate. It would be a Republican, Caitlyn Jenner, in California. And I'm not asking --

MS. PSAKI: Are you announcing her run?

Q No, no. I'm just announcing an Axios report.

MS. PSAKI: Are you working for her?

Q I am not.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q I'm not. But -- and I'm not asking you to endorse anyone, but I was wondering if the White House welcomes this appearance, a LGBT milestone.

MS. PSAKI: We certainly would welcome the freedom of any -- any human being participating in the democratic process to run for office, of course, and including, of course, transgender members of our society.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. I just want to ask if the budget rollout is still going to happen this week. And secondly, is it accurate that debate or discussion about defense spending is what's holding it up?

MS. PSAKI: That is not accurate. We know you all are eager to have the discretionary guidance, and it certainly will give some insight into the President's priorities and the priorities of this administration. We hope to have that out very soon this week, but I don't have an exact date for you quite yet.

Q It sounds like it could possibly slip into next week. Is that -- is that (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're hopeful it will be out this week.

Q And then, just to follow up on the Olympics issue: Understanding what you said, the U.S. position, however, is still that China has committed genocide.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Doesn't that demand some sort of response or action from the U.S.? And what will the U.S. need to see before it fully participates in the Olympics?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, just to be very clear and reiterate: Our position has not changed in our planned participation. However, we are working, of course, on -- as we would be on any issue, in coordination with our partners and allies about a range of concerns we have with China's behavior and their actions, including the genocide of Uighur Muslims in China, including actions that China has taken as it relates to economic and security steps.

And so that is something we would do in partnership and coordination with our partners in the region. Just like any relationship, there are areas where we feel we can work together; areas where we have great concerns. We voice those. We don't hold back on those as the President did in his call with the President.

Go ahead.

Q There s -- I have a couple questions. The first is, there are some studies that show that Black Americans have half of the vaccination rate of white Americans, and I wonder why the administration is not setting hard numbers with their equity goals. How do you measure success if you don t put actual numbers next to the goals?

MS. PSAKI: I would have to check those numbers. I m not challenging them, I just would have to talk to our COVID team about those. As you know, equity is central to what we do -- COVID and addressing the pandemic. And ensuring we are taking steps to address getting the vaccine out to communities around the country is central to our focus.

We are constantly monitoring where the vaccine doses are going and that they re equitably distributed. That s something - - every vaccine is marked in boxes. It s -- we saw this at Pfizer. It s very cool actually. We monitor that closely.

We monitor the uptick in outbreak and COVID rates in communities and see how it s being -- how it s impacting different communities. We work directly with governors to help address where there are upticks in communities and where we see there are communities that are not getting ready access to the vaccine.

And we ve actually adjusted, in some cases, our approach and our strategy. That s why we ve increased our investment in community health centers massively over the course of the last several weeks; why we ve increased our investment in mobile clinics. Because one of the issues we re seeing is access. Right? Access and the ability to -- many people can t take a day off of work, especially if they re working in jobs where it doesn t allow for that. We want to bring the vaccine to people as frequently as we can.

So what I would tell you is that we are constantly adapting and adjusting our strategy to areas where we see that we are not effectively addressing distributing the vaccine equitably. That is central to our focus and will continue to be.

Q Just to reiterate, the question was: Why not set hard numbers? There s 100 million for the first 100 days, then 200 million. Why not say, "We want to see 20 percent or 30 percent of Black people, Hispanics..."? Why not put numbers by your equity goals?

MS. PSAKI: I m happy to check with our team. We may have internal goals along those lines, but I would just convey to you that we look at it as our objective is to vaccinate every adult American. That includes, of course, every adult American who is white, Black, brown, Asian American -- and that we look closely at where we are -- where there are communities where there is an uptick, where there are communities --

So I was trying to actually address your question on actually what we re doing about it, which I think is the most important information people might be looking for.

Q And then, related to racial equality, the infrastructure bill has \$400 billion focused on home healthcare aides -- a lot of them are women, women of color. How is that infrastructure? Explain why you see home healthcare workers as part of infrastructure.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, this is essentially a jobs bill. Yes, there s a lot in here that is infrastructure. But as the Secretary just conveyed, our workers, our workforce is part of the backbone and the infrastructure of America s economy and communities.

And if you have home health workers, as you noted, who are predominantly women of color; they are predominantly workers who are paid often \$11 an hour, about, on average -- these are communities and individuals who need greater assistance and need greater help.

In addition, the people who are impacted most by the need for caregiving are women. We see that statistically: About 2 million women have left the workforce as a result of the pandemic.

And so our objective and our focus is on addressing physical infrastructure, the infrastructure that is going to help us

And so, our objective and our focus is on addressing physical infrastructure, the infrastructure that is going to help us compete, including broadband.

I had -- oh, here. This is a broadband map. I love maps. Don't you guys? This shows where there is not great broadband around the country, which I think is so interesting and shows you how much we need to do -- what we need to do to address it.

But if we're going to get women back in the workforce, this is an area where we need to address. And so the President felt it was an important and imperative part of the package. And as the Secretary noted, it's something that many businesses are also welcoming.

Q If I could add two quick questions that are very -- one is a yes-or-no question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q President Biden has indicated that Beau Biden's cancer was likely caused or linked to burn pits. This is a question from our foreign team: Does President Biden and the White House support the bill Senator Gillibrand and Senator Rubio have sponsored related to burn pits?

MS. PSAKI: I'll have to look more specifically at the bill. He has talked about this quite frequently, including when we were in -- I can't remember what state, where he visited the hospital -- I don't remember.

AIDE: Ohio.

MS. PSAKI: Ohio. Thanks. It's like a phone-a-friend. When we were in Ohio, he talked about this as well. But I can check with our legislative team.

Q (Inaudible) if he supports the bill?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't looked more deeply into the specifics of the bill.

Q And then my last question is on immigration. The Family Reunification Task Force, as of now, is saying that it hasn't reunified [sic] -- it hasn't reunited any families because they're still sorting through the system.

I wonder, can you talk a bit about why they haven't been able to reunite families, and what are the concerns and challenges that maybe are even more -- even more pronounced than you would have thought they were going to be?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. First, we can't overstate how complex this challenge is. The prior administration did not have a system in place to track the children and parents who were separated. They also, of course, separated them themselves.

But the task force has been in place, as you know, for about two months. The focus right now, in this period of time, has been reviewing thousands of records, and a significant number of issues have come up in these existing files, including incorrect dates and names.

We're working -- they are working to establish a database of families who were separated and working to find previously unidentified separated families who are eligible to receive benefits through the task force. And they've also identified over 5,600 new files that were not reviewed and have begun the process for reviewing and crosschecking those files.

The task force is also working very closely with the ACLU to process identified families so we can reunite them as swiftly as possible. They'll have a full report; that's due on June 2nd.

Q So you're saying -- but what's the delay in it being so -- what's -- what makes it so hard to reunite families while they're doing that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the biggest challenge is that there's a lot of inaccurate information. There wasn't accurate -- there was not an accurate database. We've seen inaccurate names, inaccurate dates.

Again, we're working very closely with the ACLU, and we're working to move it as quickly as possible.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. You said earlier that the White House recognizes that some of you may not always be the right messenger to some of these individuals who are reluctant to take the President's --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- advice on getting vaccinated.

The President said yesterday there was a category he didn't exactly identify, but he gave Senator McConnell credit for talking to those people. Did the President ask his friend, Senator McConnell, to help him out on trying to make a pitch to those people who are not -- who are reluctant to follow the President's lead on this? And has he asked other Republican pals of his to do the same to help out?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any calls to read out or asks from the President, but I would just reiterate: We certainly do think it's a good step that Senator McConnell conveyed the importance and the efficacy of taking the vaccine.

But also, across the board, all of our data shows that the most effective voices are local doctors, civic leaders, clergy, others who are trusted in communities. And that's really where our primary focus and the President's primary focus is.

So, one in the back.

Q Thank you. Will President Biden appoint a special envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian portfolio? If so, when? And if not, why?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any personnel announcements to make here. Of course, the President believes that the only -- the most -- the only solution is a two-state solution, but I don't have any personnel or specifics to outline for you from here in addition

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q Just real -- one quick thing --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that happened here while we were sitting here. I don't know if you guys have this yet or not, that -- apparently, the President called King Abdullah of Jordan.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Can you -- have we -- have you guys confirmed that yet or no?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's been happening -- it sounds like -- as we've -- here. We'll have a robust readout, and we'll get that out to all of you guys.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thanks. Jen, has the President seen the video of the boy who came here from Nicaragua, abandoned, alone, crying to Border Patrol agents? If so, what was his response?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any response from the President directly. What I can convey is: For any of us who have seen that video, it is heartbreaking. It's a reminder of how treacherous the journey is. And it is a reminder of how important and imperative it is that we put in place reforms to our immigration system; that we convey clearly how dangerous this journey is; and that we take steps -- like the Central American Minors Program -- to make it possible to apply from within the country.

Q And given what's happening at the border, why hasn't the President -- why hasn't the Vice President visited yet?

MS. PSAKI: Visited the border?

Q The border, yes.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any trips to outline or preview. What our focus is on is solutions -- and ensuring we have more beds, we're making the processing more efficient and effective, and that we are addressing this in a humane way that keeps these kids as safe as we possibly can.

Q Thank you, Jen.

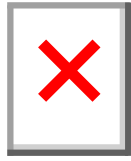
MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

1:36 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 7, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, April 7, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

**See correction below, marked by an asterisk.

12:21 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi. Good afternoon. Okay. Joining us today is another member of the President's Jobs Cabinet, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. As you all know, the Secretary was the first woman to be governor of Rhode Island, where she kick-started the state's economy and achieved a record number of jobs and the lowest unemployment in a generation thanks to investments in infrastructure, education, and job training.

As governor, she prioritized creating jobs, supporting workers, and improving the quality and availability of services in the care economy, including supporting wage increases for care workers.

She also chair -- served as chair of the Democratic Governors Association in 2019. In 2010, she was elected General Treasurer of Rhode Island, receiving the largest number of votes of any statewide candidate. When she took office as General Treasurer, she tackled the state's \$7 billion unfunded pension liability.

The Secretary is focused on a simple but vital mission: to spur good-paying jobs, empower entrepreneurs to innovate and grow, and help American workers and businesses compete.

As always, she can stay for a few questions. I'll be the bad cop. And with that, we'll turn it over to the Secretary.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you, Jen. Good afternoon, everybody.

Q Good afternoon.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Nice to see all of you. And it's an honor for me to be here to talk a little bit about President Biden's American Jobs Plan.

At its core, the American Jobs Plan is about making sure every American has the opportunity to get a decent job. A decent, well-paying job, with dignity and has opportunity.

It's a historic investment in America, intended to create tens of millions of jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position the United States to outcompete China.

Many have commented that it's large, it's bold. It's necessarily large because, frankly, we're behind, and we've neglected for too long important investments in our infrastructure.

We need to ensure that investments in infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, workforce development, and our care economy are made -- are made at the scale we need and are made in every single community in America.

And as the President has -- has led us to -- is leading us to build back better, that means we need to do so more inclusively and ensure that these investments that we are making -- in broadband, in housing, in the care economy, in water -- are in every community in America: rural, tribal, urban, communities of color, and reaching everyone across America.

The fact is, we have failed for a long time to invest. And as a result, we have fallen behind. So why does that matter? It matters because it makes it harder for small businesses to compete. It makes -- it matters because it makes it harder for American companies to compete, and it makes it harder for the average American to get a decent job and to get the skills they need in order to get a high-paying job in the industries that are growing today and tomorrow.

And the fact of the matter is, we know that lack of investment, particularly in public transportation, transit, water, housing, has hurt low-income folks and people of color the most. And it's time to finally rectify that systemic inequality and build back better and more equally.

As Jen said, my job as the Commerce Secretary is to do everything I can to enable American businesses of all sizes to compete. And at its core, the American Jobs Plan is about investing in American competitiveness, strengthening our workforce, rebuilding infrastructure, and leveling the playing field so all Americans have a shot at a good job.

Now, prior to being Commerce Secretary, I was governor for six years. Prior to that, I was in the private sector. And so over the course of my career, as an entrepreneur and as governor, now as Commerce Secretary, I have had many, many, many discussions with businesses, from the biggest to the smallest. And over the years, there is something that we all seem to agree on, which is that we need to make massive investments in our infrastructure if we are going to compete and ensure America's global competitiveness.

And most recently, I have spent a lot of time in the past few weeks talking to business leaders, and I can report to you that there's a broad level of enthusiasm for big investments in infrastructure. And I think there is a recognition that President Biden is doing the right thing in pushing us to conceive of infrastructure as broad, as including investments in STEM, research and development, investments in basic research, investments in broadband, investments in training our workforce. And the truth of it is, that's what it's going to take to compete.

A key component of the American Jobs Plan is training our workforce. This is a reality. The changes in the American economy, many of which have been massively accelerated by COVID, are very scary for millions of Americans. It's a scary place to be to need a job and not have the skills to get a good job.

And so that's why this package calls for big investments in training our workforce. Now, as Jen said, this was a priority of mine when I was governor, and I saw it work. I know it works. We saw it work.

When I ran for governor, my state, Rhode Island -- if you haven't been, I want you to go -- had the highest unemployment rate in the country. Number one in America. It was sad -- very sad. The unemployment rate in the building trades when I took over was over 20 percent. Think about what that does to a community.

When I -- before COVID, after a lot of our work, Rhode Island had more jobs than at any time in our state's history, because we leaned into it in a broad fashion, similar to what this package calls for: investments in infrastructure, working with business, and big investments in work or training.

So, the fact of the matter is, in order to compete, we have to have investments in apprenticeships, community colleges, STEM education, job training.

My view is: If you have the guts, in the middle of your career, to go out and get some job training to retrain yourself to get a new job, then we need to be there for you to provide high-quality, demand-driven, affordable -- if not free -- job training.

The American Jobs Plan also is about strengthening our supply chains, making things in America, making critical goods in America, creating good jobs in the process, and increasing the security that we have, knowing that we aren't overly dependent on other countries for critical supplies. We saw that on full display in COVID. Every governor knows what it's like to be up in the middle of the night -- can't get your hands on PPE or ventilators or medicine because they aren't manufactured in America.

We also need to invest in domestic manufacturing, particularly for critical industries like semiconductors. We all know semiconductors are the building blocks of our future economy. And as we go through the data and digital revolution, semiconductors underpin so much of the new technology where we'll see job creation.

So we've -- we are living through now a global chip shortage. We're seeing that hurt businesses in every sector, and so we need to strengthen our domestic supply chains. The American Jobs Plan calls for a \$50 billion investment in semiconductor manufacturing and research, as it's called for in the bipartisan CHIPS Act.

Finally, we need strong investments in our broadband infrastructure. We've seen more clearly than ever before that high-quality, affordable broadband isn't a luxury, but it's a necessity for education, jobs, and healthcare. But millions and millions of Americans don't have access to broadband, particularly in rural communities.

I finally want to address one last component, which is the investments in the care economy. You might say to yourself, "Why is the Commerce Secretary talking about investments in the care economy?" Because it matters. It is core to our competitiveness. In order for you to be able to go to work, you need to know that your loved one is being taken care of.

And also, we have millions and millions of women, mostly women of color, working full-time, caring for our loved ones, living in poverty. It's time to make those investments so they can have a dignified job and so that we can shore up our communities.

As Jen said, I did a lot of work of this as governor. And it's something that I'm very proud of President Biden and to be on the team of a president who's investing in the care economy.

So, fundamentally, this plan invests in American workers and businesses, small and large alike, so they can compete and win in the global marketplace. And I'm psyched to talk to you about it and proud to be on the team that's going to get this done.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Kristen.

Q Thank you, Jen. Thank you, Secretary Raimondo, for being here. As you know, some Republicans have looked at this plan and said: If you increase the corporate tax rate overall in the long run, jobs could be eliminated. They cite one study, the Tax Foundation, that says that increasing the corporate tax rate will eliminate 159,000 jobs over the next 10 to 30 years. How do you respond to that criticism that in the long run this plan kills jobs?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I don't agree with that assessment. So, a few -- a few points.

First of all, every business leader I talk to, big and small, agrees we must make these investments in infrastructure in order to compete. If we don't invest in semiconductors, we're going to fall further behind. If we don't invest in job training, we're not going to have the workforce that businesses need to compete. So it's essential that we make these investments.

With respect to taxes, there is not a shred of evidence to show that the cuts in 2017 increased growth or productivity. Actually, very little of it went into additional R&D.

So, the fact of the matter is, the corporate structure today is broken. Many, many companies don't pro- -- large profitable companies pay no corporate taxes. So I'd like to think we can all agree that it needs to be improved, level the playing field, close the loopholes, and have a discussion around how we do this together to improve competitiveness.

Q If it is raised to 28 percent, though, that would put the U.S. at one of the highest in the world. Does it have to be 28 percent? Would you go lower? Could you accomplish the same thing if the tax rate weren't raised to 28 percent?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, there is room for compromise; that is clear. The President has said a few things: We have to get this investment done. He's charged us to work across the aisle and in a bipartisan way, and to -- and we need to pay for what we're doing. Like, our proposal is to invest in 8 years and pay it back over 15.

Now, we can have a discussion about that. Should we pay it back over 20 instead of 15? Is the rate not quite 28? Is it something, you know, lower? So we're -- we want to compromise.

What we cannot do, and what I am imploring the business community not to do, is to say, "We don't like 28. We're walking away. We're not discussing." That's unacceptable. Come to the table and problem-solve with us to come up with a reasonable, responsible plan.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Mario.

Q Thank you, Madam Secretary. Two questions for you. On the infrastructure side, how do you target and make sure that those projects help minority communities? I'm thinking of the situation in Jackson, Mississippi, for example; Flint as well.

And then my other question is: How do you make sure that minorities are the beneficiaries of these jobs. Right? There's been a long history of programs that were built to help minorities -- I'm thinking of Opportunity Zones with the last administration -- that didn't ultimately help minorities.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah, really good question. Two things. So, again, the President has been very clear in this; this is about equity in everything we do. And I'm going to -- I can promise you as Commerce Secretary -- like, right now, we have \$3 billion from the rescue package to invest in communities -- I promise you now, equity is front and center. And that's why I was saying we have to get the money everywhere -- rural, tribal, urban -- and prioritizing those who have been left behind.

With respect to the job training -- you know, I can fall on my own experience -- we did a back-to-work Rhode Island job training initiative, and we said we're going to tar- -- we're going to make sure it's equitable. More than half of the people

trained were women; more than 25 percent were people of color. If you commit yourself to it, which is what we will do under the President's leadership, we will make sure to make up for the fact that, as you say, in the past that hasn't been done.

MS. PSAKI: Alex.

Q Thank you. What is the status and direction of the China tech policy review? And more specifically, what about TikTok?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah. So, this -- I'll say quickly: We need to play offense and defense. The jobs package is offense: invest in America competitiveness so we can play offense. A lot of the tools that Commerce has are defense: the entities list, tariffs, et cetera.

So we are -- you know, led by Jake Sullivan and our team interagency review -- we're in the process of doing it now. A lot of people have said, ~~it's probably~~ "[Is Huawei]* going to stay on the Entity List?" I have no reason to believe that they won't, but we're kind of in the middle of the overall review of the China policy.

Q How close is that to being completed?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I would actually defer that more to the White House. But I would say we're -- we're in the thick of it right now. Like we're working as aggressively as we can. We're not wasting time on it.

MS. PSAKI: Zeke.

Q Thank you, Secretary. I was hoping to draw on your experience as governor, with regard to the virus. The White House and the President have been calling on governors across the country not to roll back virus restric- -- virus restrictions, business capacity limitations, and the like. Yet, many, including many Democratic governors, have rolled back those policies steadily, even as cases have risen. You faced some of these struggles as governor. Can you speak to a little bit of what those governors are facing? And how would you advise them to balance their, you know, maybe their pressures at home versus the federal guidance here to keep those restrictions in place?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So it's a tough spot. To be a governor in America today is a challenge, and everyone is, you know, trying hard. I would say, first of all, they are so lucky that President Biden is in office now, after what we went through last year.

Secondly, follow the President's lead around vaccinations. The administration is doing a fantastic job getting vaccinations out the door. And I think that it's a balance. Listen, every governor knows what's going on in their community. And I think we have to respect that. They -- you know, they see what's going on in their community.

Having said that, I would say, you know, the administration -- the Biden administration is focused heavily on vaccinations. It has a fantastic strategy. And I would just encourage governors to lean into that, vaccinate people as quickly as possible, and don't -- just don't jump the gun. I am not going to tell governors what to do. I just have lived it, and every time you jump the gun, you live to regret it.

So, vaccinate. Put the pedal to the metal on vaccinating more than lifting restrictions.

MS. PSAKI: Ed.

Q Madam Secretary, thank you for being here. You oversee a big department -- everything from the Weather Service to the Fisheries and the Census. Have you been briefed on the status of getting the results of the 2020 Census?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yes, I have.

Q When s it coming?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Well, we think -- we have said that the redistricting data will be available no later than September 30th. If it s available before that, in a -- you know, when we feel comfortable about it, we ll put it out then, but we need a little bit more time.

Q To state elections officials, secretaries of state who are sitting there, you know, scratching their head over which lines they should be using for elections this year --

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yeah.

Q -- and next year, what do you say to them?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I say: I know it s tough, but be patient. You know, last year was a -- was a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. The Census professionals had to do the Census in the middle of a global pandemic with COVID, civil unrest through the summer. So, we re behind. You know, we are behind.

But my direction to the team is: We have to get it right. So I -- having been a local politician, I hear -- look, I hear them. But the fact of the matter is, it is so much better to wait a little longer and have accurate data that we all can trust. So I -- we re -- rest assured, if it s ready before the 30th, we ll put it out. But we are prioritizing accuracy over rushing it out.

Q There s one wonky bit of this, though, and it s the subject of lawsuits -- differential privacy, where the idea of using essentially funky math to sort out some of this. Have you been briefed on that? And do you think that was a good idea at this point to have done it that way? Would you just recommend doing it that way in the future?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, in this regard, I have to rely on the experts. The experts at the Census Bureau are top-notch -- career, top-notch statisticians and demographers.

Here s the reality: That -- what you re referring to is a statistical technique that is intended to protect people s privacy. It s the first time we ve used it.

Today, the way quantum computing and computing is such that we -- there can be privacy hacks today that weren t technologically available 10 years ago. So in order for us to keep up with that and protect people s privacy, we have to implement new techniques, and this is one of those new techniques. So, yes, I think it s justified.

MS. PSAKI: Cecilia, you re going to be the last one.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: But we ll invite her back. We ll invite her back.

Q Thanks, Madam Secretary. Two quick ones on infrastructure for you. A friend of this White House, Senator Chris Coons, said today that he thinks it s more likely that Democrats ultimately will end up with a less robust -- this is his words -- infrastructure package. He says it s -- could end up looking one that s -- like one that s more directly targeted at what he s calling "hard infrastructure." Is that an accurate prediction to you at this stage?

And then, my second question -- I ll just tack it on here: The President -- you re one of the five Cabinet secretaries that President Biden tapped to, kind of, go out and sell this -- his words -- to engage the public. What has that entailed at this point, specifically as it relates to getting these Republicans on board with this plan?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Talking to them. You know, sitting down, listening, engaging them. As I said before, we have

put forth a bold proposal and a reasonable way to pay for it. There are other ideas.

So what I'm going to do -- and all the Cabinet is doing and the White House -- is sitting down with our Republican friends and Democrats and business leaders and saying, "Okay, if you don't like this, what's your idea? How do you think we ought to pay for it?" If we -- you know, "We are proposing paying for it over 15 years. What do you think?"

So I think, again, it's all about finding that compromise and actually delivering for the American people. So that -- anyway, I think broad engagement.

Q How many Republicans have you had face-to-face conversations with?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: If you include Zoom as face-to-face --

Q Yes.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: -- I would say very many. Only a few actually face-to-face, but a lot. You know, a lot. And I plan to do even more of it. Like, we're serious about this. We want to get this done. There's a lot of different ways to do it. The President does what a leader does: puts forth his ideas. Now let's get to work. Let's talk about it. Where do we tweak it? Where do we change it?

With respect to Senator Coons, I am not going to disagree with his assessment because he's been up here longer than my four weeks. But, look, I think it's early to say. The President put his plan out a week ago. Let's give it a shot; let's go big.

I can tell you this: Every single business leader I've talked to applauds the fact that this package is more than just roads, bridges, and water. Like, come on, 35 percent of Americans in rural areas don't have broadband. You cannot have a modern economy without that. We have a crisis in semiconductor manufacturing. You cannot have a modern economy without that.

So I hope that that isn't where we settle because we'd be shortchanging the American people -- workers and businesses.

Q Could you take one more?

MS. PSAKI: All right, Jeff. You're so convincing.

Q Thank you. Secretary, just to follow up on Alex's question about TikTok: Can you just clarify what your position is on whether TikTok needs to be sold by the Chinese company ByteDance that owns it now? And can you also give us a broad view of your advice to President Biden on tariffs with regard to China?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, I would say -- here's my broad view, and I don't want to get into details on any particular company. My broad view is: What we do on offense is more important than what we do on defense.

To compete in the long run with China, we need to rebuild America in all of the ways we're talking about today -- and, by the way, do that with our allies. You know, we have to work with our allies and find common ground where we can.

With respect to tariffs, there is a place for tariffs. You know the 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum have, in fact, helped save American jobs in the steel and aluminum industries. So what do we do with tariffs? We have to level the playing field. No one can outcompete the American worker if the playing field is leveled.

And the fact is China has -- China's actions are uncompetitive, coercive, underhanded. They've proven they'll do whatever it takes.

And so I plan to use all the tools in my toolbox, as aggressively as possible, to protect American workers and businesses

from unfair Chinese practices.

MS. PSAKI: Yamiche, I don't want to leave you hanging. And you were the last one hanging. At the risk, Yamiche.

Q No, this is great. (Laughter.) Thank you, Madam Secretary.

MS. PSAKI: Hopefully the Secretary will come back after this, but go ahead.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: It depends what she asks. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q Right. (Laughs.) Now it's a lot of pressure. But thank you for taking my question, Madam Secretary.

What do you say to a business owner who's looking at the U.S. and wondering, "Why should I start a company here when I could possibly do so in another country more cheaply?" How do we stay competitive, as the United States, for that business owner's company?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: So, I'd say a few things. One, you cannot get better than American workers, American ingenuity, American innovation. Two, this Jobs Plan will enhance American competitiveness. You know, I know from being governor, businesses want to locate in communities with good infrastructure, good public transportation, clean water, excellent public schools. That's where businesses want to be. That's where their employees want to work.

So, if we pass this package, it will massively -- businesses will want to be here -- will want to be here more than they do now.

Also, the whole point of the tax reform as proposed by the administration is to get rid of the loopholes, level the playing field between big businesses and small businesses. I don't know any small businesses in Rhode Island who are shielding their profits in tax havens around the world. Like, it'll level the playing field, raise more money, and allow us to invest in job creating, infrastructure, and job training.

So, as a former business owner and as a former governor who recruited businesses, I think it's a winner for business.

Q Is there an alternative other than the 28 percent? It sounds like it's a little open.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yes.

Q What else could the White House come up with to pay for the infrastructure bill?

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Let's have the discussion. Let us have the discussion. We put a plan out. Tell us what you think is an alternative, reasonable plan. But I would say: Don't shortchange America. Don't come back and say we only need a half a billion dollars of infrastructure, because we don't; because if we do that, we'll be in the same place or a worse place 10 years from now.

So, yes, we're wide open -- reasonable people can disagree; we'll find compromise. But let's go big, and let's do what's required.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Thank you so much for joining us.

SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you. Bye. I can't believe that you do this every day. (Laughter.) I always wanted to know.

Q You don't. (Laughter.)

Q You don't. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: You're here, right. Lots of questions about COVID and Iran.

A couple of other items for you all at the top. A new survey, just yesterday, from Invest in America and Data for Progress found that 73 percent of voters backed the American Jobs Plan. That includes the support of 57 percent of Republican voters. Dig into -- digging into the numbers shows just how broad the support is: 68 percent of independents, 64 percent of Republicans back the President's proposed investment in the care economy -- something the Secretary just talked about quite a bit. And all of the investments the survey looked at -- from roads and bridges, to housing, clean energy, and manufacturing -- have the support of over 60 percent of voters and a majority of independents.

The evidence is unanimous that the American people support the President's vision of rebuilding our economy and his plan to pay for it by asking big corporations to pay their fair share.

A Morning Consult poll, just last week, showed that 2-to-1 registered voters back a hypothetical \$3 trillion infrastructure package. And an earlier Data for Progress poll showed that by a 35 percent margin, voters want to pay for this plan by asking the wealthy and big corporations to pay their fair share.

Another update: Today, we can proudly say that in addition to the 150 million shots in arms, we have successfully sent over 150 million relief checks to the American people. The fourth batch of the American -- of the economic impact payments from the American Rescue Plan totals more than 25 million payments, which brings the total dispersed so far to more than 156 million payments, totaling \$372 billion since the plan was signed into law less than a month ago.

The largest block of these latest payments went to Social Security beneficiaries who didn't file a 2020 or 2019 tax return and didn't use the non-filers tool last year, which is consistent with our, you know, view that it would be more challenging -- the easiest would be those who had information that the IRS had, and it would become more challenging. So this is a more challenging group, but this is certainly good news.

Within two weeks of the American Rescue Plan becoming law, the IRS and Treasury had started dispersing 170 million payments. At a similar point during the first round of economic impact payments authorized a year ago, the first payments had yet to be completed. So just to give you a point of comparison.

It's also important to note -- and I know there's been some coverage of this -- the IRS has consistently underfunded -- has been consistently underfunded with 20,000 fewer staff available to help Americans. That's over the last 10 years -- 20,000 fewer. And our commitment is also to working on this problem and hiring more personnel at the IRS.

The President's Rescue Plan secured an additional \$1.5 billion to help the IRS get checks out -- out checks and modernize. And we are pleased that, since the beginning of this administration, the inherited backlog of 2019 returns has been cut in half.

One other update -- two others, sorry. "Good news you can use" -- I'll put it in that category. Health and Human Services Secretary Becerra announced that more than 500,000 Americans have already signed up for coverage on Healthcare.gov since the beginning of the Special Enrollment Period. Nearly 15 million Americans who currently lack health insurance and many current enrollees are eligible. An average of four out of five consumers currently enrolled in Marketplace coverage can now find a plan for \$10 or less a month after the tax credits.

Finally, the First Lady announced earlier today -- was joined by -- virtually by U.S. military families, advocates, and stakeholders from around the world, as she set forth the priorities of Joining Forces. She spent the last few months hearing directly from military families, caregivers, survivors, and visiting military installations across the country.

The mission of Joining Forces is to support those who also serve. The work and priorities of Joining Forces will center on the needs of military families in the areas of employment and entrepreneurship, military child education, and health and wellbeing. It was important that she relaunch this initiative within the first 100 days

welcoming. It was important that she relaunch this initiative within the first 100 days.

With that, Zeke.

Q Thanks, Jen. A couple foreign policy ones to get started. First, there was some confusion yesterday about the U.S. policy with regard to the Beijing Olympics next year. Is it the U.S. policy now that American athletes will participate in those Olympics? And is the U.S. government going to encourage American spectators to travel to China to view those games?

MS. PSAKI: Well, these are the Winter Olympics of next winter, I should say. So some time away, as it relates to the second part of your question. And certainly our hope is that we are at a point where enough people across the country -- and hopefully around the world -- have been vaccinated. But we will rely on health and medical experts on that particular piece.

Our position on the 2022 Olympics has not changed. We have not discussed and are not discussing any joint boycott with allies and partners. We, of course, consult closely with allies and partners at all levels to define our common concerns and establish a shared approach, but there's no discussion underway of a change in our plans regarding the Beijing Olympics from the United States' point of view.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions on timelines: One, with regards to the ongoing talks in Geneva right now regarding the JCPOA. What is the time -- timetable for bringing Iran back into compliance in terms of the breakout time for the (inaudible) potential of nuclear weapon?

MS. PSAKI: The timeline for getting them back at the table for direct --

Q Yeah. What is the ultimate timeline in terms of getting them back to the table? Not the timeline for this specific round of talks, but longer-term timetable to get them back into compliance.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, first, I would say, you know, the talks are continuing today in Vienna. It's only the second day of talks.

You may have seen a tweet from one of the European officials attending who called this -- said, "There's unity and ambition," and that was their description of the conversations.

This is just a constructive early step. We're at the early part of the process here. The primary issues, as you know, that will be discussed are both steps that would need to be taken for Iran to come back into compliance and the sanctions relief steps that the United States would need to take.

But we expect this to be -- these conversations to be difficult. We expect this to be a long process. And we're very much at just the beginning period.

Q There is time, from the U.S. perspective, for these talks to continue. Is that months? Is that years? What's -- you know, what are we ta- -- what scale are we looking at?

MS. PSAKI: I can't put a timeline on it, Zeke. We do feel, of course, that diplomacy is the right way to approach this -- this -- these challenge -- this challenge; that doing that in coordination and close cooperation with our partners is also exactly the right approach. That's what we're doing and what we're focused on now.

It is a good sign and a good step that we are engaged in, even though these conversations are not direct at this point in time. But, again, we're at the beginning of the process. I expect they may have more to read out once they complete this round of talks.

Q And a second timetable question. We heard the President talk a lot about when Americans will be eligible to get

Q And a second timetable question. We heard the President talk a lot about when Americans will be eligible to get vaccinated. What is the President's timetable by which point all Americans should have already been vaccinated? Is it -- what is his goal, his deadline for Americans to actually get the shot in arms?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a role that the federal government can play -- led by the President, of course -- increasing the number of vaccine supply we have. He's done his job in that regard. We're going to have enough vaccine to vaccinate -- more than enough, I should say -- every adult American by the end of May.

He has increased and invested in the number of people we have as vaccinators, increased the number of vaccination sites around the country, more than doubling the number of pharmacies, investing in mass vaccination sites, investing in community health centers.

It is now incumbent upon the American people to do their job and continue to mask up, get the vaccine when they're eligible.

We, of course, just launched a massive public campaign that is both paid media as well as investment in community organizations, but I can't make predictions for you here. That is going to be determined in large part by the American public.

Q And so is the President's timetable of July 4th activities, gatherings in the backyard, independent from the rate of vaccination of the American public?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what you were asking me is when he expects -- if I heard the question correctly -- the vast majority of the American public to be vaccinated. And what I'm conveying to you is that there's a role for the government to play -- many roles for the government to play.

We are moving forward on all of those fronts. But there is also a role for the American people to play, and that question will be answered in part by whether people get the vaccine when they are eligible.

As it relates to July 4th barbecues, I mean, you can see the numbers that are reported regularly on vaccinations, the percentage of the public that's vaccinated, where we've seen success in different communities; those are all numbers that are reported.

What he's talking about is the ability to have a barbecue in your backyard with other people who have been vaccinated. That is not mass gatherings. That's not the same as having the entire public vaccinated.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Jen, can you confirm the Biden administration plans to restart aid to the Palestinians?

MS. PSAKI: I expect the State Department is going to have more specifics on this later this afternoon or right about now, so I will leave it to them to lay out the details for you.

Q Okay. We talked a little bit about taxes with the Secretary.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Amazon said yesterday that it supports an increase in corporate taxes, which was interesting because the President had singled Amazon out specifically. Has the White House reached out to Amazon and/or has it reached out to other companies in corporate America to try and boost support for this plan?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have certainly reached out to a range of groups -- obviously, elected officials; large businesses; small businesses; rural and agricultural stakeholders; climate groups; local chambers of commerce; faith leaders; Black, Latino

and AAPI leaders; community college groups; and more. We've done a lot of calls -- a lot of Zooms around here and across the administration.

It's my understanding Amazon did join a call with 20 other groups, carriers, and businesses as part of our outreach to a range of companies of many sizes across the country about what was being proposed and about the specifics of our proposal to pay for it.

Q Okay. Last one, which is a little wonky.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q A South Korea company called SK Innovation is threatening to pull its construction of a battery plant in Georgia over a trade dispute -- if you're familiar with that. The President has an April 11th deadline to intervene, and I'm curious if he plans to.

MS. PSAKI: I will probably have to take that question and talk to experts. I love wonky questions, but I will talk to the people who know more about it than I do.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Reports popped just before the briefing started that the President is going to announce a series of executive actions on guns tomorrow. Can you confirm that? And anything that you can preview?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview. I can convey that I expect the President will have more to say tomorrow.

Q Okay. And will it involve those ghost guns -- potential extended background checks on ghost guns?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to preview more from here. I expect we'll have more -- we will probably do a background briefing call for all of you later today.

Q Okay. Just a follow-up on something Secretary Raimondo said. She was very clear that there is room to compromise on increasing the corporate tax rate to 28 percent. As you know, Senator Manchin is saying he wants it to be as low as 25 percent. Is there a scenario where the President would go that low?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, here's -- here are our principles: Debate is inevitable, compromise is inevitable, changes are certain, and our main bottom line is inaction is not an option.

And so we see it as a positive that Senator Manchin, that others -- Republican members, other Democrats -- have come forward and said, "I like these pieces. I like a different -- I propose a different component on the tax piece." We're happy to have that discussion.

And what we are seeing, though, is broad agreement about the need to invest in and modernize our infrastructure.

Q Could you get everything you wanted in the bill at 25 percent?

MS. PSAKI: Well, just like any discussion or negotiation, there's lots of factors. It's like a Rubik's Cube; I don't know if that's the right analogy. But if you are proposing a lower tax rate, then you have to make some decisions.

Q What would you compromise on that? What would you be willing to cut?

MS. PSAKI: We're going to have -- we're going to have those discussions with members of Congress. Expect the President will welcome members of both parties here when they return next week, and he'll have those discussions with them. We're

having them with committee staffers, with staffers on the Hill, to see what the push and pull can be.

Where there is agreement, let's start there. Where there are alternative ideas, additional ideas -- remember some -- some members are proposing to make the package smaller. Some are proposing to make it larger. That's all a part of the discussion.

Q And you said yesterday, Jen, "The President continues to believe... that there is a bipartisan path forward." Is that realistic given the backlash that you've seen so far from Republicans? And if the President can't win over any Republicans, is he staying true to that promise of ushering in a spirit of bipartisanship?

MS. PSAKI: Well here's how the President sees it: Democrats and Republicans will have ideas about what they like or don't like about the plan. That's a good thing. That's democracy in action. That's the American way.

Our view -- his view is we don't just fix what is broken today, we build for tomorrow. And his idea of infrastructure is evolving -- is that it should evolve to address the needs of the American people. We believe there is a fair amount of opportunity for agreement -- that we are open to compromise, we welcome the debate, and we'll look forward to having those conversations when members return.

Q But you would pass it along party lines if you needed to?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we're quite there yet. The President believes there is an opportunity to work with Democrats and Republicans -- that there is agreement on the need to modernize our infrastructure, there is agreement that we need to do more to compete with China. Let's start with areas where we agree and have a discussion from there.

Go ahead.

Q Two things. And thanks for confirming the timing on guns specifically. First, in a COVID-related matter, there are reports that during the transition, the incoming administration received a June 2022 report from Trump officials concluding that Emergent BioSolutions -- that plant in Baltimore than spoiled some J&J vaccine doses -- had oversight and quality assurance issues. Is that accurate? And if you guys had this report before taking office, why were steps not taken sooner regarding that facility?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first let me say that the facility is not approved by the FDA. That's, in fact, the process working, in that the FDA is taking a look at whether any manufacturing facility meets the standards that would be required to produce and put out doses that will go into the arms of the American people. There are not a broad swath of options for manufacturing facilities across the country.

So HHS and others can give you more specifics of what the options are that are available, but our focus is on getting vaccines produced, distributed, in the arms of the American people, and to relying on the process that is in place by the United States government.

We have one of the most stringent set of review processes in the world. So, in our view, this is the process working. We remain on track to have the number of doses -- enough doses to vaccinate the entire -- all adult Americans by the end of May. This has not impacted that.

Q I don't hear you though confirming or denying that report?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on the specifics of the receipt of a report. But, again, it was -- it's still not approved by the FDA -- the manufacturing facility and the site.

Q And then, Amnesty International says that Aleksey Navalny is being incarcerated in conditions that amount to torture and may be slowly killing him. Is there any reaction from here regarding that?

Also, you said on February 23rd -- I think you said it a few times since -- that it would "be weeks, not months" before the Biden administration responded to the SolarWinds hack, and other Russian misconduct. I also recall you telling us some of it would be seen, some of it would not.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Any updates on all that?

MS. PSAKI: "Weeks" -- there's lots of ways to define it. It's still weeks.

Q There are lots of ways (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: It is still -- it is still weeks, not months away. I don't have an update on the exact timeline.

I will say, on the reports you referenced of Mr. Navalny, we are disturbed by reports that Mr. Navalny's health is worsening, that he is on a hunger strike to demand -- demand access to outside medical care. We urge Russian authorities to take all necessary actions to ensure his safety and health. So long as he is in prison, the Russian government is responsible for his health and wellbeing. We will continue to mon- -- monitor the situation closely.

I would also reiterate that we consider Mr. Navalny's imprisonment on trumped-up charges to be politically motivated and a gross injustice. And we stand with like-minded allies and partners in calling for his immediate release, as well as an end to the persecution of his supporters.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Quick one on Senator Coons's comments from this morning. He also said today that if it's clear by Memorial Day that Republicans aren't willing to get on board with this, that, at that point, Democrats perhaps just roll this into a big package and move on.

So, is that the timeline for this White House as well? That Memorial Day is the decision -- the deadline to sort of make this decision to fish or cut bait?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not here to set a new deadline from here. We would like to see progress by Memorial Day. We would like to see the bill passed this summer, in order to get this -- these vital investments out into our economy and out into, you know, rebuilding our infrastructure across the country.

I will note that there are a range of points of view, as I said in response to Kristen's question. Some feel this package should be smaller, some are calling for a larger package, some believe that it should be paid for in different ways.

Senator Coons is one of -- one of those individuals who will certainly have a role to play in having these discussions, but it's important that we allow the process to play itself out, have those ideas put forward, have debates, have those discussions, and we'll see where we go from there.

Q I have a couple of questions on immigration, if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is the administration considering restarting some construction on the border wall to plug in holes in gaps of areas where the construction -- construction stopped after the President took office?

MS. PSAKI: Well, wall construction remains paused. There is a review in underway taking a look at the funds that had

been allocated.

When the administration took office, as you know -- but funds had been diverted from military construction projects and other purposes toward building the wall. That was not something we, of course, supported. There are some components of the wall that had already been allocated -- the funding to continue building by Congress. So we're working within what is allowable.

But our focus is not -- we don't believe the wall is an answer. We have never believed the wall as an answer to addressing the challenges -- immigration challenges at the border. That's why we're proposing an investment in smart -- investments in smart security at the border, why we're driving 20 -- what we see as 21st century solutions for border management, and why we believe we should build a functioning immigration system.

There's a review underway of, kind of, where this funding had been allocated and not, but it's currently paused and -- for the most part.

Q But the President had said he wouldn't build one more foot of the wall, but you're saying some monies could still be used to fill in the gaps on construction on the wall?

MS. PSAKI: No, I'm saying that some had been allocated already, previously. We're working within what our limitations are by law. But we believe -- we -- we have never believed that putting -- building more of a wall -- the President doesn't believe -- is a way to address our immigration challenges at the border.

Q Okay. And then a quick clarification on Special Envoy to the Northern Triangle Ricardo Zuñiga, who is in Guatemala right -- was there yesterday talking about this. He said, "The White House is looking to create legal ways for Central American migrants to reach the... U.S." Is that what -- could you explain more on, if you know, what he was talking about? Is that what President Biden has said -- has talked about allowing folks to apply for asylum in their home countries? Or is -- are there other options being considered?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the -- more immediately, we've reinstated the Central American Minors Program, which I would -- I would think he is likely referring to -- which, when it was stopped in 2017, there were about 3,000 kids who could have applied. I don't have an updated number on how many might be eligible now. That's one piece: so that kids can apply from country and won't take the treacherous journey.

But we also believe that there needs to be reforms to the whole process: Make it more efficient, more effective, in terms -- when families, when children come to the border. That's part of what we want to discuss [sic] -- discuss through legislation. So he could have also been referring more broadly to the longer-term changes that need to take place.

But more immediately, there, of course, is the Central American Minors Program.

Go ahead, Mario.

Q Thanks, Jen. The UK variant of the virus is now the most common in the U.S. We're seeing things like outbreaks in high school sports. Does the White House consider that to be more dangerous for schools and kids? And also, what does that mean for the goal of reopening schools?

MS. PSAKI: Well, in terms of the impact of the variant, I would refer to our health and medical experts to give their assessment of that.

We remain focused on and committed to our objective of reopening schools five days a week and having kids in school, learning. We believe that the mitigation steps that have been put out by the CDC give a good guideline for doing exactly that.

There was actually some data that was put out that is a little outdated, as these things sometimes go -- because it's more from February -- that showed that we are close to, even at the end of February, reaching [sic] -- reaching that mark of 50 percent of schools open five days a week.

Q And then, kind of similar to that, we're seeing people, who work in the retail industry, increasingly afraid for their lives, their health and safety, as customers refuse to mask up. What's the White House looking to do to protect them? Are you looking at revisiting, you know, legal authority for a national mask mandate? I mean, what's, kind of, in the toolbox there to help these workers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say one of the steps we can take from the federal government is ensuring there is vaccine supply available across the country to ensure Americans are vaccinated; that these individual workers, that these employees in these businesses, in stores, every one of them will be eligible on April 19th to get a vaccine. That is, they will get -- be able to get in line at that point in time. That provides clarity and hopefully it provides some certainty on their own safety.

We also, of course, work with businesses and convey directly to businesses, just as we do to leaders across the country, about the importance of abiding by public health guidelines, and whether that is ensuring that masking up, hand washing, are seen -- are used as models in these locations. You know, these are also entities and businesses that we're in touch with around the country as well.

Go ahead, Ayesha. This is your first time in the briefing room -- right? --

Q This is my first time.

MS. PSAKI: -- since the Biden administration.

Q Yes, since the Biden administration.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Yes.

Q And it's my wedding anniversary, so it's (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Oh, happy anniversary. (Laughter.) And here you are with us. (Laughter.)

Q And here I am with you guys.

MS. PSAKI: Ed brought you a cake. That was so nice of Ed.

Q I know you'll allow me a lot of questions (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Q So, starting off on the issue of North Korea: Think tanks like Beyond Parallel and other North Korea watchers have observed yesterday that North Korea moved a submersible missile test stand barge. And along with that, there has been activity at other sites, related to weapons, in North Korea. Is the administration concerned that North Korea may be ramping up for more testing, more provocative actions? And if so, what would be the response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I've seen those reports. I would send you to the Department of Defense. I'm just not going to be able to get into more details from here.

Q Is there -- with sanctions already in place -- very heavy sanctions already in place on North Korea -- is the U.S. limited in how it could respond to potential provocations from North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: You know, again, I would send you to the Department of Defense for that if you're asking about specifically military action or military considerations.

I would say, broadly speaking, we have a clear objective as it relates to North Korea, which is denuclearizing the North Korean Peninsula -- the Korean Peninsula, I should say. We're, of course, continuing to enforce sanctions. We're consulting with allies and partners. We are prepared to consider some form of diplomacy if it's going to lead us down the path toward denuclearization.

So that is broadly how we view. There's also a review that's underway within the administration. But on the specific reports, there's just not more I'm going to be able to convey from here.

Q On a separate issue, President Biden, when he was a candidate, pledged that within the first 100 days, there would be a commission on policing oversight set up. I know that we still have some more time in the first 100 days, but what is the status of that? And, you know, where do things stand with that commission?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on the commission, but I would convey to you that from our consultation with Congress, with the groups, our focus right now is on the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. We believe we must continue to press ahead to pass meaningful police reform.

The President would love to sign a piece of legislation; would love to have it on his desk. We're encouraged by some of the engagement we've seen -- pleasantly surprised in some cases with -- in the Senate. And that is where we feel we can have the most impact at this point in time.

Q So is the commission still on the table, or is that something that is not being thought of right now?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have an update on it. But we are focused on working with members, with advocates on many sides of this debate on how to move things forward, and we feel the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is the most constructive, effective, impactful way to do that.

Q And just really quickly, the President is talking more openly about sharing vaccines with the rest of the world. Why is that? And how soon does he think that the U.S. will be at a point where he feels confident sharing more of the vaccines -- vaccine doses with the rest of the world?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that our focus remains -- his focus remains on ensuring that adult Americans are vaccinated. We also plan for contingencies, including the fact that there's ongoing research. We've seen some reporting, of course, on which vaccine is most effective with children. As we've seen in the recent -- even in recent weeks, things happen and we have to plan for contingencies as well.

But when we are confident about our supply, about our ability to provide for the American public, the President is absolutely committed to playing a constructive role in being a part of the global community's efforts to get the pandemic under control. That includes through COVAX. It also can -- it could include direct conversations with countries. You've seen we've already lent doses to Canada and Mexico.

So we remain committed to that. I can't give you an additional timeline at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Back to immigration and particularly the Northern Triangle. The Vice President's assignment to try to, you know, address the root causes of migration, what -- how do you get a measure of success?

MS. PSAKI: How do we measure success?

Q On that issue, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that we know that addressing the root causes means working with these countries to help create a collaborative and a cooperative approach to addressing what the circumstances are on the ground, whether that is economic challenges, a response to challenges related to hurricanes that have impacted a lot of these communities.

And what we're trying to do is work with them to determine how we can get to these root causes to reduce -- to disincentivize travel from the region.

Q But, I mean, will you have a numerical measure, any kind of tangible measure of success, benchmarks, that sort of thing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think as everybody who's followed this for some time knows, this is about addressing these causes over the long term. Unless we address root causes in these countries, we are going to see the same cycle of rushes to the border year after year, as we have seen in 2014, in 2018, in 2019.

So we're going to look to how we can work with these countries through diplomatic means. The President has also proposed \$4 billion in assistance and aid through his immigration package. And, of course, the Vice President and our diplomats will be engaged with these countries to determine how we can best help to prevent these rushes at the border in the future.

Q But there's no benchmark specifically, like, you know, "We curved by X or Y percent over some..." -- a timeline period?

MS. PSAKI: We're talking about how we address this over the long term and how we reduce the incentives -- incentivize -- disincentivize travel over the long term to the border.

Q And you mentioned the money.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you work with these governments? There's a -- you know, one of the major issues --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- is a lack of rule of law and corruption.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, you're absolutely right. And the President has talked about this as well, and the need to sometimes work with organizations, work with local groups, find ways to avoid getting the funding in the hands, in some scenarios, of corrupt governments. And that will certainly be part of our approach.

Go ahead. Yeah, go ahead. Yeah, go ahead.

Q Depending on what poll you look at, about half of Republican men say they won't be getting the vaccine. Experts say that a major reason that any group would be hesitant -- vaccine hesitant would be because of trust. I think it's probably fair to say that President Biden and the administration has a long way to get this, kind of -- this group to trust him.

Two questions: What has the administration's research found about why this group is so entrenched in vaccine hesitancy? There's a lot of talk about Black and brown people. We found that that's not exactly true; they're not more hesitant than anyone else.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And outside of the “We Can Do This” campaign, how does the administration plan to reach this group?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we recognize that the President, that all of us may not be exactly the right messengers for some of these audiences. And what we’ve actually seen through our data and research is that it’s not always famous people -- and often not famous people -- like the President or athletes or former elected officials who are going to reach any group who are hesitant or have concerns about the vaccine -- hesitancy or safety.

So this is the reason why a big part of our funding and our approach to our public campaign is actually for local groups and organizations. Some of those may be civic groups, some are clergy -- there’s a role that clergy and different faith groups and organizations can certainly play -- and some of these are just simply local doctors and medical experts who are more trusted voices in different communities.

So what we’re working to do is empower local sources, empower local authorities, medical experts, civic leaders, clergy, in some cases, to be the communicators about the effectiveness and the efficacy of the vaccine.

I will say one of the things that is sometimes not understood, or people don’t see in the data but we’ve seen in the data, is that the issue -- we’ve seen a reduction in hesitancy as it’s defined. And you referenced Black and brown communities -- certainly a reduction in hesitancy.

The issue is now access. This is true in whether you’re talking about conservative white people or you’re talking about communities of color. It’s now at the point where people are saying, “Look, I -- I’m confident in -- or I feel comfortable in taking the vaccine.” In many cases, “I can’t take a day off of work.” “I don’t know where to go.” “I don’t know what health center to go to to get the vaccine.”

So we’re looking at that, and our focus is on addressing the access issue -- mobile clinics -- making it easier and more accessible to get the vaccine.

Q And you’ve also said the President is being updated on the trial of Derek Chauvin. We’re probably weeks away from a verdict. But regardless of the outcome of the trial, does the President plan to address the country upon its conclusion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would never -- and not that you’re asking me this, but we would never, of course, prejudge the outcome. The President has spoken about the death of George Floyd, the impact on him personally, quite a bit over the course of the last year. It certainly impacted his own -- redoubled his commitment to addressing racial injustice in the country and throughout the government.

I certainly would expect we’d have a statement, but I’m not going to get ahead of what the outcome may be or the timeline. We just don’t have insight into that.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I’d like to pick up the line of questioning on immigration and the border --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- and ask you two rather quick follow-up questions about some other topics.

MS. PSAKI: You always like “yes” or “no” questions. I don’t know if they’re “yes” or “no.”

Q Well, I’m --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

~ ”

Q Answer as you will.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q So on immigration and the border, as we discussed here today, Vice President Harris has been put in charge of addressing the root causes of the border crisis. Last Tuesday, she spoke with Guatemala's president, but she hasn't visited the border or Central America or spoken to the leaders of El Salvador or Honduras.

She was traveling this week. Took time to visit a bakery in Chicago. I'm wondering, is she still working on this? And can you address the perception that she's, kind of, quietly backing off while Secretary Mayorkas is pursuing some Trump-era policies, such as potentially building new border barriers and potentially prosecuting people who illegally cross multiple times?

MS. PSAKI: There was a whole lot packed in there, so let me just see what I can do here.

First, I would say the Vice President was visiting Chicago actually to talk about COVID and the importance of communities getting the vaccine when it's available and accessible to them. And so, while she was there, like many Americans, she got a snack. I think she's allowed to do that.

But she was there to talk about COVID and play a role -- as she's playing a significant role on our efforts to address vaccine hesitancy, communicate with the public about how we can do this, and it's -- it's imperative to get the vaccine once available.

Second, I would say that yesterday -- and this was actually a statement put out by her team -- USAID announced the deployment of a DART team -- we only have these in a couple of places in the world, so this is fairly significant -- to respond to urgent humanitarian needs in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. This is meant to help address the immediate humanitarian needs, whether it's drought, food insecurity, ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. And this is in communities that are still recovering. So that is actually an announcement made by the Vice President's team earlier today.

This is absolutely an issue that she is -- remains committed to, is in the lead on. The Northern Triangle, which I'm sure you're aware of, but is not the same as the border. They're all related to each other, but addressing the North -- being responsible in the lead on the Northern Triangle is working with these countries in the region, addressing the root causes, working with them on how we can address issues like long-term food insecurity, drought, the COVID-19 pandemic, hurricanes, et cetera. That's what she's focused on.

I don't have an update on when she'll travel. I'm sure it will be soon.

Q But she's still working on this issue very much?

MS. PSAKI: Well, they wouldn't be putting out a statement this morning if she wasn't, would they?

Q And my two other questions -- I'd like to circle back to something that a colleague asked in this room a few weeks ago.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q They asked about a request by about three dozen Democrats in Congress for President Biden to relinquish unilateral nuclear launch authority. I believe, at the time, you weren't aware of that request, and I was wondering if you've been able to get an answer from the President on that.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you on that.

Q And my third question, if I could

Q And my third question, if I could.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q According to a report yesterday in Axios, we may soon have a prominent transgender gubernatorial candidate. It would be a Republican, Caitlyn Jenner, in California. And I'm not asking --

MS. PSAKI: Are you announcing her run?

Q No, no. I'm just announcing an Axios report.

MS. PSAKI: Are you working for her?

Q I am not.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q I'm not. But -- and I'm not asking you to endorse anyone, but I was wondering if the White House welcomes this appearance, a LGBT milestone.

MS. PSAKI: We certainly would welcome the freedom of any -- any human being participating in the democratic process to run for office, of course, and including, of course, transgender members of our society.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. I just want to ask if the budget rollout is still going to happen this week. And secondly, is it accurate that debate or discussion about defense spending is what's holding it up?

MS. PSAKI: That is not accurate. We know you all are eager to have the discretionary guidance, and it certainly will give some insight into the President's priorities and the priorities of this administration. We hope to have that out very soon this week, but I don't have an exact date for you quite yet.

Q It sounds like it could possibly slip into next week. Is that -- is that (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're hopeful it will be out this week.

Q And then, just to follow up on the Olympics issue: Understanding what you said, the U.S. position, however, is still that China has committed genocide.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Doesn't that demand some sort of response or action from the U.S.? And what will the U.S. need to see before it fully participates in the Olympics?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, just to be very clear and reiterate: Our position has not changed in our planned participation. However, we are working, of course, on -- as we would be on any issue, in coordination with our partners and allies about a range of concerns we have with China's behavior and their actions, including the genocide of Uighur Muslims in China, including actions that China has taken as it relates to economic and security steps.

And so that is something we would do in partnership and coordination with our partners in the region. Just like any relationship, there are areas where we feel we can work together; areas where we have great concerns. We voice those. We don't hold back on those as the President did in his call with the President.

Go ahead.

Q There s -- I have a couple questions. The first is, there are some studies that show that Black Americans have half of the vaccination rate of white Americans, and I wonder why the administration is not setting hard numbers with their equity goals. How do you measure success if you don t put actual numbers next to the goals?

MS. PSAKI: I would have to check those numbers. I m not challenging them, I just would have to talk to our COVID team about those. As you know, equity is central to what we do -- COVID and addressing the pandemic. And ensuring we are taking steps to address getting the vaccine out to communities around the country is central to our focus.

We are constantly monitoring where the vaccine doses are going and that they re equitably distributed. That s something - every vaccine is marked in boxes. It s -- we saw this at Pfizer. It s very cool actually. We monitor that closely.

We monitor the uptick in outbreak and COVID rates in communities and see how it s being -- how it s impacting different communities. We work directly with governors to help address where there are upticks in communities and where we see there are communities that are not getting ready access to the vaccine.

And we ve actually adjusted, in some cases, our approach and our strategy. That s why we ve increased our investment in community health centers massively over the course of the last several weeks; why we ve increased our investment in mobile clinics. Because one of the issues we re seeing is access. Right? Access and the ability to -- many people can t take a day off of work, especially if they re working in jobs where it doesn t allow for that. We want to bring the vaccine to people as frequently as we can.

So what I would tell you is that we are constantly adapting and adjusting our strategy to areas where we see that we are not effectively addressing distributing the vaccine equitably. That is central to our focus and will continue to be.

Q Just to reiterate, the question was: Why not set hard numbers? There s 100 million for the first 100 days, then 200 million. Why not say, “We want to see 20 percent or 30 percent of Black people, Hispanics...”? Why not put numbers by your equity goals?

MS. PSAKI: I m happy to check with our team. We may have internal goals along those lines, but I would just convey to you that we look at it as our objective is to vaccinate every adult American. That includes, of course, every adult American who is white, Black, brown, Asian American -- and that we look closely at where we are -- where there are communities where there is an uptick, where there are communities --

So I was trying to actually address your question on actually what we re doing about it, which I think is the most important information people might be looking for.

Q And then, related to racial equality, the infrastructure bill has \$400 billion focused on home healthcare aides -- a lot of them are women, women of color. How is that infrastructure? Explain why you see home healthcare workers as part of infrastructure.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, this is essentially a jobs bill. Yes, there s a lot in here that is infrastructure. But as the Secretary just conveyed, our workers, our workforce is part of the backbone and the infrastructure of America s economy and communities.

And if you have home health workers, as you noted, who are predominantly women of color; they are predominantly workers who are paid often \$11 an hour, about, on average -- these are communities and individuals who need greater assistance and need greater help.

In addition, the people who are impacted most by the need for caregiving are women. We see that statistically: About 2 million women have left the workforce as a result of the pandemic

WHICH WOMEN HAVE LEFT THE WORKFORCE AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC.

And so, our objective and our focus is on addressing physical infrastructure, the infrastructure that is going to help us compete, including broadband.

I had -- oh, here. This is a broadband map. I love maps. Don't you guys? This shows where there is not great broadband around the country, which I think is so interesting and shows you how much we need to do -- what we need to do to address it.

But if we're going to get women back in the workforce, this is an area where we need to address. And so the President felt it was an important and imperative part of the package. And as the Secretary noted, it's something that many businesses are also welcoming.

Q If I could add two quick questions that are very -- one is a yes-or-no question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q President Biden has indicated that Beau Biden's cancer was likely caused or linked to burn pits. This is a question from our foreign team: Does President Biden and the White House support the bill Senator Gillibrand and Senator Rubio have sponsored related to burn pits?

MS. PSAKI: I'll have to look more specifically at the bill. He has talked about this quite frequently, including when we were in -- I can't remember what state, where he visited the hospital -- I don't remember.

AIDE: Ohio.

MS. PSAKI: Ohio. Thanks. It's like a phone-a-friend. When we were in Ohio, he talked about this as well. But I can check with our legislative team.

Q (Inaudible) if he supports the bill?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't looked more deeply into the specifics of the bill.

Q And then my last question is on immigration. The Family Reunification Task Force, as of now, is saying that it hasn't reunified [sic] -- it hasn't reunited any families because they're still sorting through the system.

I wonder, can you talk a bit about why they haven't been able to reunite families, and what are the concerns and challenges that maybe are even more -- even more pronounced than you would have thought they were going to be?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. First, we can't overstate how complex this challenge is. The prior administration did not have a system in place to track the children and parents who were separated. They also, of course, separated them themselves.

But the task force has been in place, as you know, for about two months. The focus right now, in this period of time, has been reviewing thousands of records, and a significant number of issues have come up in these existing files, including incorrect dates and names.

We're working -- they are working to establish a database of families who were separated and working to find previously unidentified separated families who are eligible to receive benefits through the task force. And they've also identified over 5,600 new files that were not reviewed and have begun the process for reviewing and crosschecking those files.

The task force is also working very closely with the ACLU to process identified families so we can reunite them as swiftly as possible. They'll have a full report; that's due on June 2nd.

Q So you're saying -- but what's the delay in it being so -- what's -- what makes it so hard to reunite families while they're doing that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the biggest challenge is that there's a lot of inaccurate information. There wasn't accurate -- there was not an accurate database. We've seen inaccurate names, inaccurate dates.

Again, we're working very closely with the ACLU, and we're working to move it as quickly as possible.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. You said earlier that the White House recognizes that some of you may not always be the right messenger to some of these individuals who are reluctant to take the President's --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- advice on getting vaccinated.

The President said yesterday there was a category he didn't exactly identify, but he gave Senator McConnell credit for talking to those people. Did the President ask his friend, Senator McConnell, to help him out on trying to make a pitch to those people who are not -- who are reluctant to follow the President's lead on this? And has he asked other Republican pals of his to do the same to help out?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any calls to read out or asks from the President, but I would just reiterate: We certainly do think it's a good step that Senator McConnell conveyed the importance and the efficacy of taking the vaccine.

But also, across the board, all of our data shows that the most effective voices are local doctors, civic leaders, clergy, others who are trusted in communities. And that's really where our primary focus and the President's primary focus is.

So, one in the back.

Q Thank you. Will President Biden appoint a special envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian portfolio? If so, when? And if not, why?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any personnel announcements to make here. Of course, the President believes that the only the most -- the only solution is a two-state solution, but I don't have any personnel or specifics to outline for you from here in addition.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q Just real -- one quick thing --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that happened here while we were sitting here. I don't know if you guys have this yet or not, that -- apparently, the President called King Abdullah of Jordan.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Can you -- have we -- have you guys confirmed that yet or no?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's been happening -- it sounds like -- as we've -- here. We'll have a robust readout, and we'll get that out to all of you guys.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thanks. Jen, has the President seen the video of the boy who came here from Nicaragua, abandoned, alone, crying to Border Patrol agents? If so, what was his response?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any response from the President directly. What I can convey is: For any of us who have seen that video, it is heartbreaking. It's a reminder of how treacherous the journey is. And it is a reminder of how important and imperative -- imperative it is that we put in place reforms to our immigration system; that we convey clearly how dangerous this journey is; and that we take steps -- like the Central American Minors Program -- to make it possible to apply from within the country.

Q And given what's happening at the border, why hasn't the President -- why hasn't the Vice President visited yet?

MS. PSAKI: Visited the border?

Q The border, yes.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any trips to outline or preview. What our focus is on is solutions -- and ensuring we have more beds, we're making the processing more efficient and effective, and that we are addressing this in a humane way that keeps these kids as safe as we possibly can.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

1:36 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 8, 2021 10:47 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2021

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen

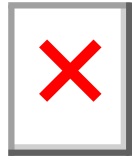
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone on April 7 with Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen. Mr. Sullivan expressed the Biden Administration's grave concern about the continued humanitarian and human rights crisis in the Tigray region. Mr. Sullivan and Deputy Prime Minister Mekonnen discussed critical steps to address the crisis, including expanded humanitarian access, cessation of hostilities, departure of foreign troops, and independent investigations into atrocities and human rights violations. They also discussed the importance of continued dialogue among regional leaders, with the support of the African Union, to peacefully resolve current disputes related to the al-Fashaga border and the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam. Mr. Sullivan stressed that the United States is ready to help Ethiopia address the crisis, building on our longstanding bilateral partnership and friendship.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement from National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Service of Ambassador Jacobson, Coordinator for the Southwest Border
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 9, 2021 4:03 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 2021

**Statement from National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Service of Ambassador Jacobson,
Coordinator for the Southwest Border**

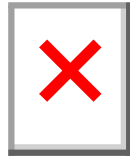
Ambassador Roberta Jacobson's leadership in serving as the Special Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Southwest Border at the National Security Council has been an invaluable contribution to the Biden-Harris Administration and to the United States. Ambassador Jacobson dedicated her career to working tirelessly to advance U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere, including as the United States Ambassador to Mexico, and President Biden knew there was no person better to usher in a more safe, secure, and just approach to our Southern Border. Consistent with her commitment at the outset to serve in the Administration's first 100 days, Ambassador Jacobson will retire from her role as Coordinator at the end of this month. She will do so having shaped our relationship with Mexico as an equal partner, having launched our renewed efforts with the Northern Triangle nations of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and having underscored this Administration's commitment to reenergizing the U.S. immigration system. President Biden has asked Vice President Kamala Harris to lead the Administration's work on our efforts with Mexico and the Northern Triangle, a testament to the importance this administration places on improving conditions in the region. The Vice President is overseeing a whole-of-government approach supported by outstanding public servants across the interagency including Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, who were tasked by the President at the beginning of the administration to rebuild our immigration system.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, April 9, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:33 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Friday. Okay, so if it's another day, we have another member of the Jobs Cabinet.

Joining us today is Secretary Buttigieg. He served, as you all know, two terms as mayor of South Bend, Indiana, where he worked across the aisle to transform the city's future and improve residents' everyday lives. Household income grew, poverty fell, unemployment was cut in half. He helped spark citywide job growth and facilitated innovative public-private partnerships, like a benefits program to improve the city's transportation experience for workers.

One of the mayor's initiatives, "Smart Streets," led to benefits that included small-business growth along previously neglected corridors and hundreds of millions of dollars in new private investment in the once-emptying downtown.

He also served for seven years as an officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, taking a leave of absence from the mayor's office for a deployment to Afghanistan in 2014. And he is the first openly gay person confirmed to serve in a President's Cabinet. I know you know a few things about him from the past.

He will take a few questions at the end. We kind of have a time limit, so, as always, I will be the bad cop. With that, I will turn it over.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Thank you. All right. Thanks a lot, Jen. And thanks, everyone. It's a real honor to be here, especially at such an important and exciting moment for the country. I'm convinced that this is the best chance in our

lifetimes to make a generational investment in infrastructure, and that's what the American Jobs Plan does.

The need is clear. It's growing by the day. After decades of underinvestment, we have fallen to 13th place globally in infrastructure. Delays caused by traffic congestion alone cost over \$160 billion per year, and motorists are forced to pay over \$1,000 every year in wasted time and fuel.

Americans are spending too much of their money on transportation in the wrong ways or don't have access to it at all. And the American people are making clear to all of us, regardless of party, that they want us to get it done and they are not asking us to tinker around the edges.

We've risen to this challenge before as a country. In fact, building bold infrastructure has always been central to America's story. We built the Erie Canal, we connected east to west through the transcontinental railroad, and we developed the Interstate Highway System. And each of those projects was audacious, was transformative, and -- partly because it challenged the American people to expand our concept of infrastructure. But in doing so, these projects have transformed our nation for the better, and they fueled the U.S. economy and way of life for the long run. So now it's our turn.

The American Jobs Plan will again transform America's roads and bridges, rail and transit, ports and airports for the better. It's going to help modernize our transportation infrastructure so we can compete in the 21st century and connect communities. It will create millions of good jobs in communities across the country.

I want to point out again that this is the biggest investment in American jobs since World War Two.

But I think it's important to demystify the kinds of jobs that this plan is going to create. These are good jobs; they're not mysterious or overly futuristic or inaccessible. We are going to need workers who are good with steel to make the cars and trucks of the future. We're talking about building retrofits that are going to require union carpenters and insulators, painters, and glaziers. We're going to need electrical workers more than ever. And we're not going to be able to build the roads we need to build without construction workers, laborers, operating engineers. Plumbers and pipefitters are going to be a huge part of the story of how we overhaul those lead service lines.

So this is a jobs plan that is building America's economy from the middle class out, coming at just the right time. It's meeting the challenges that we face today. And it is fully paid for by making corporations pay their fair share.

We think it's unacceptable that there are major profitable corporations in this country paying less in taxes than a teacher or a firefighter, not in terms of a percentage, but in terms of dollars -- specifically, in many cases, paying zero.

And there's been a lot of talk at this moment, as you know, about what infrastructure is and isn't. I would argue that infrastructure is the foundation that makes it possible for people to live and work well. And you can't live or work or thrive without things like roads, clean water, electricity, broadband -- yes, that's infrastructure. And investing in a full vision of infrastructure is how we build a safer and more prosperous America, and ultimately, I believe, critical to the American Dream.

So that's why I'm thrilled to be in this role, delighted by the American Jobs Plan announcement, and spending time every day speaking to stakeholders about how to make sure we get it through.

MS. PSAKI: All right. It's time to kick us off. Okay, Peter, go ahead.

Q Thank you. President Biden says he wants \$80 billion for rail. And the other day he was talking about having trains that can go across the country as fast as a plane. I'm curious, as the Transportation Secretary, do you see a big demand for that -- for a high-speed cross-country train?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, there's definitely a lot of excitement around America about ensuring that the American people can enjoy a high standard of passenger rail service. Like the President, I don't think Americans should settle for less

than citizens in other countries enjoy as a matter of course.

Now, the truth is, we have a backlog to deal with, in addition to making sure that we can create new routes and new capacity. And what's great about the scale of the American Jobs Plan is it's going to support both of those things: maintenance that we've needed to do all along, and a chance to build new routes and expand what Americans can access.

Q And about how long away are we from something like a high-speed cross-country train?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, again, we need to add a lot -- first of all -- to what we've already got, but we can build new routes with the resources that are here. It's not the end of the story, but it's a fantastic beginning for a new chapter in American rail.

MS. PSAKI: Josh.

Q Thanks for doing this. As you know, there's been some criticism about the corporate tax hike. Some people have said that user fees should fund infrastructure. And I was curious because user fees often cover the costs of maintenance and repairs. Does this administration have a plan to cover maintenance and repairs for all the infrastructure that's being built?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: So, as you know, the Jobs Plan envisions this being covered through corporate taxes. And the President believes very strongly that this is not something that should burden ordinary American families at a time when we've got so many corporations that have paid literally zero.

And I also would argue that there's ample evidence that American corporations can be competitive at a tax rate like 28, for the simple reason that they were extremely competitive at a tax rate like 35. If they could handle 35, surely they can handle 28, which was lower -- of course, is lower -- would be lower than it's been for most of my lifetime.

Now, we've heard a lot of different ideas on what the payfors should be. I think this is a good time to take those inputs on board. But for my dime, it's pretty hard to beat the vision that the President put forward.

Q Does there need to be a dedicated revenue stream?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, look, we'll keep talking with Congress about this. But as you know, for some time we've seen general fund dollars going into supporting maintenance. So there are a lot of different ways to do this, but the best way I've seen -- especially for these kind of capital improvements -- is exactly what's in the President's plan.

MS. PSAKI: Mike.

Q Hi, Mr. Secretary. Having covered local -- state and local government for almost 20 years before coming here, I've seen the divisions that can erupt in -- within the state, between regions of the state over -- as they fight over limited pots of money to build these kinds of infrastructure projects.

How involved do you think the federal government, the Department of Transportation, the Congress, the White House should be in making the inevitable choices that are going to have to be made, in terms of which bridge gets fixed first, which road gets widened?

You know, there's obviously not enough money to fix everything and to do everything. And so, how much of a role do you envision playing? Or is it up to the states to kind of wage the wars they normally wage over this stuff?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, I think there's always been a push/pull here -- right? -- because communities often know what is most needed for them. And we welcome that, and I think our program design recognizes that. So I view our role as laying out the broad policy strokes.

Even in the existing discretionary grant programs, you've seen this. So, for example, with the INFRA -- formerly known as FAST grants -- we made sure that that first wave of calls for applications clarified that we're looking for great projects that also bear on things like equity and climate that are important to this administration. And you'll continue to see that in the program design.

Of course, there's always going to be competition for limited funds. But the other thing I would say is: That competition is most ferocious when the funds are most limited. And so, part of what we're trying to do here is make sure there's an ample set of resources to go around so that some communities may be the most successful in rounds of competition, but that it doesn't feel like other communities [sic] -- communities are being left behind, because we've got to make sure there's enough to raise the bar in the country as a whole.

Q And just one quick follow-up on that. To the extent that then a lot of that decision making gets pushed to the local level because that's where they know that the -- you know, how to allocate the needs, how does the federal government retain oversight over what is an enormous amount of money -- both in terms of, you know, just, sort of, waste, fraud, and abuse, but also in terms of making sure that -- you know, that it adheres to those kind of broader equity -- equity, you know, issues that you guys have talked so much about?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Yeah, I mean, that's a big responsibility for a department like mine that will be charged with carrying this out. And the President has already made clear his very high expectations for us in the Rescue Plan dollars. Right? That's about \$40 billion, just out of the Rescue Plan, that we got to manage well.

But, you know, he also rightly takes pride in the remarkably low rate of waste, fraud, and abuse in the -- in the Recovery Act that he led in the Obama administration. I think now is the moment to make sure we double down on those principles to make sure that the dollars are well spent.

And, yes, we got to make sure that they actually meet the public policy goals that are motivating us to do this in the first place.

MS. PSAKI: Ed.

Q Secretary, thanks for doing this. Although with you and Chris here, I'm having like alternative universe flashbacks to -- (laughter) -- other times and other places. Since you're Transportation Secretary -- travel, obviously a big part of what you have to worry about. To Americans eager to get back overseas, whether it's by plane or by cruise ship -- as you know, there have been questions about the cruise industry, especially this past week.

CDC issued some guidance; there's concerns that it perhaps didn't have enough specifics -- or specific benchmarks, I guess. Have you been in touch with the CDC about that industry's concerns? And to cruise industry leaders who say, "We should be treated more like the airlines," what would you say?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, the bottom line is safety. Right? And we've -- look, I'm the Secretary of Transportation; I can't wait for us all to be on the move as much as possible in a safe and responsible way, but it's got to be safe and responsible. And airlines have -- airplanes have one safety profile; cruise ships have another, vehicles have another. And each one needs to be treated based on what's safe for that sector.

I'll tell you, I certainly care a lot about seeing the cruise sector thrive. And I know that CDC is hopeful that a lot of these operators will be in a position to be sailing by mid-summer. And laying out these specific, kind of, gates that they need to get through is a very important step toward that.

Q And to the industry leaders who say mid-summer is too late, to the governors who say that's too late for our state economies, you would say what?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: We want to do this as soon as we responsibly can, but we also have to make sure that it's safe.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Steve?

Q Once you get the money from the Rescue Plan, is there a process for speeding the projects that you're getting construction started? Because there's always delays and permitting and so forth.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Yeah, this is another thing that I was glad to see specifically discussed in the Jobs Plan release, which is the importance of efficiently delivering these dollars. And we see that a lot of countries that have very rigorous standards around environmental and other concerns also have found ways to make sure the delivery is efficient.

So provided it does not entail cutting any corners on things that are fundamental policy goals and legal requirements like, you know, environmental standards -- you know, provided we can do it without cutting corners, I think we can find ways to make sure that the process is more efficient, to look for duplication, and try to root that out.

And that's going to be an important part of making sure that these dollars do the most good economically. Although I would point out this is not the same kind of stimulus pattern we were talking about in 2009. Right? We're looking for shovel-worthy projects, but we're also looking -- or shovel-ready projects but also shovel-worthy projects that are still in that pipeline.

MS. PSAKI: Jenny?

Q To pivot, really quickly, to planes: There's been problems discovered with the 737 MAX. Dozens of them have been grounded, and this was months after the FAA said they were safe to fly again. I'm curious if you still have confidence in the FAA's decision to lift the grounding of the jet.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: So, my understanding -- and we're just looking at this -- but my understanding is that this is different from any of those other issues and that -- obviously, that we need to make sure that they are -- that there's full confidence before these specific aircraft return to the air. And that's what the FAA will be closely monitoring.

MS. PSAKI: Patsy.

Q Thank you. Mr. Secretary, many administration officials, including Secretary Granholm yesterday, frame infrastructure in the context of competition with China. So my question is: Why do that? Why design and frame a policy based -- or in the context of what an adversary is doing?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: I think because it's really important to understand that American competitiveness happens in a context. And when you see other countries -- our allies; also our strategic competitors -- doing more than we are, it challenges that fundamental idea that American life is what it is partly because America is in first place in so many of these aspects of our national life. Only America is not in first place in infrastructure. Like I said, we're in 13th.

So when you have a strategic competitor, like China, investing sometimes multiples of what we are in forms of transportation, we have to make a decision about whether we're content to be left behind or whether we actually want to remain number one.

And for my dime, there's no good reason why we should settle for less, why we should be content that -- it's nothing against Chinese citizens, but I'm not content that a Chinese citizen can count on a dramatically better standard of, let's say, train travel than a U.S. citizen. I think Americans should always have the best, and I think that's the tone that the President sets every day.

Q Just to follow up on that, is it partly also a messaging strategy to get more Republican support?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, I'll say that I've heard a lot of voices from across the aisle also expressing concern about

whether America is falling behind in any number of strategic and economic dimensions.

And again, a lot of that depends on what we're investing. And this is nothing new. Right? I mean, part of what made the Interstate Highway System so important was an understanding that our national security, in the Eisenhower era, was well served by making sure that we had a more connected economy and country.

We're not in the Cold War, and this is not the Eisenhower era, but that principle that national security is at stake applies, especially when you consider that, today, one of the biggest threats to our national security is the global security threat posed by climate change.

MS. PSAKI: We have time for a few more. Go ahead, Kaitlan.

Q Have you personally spoken with Senator Manchin about this proposal?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: I'm looking forward to speaking with him soon.

Q This next week? Or --

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: I don't remember the date, but I think we got a conversation in the works.

Q And he, of course, has an issue with the corporate tax rate going to 28 percent. Is -- in his proposal -- his counter proposal -- it's been 25 percent. Can this plan be successful with a 25 percent corporate tax rate?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, as you know, the -- maybe the flagship piece that people are talking about most is the rate, but there's a lot of other things alongside that -- right? -- in terms of what's going on with loopholes, the offshoring incentives, and other things.

And I haven't had a chance to get a sense of how he views those things adding up -- whether he envisions another element that makes up for the gap between 25 and 28. Those are the kinds of things I want to take up with him and get a -- have a good conversation on.

Because I think, you know, for anyone who is on board -- and, by the way, I have yet to talk to anybody who -- including in conversations with Republicans -- who is against the idea of a big investment in infrastructure. Right?

So most of the dialogue we're having is around how we're going to pay for it, and we're really eager to hear the alternative suggestions for how to pay for it.

Q And have Republicans given you, so far, alternative suggestions for how to pay for it that you believe are viable?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Not in any detail, no.

MS. PSAKI: Alana?

Q Just to follow up on what Kaitlan said because she actually asked my question. (Laughs.)

MS. PSAKI: Some coordination. (Laughter.)

Q Not in coordination. But you would be opposed -- so you would be willing to lower the corporate tax rate in exchange for maybe closing additional loopholes? Or -- like, the 28 percent, is that a fixed rate that you are dead set on?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, we've heard the President say that this is going to be a process of negotiation, that we're going to take ideas on board, that there's going to be refinement as we go.

I haven't heard a proposal that I consider to be better than the one the President put forward, but it's early in that legislative process.

MS. PSAKI: Rob, make it a good one.

Q Well, I've got a couple from people who can't be here today because of COVID-19 restrictions, as their print pooler. So, first of all, from Chris Megerian of the LA Times: To follow up on the high-speed train question, how about California high-speed rail? Is that a project that could be funded through the infrastructure bill?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Potentially. I mean, I think it's important to recognize that communities of different types and in each part of the country can benefit from high-speed rail or even from raising the standards of what most other countries would consider regular-speed rail and their availability here in the U.S. But this is not crafted in a way that's targeting any one area; this is about lifting our game as a country.

Q And, if I may, from Ben Gittleman at WABC in New York: Does the administration support congestion charging in New York City? And will the administration do anything for drivers who will ultimately pay that premium?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: So this is a decision for the different parties that are all involved in that. Our responsibility mostly has to do with the environmental assessment process that goes on. We're certainly very interested to see that process unfold. And, you know, we think different solutions work differently for different parts of the country. It's not an example of something that's best designed here in Washington and then imposed on local communities. But, obviously, there's a real challenge with congestion there and a real revenue opportunity as well.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Thanks very much. Real honored to be here.

MS. PSAKI: Appreciate you coming. And we'll have him -- invite him back.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Sounds good. Thank you.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: And thank you for Chris too, while you're here. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: (Laughs.) You're welcome. I was a little concerned when I saw him deputized to be backup Easter Bunny -- (laughter) -- but I'm counting on -- I'm counting on you all to treat him well.

MS. PSAKI: That's right. The indoctrination we agreed upon. Thank you so much.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you for joining us.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. All right, Chris will always be the bunny in our eyes. (Laughter.)

So, a couple of items for you just while we are wrapping up the week. As you know, the administration has submitted to Congress President Biden's discretionary funding request for fiscal year 2022. I know we did a call this morning, but just to give you all a little bit more from here:

As Congress prepares to begin the annual appropriations process, the request lays out the President's discretionary funding recommendations across a wide range of policy areas, and outlines a strategy for reinvesting in the foundations of our country's resilience and strength. The request, which represents only one element of the administration's broader agenda, includes major investments -- proposed investments, I should say -- in K-through-12 education, cutting-edge medical research, housing, civil rights, and a range of other priorities that are vital to our future.

Later this spring, we will release the President's full budget, which will present a unified, comprehensive plan to address the overlapping crises we face in a fiscally and economically responsible way. And that will also include a number of the proposals you've seen him introduce over the last -- well, the big proposal he just introduced and other proposals that he will introduce between now and then.

Our country is confronting historic crises: a pandemic, an economic downturn, climate change, and a reckoning on racial injustice. At the same time, we're also inheriting a legacy of chronic underinvestment, in our view, in priorities that are vital to our long-term success and our ability to confront the challenges before us.

So the President is focused on reversing this trend and reinvesting in the foundations of our strength. And this process provides another opportunity to do that, and so the funding proposal is an indication of our priorities.

You may have also noticed another flag flying above the White House today. In keeping with the President and the First Lady's commitment to honor the sacrifices of all those who serve -- including veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors -- the President and First Lady have restored the POW/MIA flag to its original location on top of the White House Residence.

In a true display of bipartisanship, Senators Hassan, Warren, and Cotton wrote to the President at the beginning of the administration requesting the POW/MIA flag fly high above the Residence. This follows passage of a bipartisan -- bipartisan legislation in 2019, led by those same senators, which requires the flag to be displayed whenever the American flag flies on federal buildings.

Today also happens to be National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day -- a day when we remember and honor those who were in captivity in service to our nation and recognize those who awaited their return.

I have two more items; one of them is a week ahead.

The Semiconductor Summit -- of great interest to many of you, I know. On Monday afternoon, following President Biden's release of his Ameri- -- let's see. Hold on. On Monday afternoon, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and NEC Director Brian Deese will host a virtual CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience to discuss both the American Jobs Plan, as well as steps to strengthen the resilience of American supply chains for semiconductors and other key areas -- something we discuss in here quite frequently.

They will also be joined by Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, who has been one of the leading voices in the administration.

We provided a list to the pool of the attendees or the companies that will be represented at that, which you should all have. And if not, let us know, and we will give it to you directly, after the briefing.

Finally, for the week ahead, the President will, of course, continue making the case in public and in meetings with members of Congress for the critical need to pass the American Jobs Plan and make historic investments in infrastructure.

On Monday, he will meet with Democratic and Republican members of both the House and Senate to discuss the American Jobs Plan and the need for a bold, once-in-a-generation investment in America to put millions of people to work. I expect we will provide that list on Monday, once attendees are confirmed. It will be bipartisan and bicameral, that meeting.

As Speaker Pelosi's office announced earlier today, on Tuesday, the President will pay his respects in a congressional tribute for U.S. Capitol Police Officer William Evans as he lies in honor in the Capitol Rotunda.

Later that day, he will meet with members of the Congressional Black Caucus at the White House.

On Thursday, the President will meet with members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

And on Friday, the President will welcome the Prime Minister of Japan. As you all already know, this will be the President's first in-person visit with a foreign leader, reflecting the importance of our bilateral relationship. And I expect they will take some questions after that meeting.

With that, Josh.

Q Thanks, Jen. Three things, real quick. First, the discretionary spending proposal --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- tries to make investments in the country that the administration says couldn't be made because of the 2011 Budget Control Act and the caps on spending. That deal had to be reached with Republicans. Now, I'm curious, what gives you more confidence that an increase in discretionary spending can be reached with today's Republicans than the Republicans of a decade ago?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that any budgetary proposal, including a discretionary proposal that is not a full budget, is an opportunity to outline the priorities of the existing administration. And it is a reflection of the President's view that a number of these discretionary programs were underfunded over the last several years, and therefore prompted a plus-up and a proposed plus-up -- because if we are going to address a range of issues where there is agreement among Republicans as well, that we need to work together to, you know, support additional funding to address these various crises in our country.

So I will say we're at the beginning of our process. This is the beginning of what we know is a long journey. It's meant to give discretionary guidance so that officials and staffers on the Hill -- the former -- the people who followed in the footsteps of Shalanda Young -- can get to work. That's exactly what it will do, and we're looking forward to having those conversations.

Q Two, does the President have any thoughts on the votes of Amazon workers in Alabama against unionization -- something he, kind of, encouraged them to take that vote?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has said that whether to organize a union is a worker's choice. And the National Labor Relations Board has a process for ensuring there's an accurate count of the votes cast in selection so that we can know what choice the workers have made.

So the President is going to wait -- just for your own planning -- for the NLRB to finish its process and declare a result to make a further comment.

But I will say, broadly, as you know and you alluded to in your question, we know it's very difficult for workers to make the choice to form a union. That's why the President's American Jobs Plan includes the right -- protecting the Right to Organize Act, which would give more workers the ability to organize and bargain collectively for -- with their employees. And that's a fundamental priority for him; something he's fought for throughout his career. But we will wait for further comment until the NLRB concludes their analysis.

Q And then, North Korea's leader said the country's economic woes right now are the worst since the famine in the 1990s. Does that create any additional security risks for the U.S.? And are we under any obligation to deal with the

1990s. Does that create any additional security risks for the U.S.? And are we under any obligation to deal with the humanitarian crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that no actions that we are taking, as it relates to sanctions, are meant to be targeted at the North Korean people. They are in the conditions and the circumstances they're in because of the actions of their leadership.

We continue to work with international leaders and organizations to provide humanitarian assistance. It's something that we believe is important and vital to do from a humane standpoint, even while we have issues with their nuclear aspirations.

Go ahead.

Q Is the -- we looked at the Pentagon budget. You're proposing a modest increase.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Is that enough to meet the priorities set out by the administration since you're facing an increasingly assertive China, and Russia poses a threat to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: You're absolutely right, Steve. And we've spoken, of course, about our concerns about exactly those issues. I will say that, first, that this is a proposal for -- to give guidance to the Hill, and hardworking budget staffers on the Hill, as they put together the 2022 -- excuse me -- budgetary plans.

The focus of the plus-up on defense is meant to address a couple of issues over that period of time: promoting diversity and inclusion in the armed forces; fulfilling our commitments to military families -- part of it goes to military and civilian pay increases, or that's what's proposed -- is proposed; prioritizing defense investments in climate resilience and energy efficiency. We believe it provides a robust funding level for the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security is grounded in the administration's Interim National Security Guidance.

But again, there will be a full budget later this spring that will be proposed by this White House.

Q And, secondly, China has been conducting military exercises around Taiwan. How do you interpret these moves? Are you concerned that they might invade Taiwan?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our -- first, let me say that we're not looking, as you know, for confrontation with China. We are -- our focus and our relationship is one based on steep competition.

We have been clearly -- publicly and privately expressed our concerns -- our growing concerns about China's aggression towards Taiwan. China has taken increasingly coercive action to undercut democracy in Taiwan. We've seen a concerning increase in PRC military activity in the Taiwan Strait, which we believe is potentially destabilizing.

So we are watching that closely. I can't make any other predictions from here. Of course, the Department of Defense and others would be in the lead on making those assessments.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you. The President's commission on expanding the Supreme Court is out. We know he's going to wait for the results. What is the President's view on the -- of the calls for Justice Breyer to step down?

MS. PSAKI: He believes that's a decision Justice Breyer will make when he decides it's time to no longer serve on the Supreme Court.

Q So should those groups pushing for him go back off?

Q -- so should those groups pushing for him go back on.

MS. PSAKI: I think I can just speak to what the President's view is of the Supreme Court justice's ability to make his own decision.

Q And outside the inauguration, when he was sworn in, has he had any conversations with Supreme Court justices?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of. I'm happy to check if there's anything we can read out.

Q Next week, Congress gets back. You announced this bicameral, bipartisan meeting. You're entering an interesting phase where, in the House and the Senate, there is now a single vote margin between the two parties. And, in essence, one, two, or three members of your own party could upend the President's legislative agenda.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q How are you guys recalibrating to deal with this closer majority -- or closer margin in both chambers, as you try to get these incredibly expensive and ambitious plans passed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that that -- what an interesting time to be in Washington and be all of you. You know, our focus has long been working with Democrats and Republicans. That is the President's objective. And obviously, the close margins make that a necessity.

And so when we are inviting -- when he is inviting members here, he's inviting not just one wing of a party, not just one wing even of his own party; he wants to have the discussion about how we can work together to address our nation's outdated infrastructure and rebuilding our workforce for the future.

Now, from our vantage point and from our viewpoint, we've seen there have been a number of Republicans in the Senate -- I'll give you more homework, but you probably know this off the top of your head, Ed -- who have supported infrastructure bills; who have supported, you know, the WRDA bills; who have supported legislation that is consistent with what the President is proposing.

And as Secretary Buttigieg just conveyed: In a lot of the discussions we're having, most of the disagreement is about -- some is about the size. Some think it's too small. Some think it's too big. It's like Goldilocks. We'll have those discussions. But also about the payfors. And so those are the conversations that we will have.

But, largely, the margins in Washington don't change our approach, because the President was elected because he was committed to working with both parties, to working together to address the crises our country is facing.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Thank you very much. To follow up on Ed's questions about the Supreme Court --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- action today: President Biden once said, in 1983, he thought court-packing was --

MS. PSAKI: Whoa. A time-back machine.

Q Oh, yeah. He said he thought that court-packing was a "bonehead idea" when FDR tried it. So why ask a panel now to go and see if it is a good idea?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, he's -- the panel is being asked to do a number of -- take a number of steps, including the pros and cons on exactly that issue. But they will also be looking at the Court's role in the constitutional system: the length of service

... on safety, that about that they will also be looking at the Court's role in the constitutional system, the length of service and turnover of justice on the Court -- justices on the Court; the membership and size of the Court; and the Court's case selection rules and practices.

And the makeup of this commission, which was vital for the President, was -- is there are progressives on the Court, there are conservatives on the Court. People will present different opinions and different points of view, and then they'll have a report at the end of 180 days.

Q Okay. And then, about immigration: The U.S. government is now reportedly spending \$60 million a week to shelter migrant children; that adds up to \$3.1 billion in a year. Where is that money coming from?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that, as you may recall, the prior administration requested and received nearly \$3 billion in supplemental funding from Congress for the UC program back in 2019. That came after the previous administration had already made multiple transfers of hundreds of millions of dollars.

And our commitment is to ensuring HHS has the funds it needs now to safely and humanely care for children, which of course is resource intensive; we know that. There are 200 permanent shelters around the country, and there are needs related to the pandemic, social distancing, enhanced ventilation, and testing that are additional needs given the time that we're living in.

Q And because of the time that we're living in, is there concern, if this is HHS money, that it is -- that these shelters -- the Washington Post says the costs are going to rise significantly -- that the shelters might be draining pandemic response elsewhere.

MS. PSAKI: No, that is not what our concern is. We -- at all. We have funding for the pandemic response. I'm just conveying to you what we feel this cost is and why it is at the rate it is at this point in time.

Q And then, just one more. Texas Governor Greg Abbott says that he asked the Biden administration to shut down a temporary shelter for migrant kids at the Freeman Coliseum in San Antonio because he says he's gotten information that children there are being sexually assaulted. Is that facility going to be shut down?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we take the safety and the wellbeing of children in our care very seriously, hence our earlier conversation about the funding spent to keep them safe during the pandemic.

We are -- his claims will be looked into and investigated by the Department of Health and Human Services. Currently, we have no basis for his call to shut down the Freeman -- the San Antonio Freeman Coliseum as an intake site, but we will -- of course, we take these -- this -- these allegations seriously, and they will be investigated.

Q And the last one would just be -- you said this week that you guys are trying to make the processing more efficient and effective and that you're addressing this in a humane way that keep these kids as safe as we possibly can. If these allegations are true, how is that consistent with what you guys are trying to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we are looking into these allegations; we take them seriously. And our focus remains on the safety and wellbeing of children, hence we're looking into them and taking it very seriously.

Go ahead, Kaitlan.

Q Thank you. On the commission for the Supreme Court, when President Biden first disclosed this idea -- I believe he was still a candidate when he said this -- he said he wanted recommendations as to how to reform the court system because, quote, "It's getting out of whack." Yet this commission is not going to actually make recommendations. So why --

MS. PSAKI: They will be. They'll be doing a report 180 day -- at 180 days. That will be released to the public.

Q But it's a report, but it's not them actually making recommendations to the President.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm sure he'll take a look at that report that this diverse group of members are putting together, thinking through over the next 180 days, and it will impact his thinking moving forward.

Q So, but it won't explicitly say, "Here is a recommendation from what we've studied to do XYZ"?

MS. PSAKI: It's meant to be a report and a summary of their discussions and their findings. I don't know what it will look like, and I'm not going to get ahead of what their process will be.

Q Okay. And then, on the lawmakers who were being invited on Monday --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- who picked the group of lawmakers that are being invited? Was it the President?

MS. PSAKI: The White House. You know --

Q Legislative Affairs?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) These decisions are made in coordination between the legislative affairs team and, of course, with the approval of the President on who will be invited.

And I will just say that whenever we have the final list, this will be the first of what we envision, as you can see by his schedule next week, to be many meetings and many of them bipartisan as well.

Q And is it important for him to have Senator Manchin there on Monday?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure if he will be a part of it or not. He is somebody that we're, of course, in close touch with and we look forward to working with as we move the American Jobs Plan forward.

Q Okay. And my last question on Johnson & Johnson -- given just how much money the federal government has given them, and the President has ordered an additional 100 million doses from them -- has he actually spoken with any of the executives at Johnson & Johnson, given these uneven numbers of doses that we're seeing coming in and how slow they've been to get an even, steady supply of production?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that our COVID Coordinator, Jeff Zients, and other members of our COVID team are typically the appropriate points of contact with leaders from any of these companies. We always expected there to be -- to be up and down -- their production.

We, of course -- as you all know because we've been talking about it, they have taken steps and they've worked closely with HHS to work toward FDA approval. That's obviously up to the FDA for the Emergent facility, which will certainly enhance their production capacity.

But we see this as -- you know, our role here is to take steps we can from the federal government along the way to help ensure that we are getting as much J&J supply and doses out to states, out to the American people, so that it can contribute to our recovery from the pandemic.

But we always knew -- we've known for some time that there would be ups and downs on the road.

Q But I think, also, we thought that they would have a lot more ready by now than what they have produced. I mean, according to the initial federal contract (inaudible), it's far different than what that was supposed to be. Understandably,

there are issues, but does the President feel that this rises to the level that he should make a phone call to someone at Johnson & Johnson to discuss what's been going on?

MS. PSAKI: He's confident in the role that the COVID team plays. And we've also been assured by Johnson & Johnson that they remain committed to meeting their contract of delivering 100 million doses by the end of May.

Go ahead, Mike.

Q Two things. First, to follow up on Kaitlan's question about the commission --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- it is my understanding that the commission has actively decided not to make any specific recommendations for or against the court -- the issues that they're examining, whether that be term limits on justices or expanding the size of the Court. That does differ from what the President seemed to say as a candidate. Is -- are you suggesting that he wants the commission to change that direction and actually come to him with specific recommendations?

MS. PSAKI: No, I'm only suggesting that he put together -- he asked his team to put together this commission to reflect a diversity of viewpoints, which it certainly will. And I'm certain that when that report is released in 180 days -- their work has not even begun yet -- he's going to sign -- once he signs the executive order, it can officially begin -- that he will -- that will, of course, impact his thinking, moving forward.

But he wants smart legal experts, people who have been thinking about these issues for some -- for decades, to have a discussion and a debate about it and deliver him a report that we will, again, be delivering to the public and you all can read once it is completed.

Q Okay. And then, on Afghanistan, there are reports out about growing frustration among the commanders in the military and the President's generals about the President's indecision on the question of what to do by May 1st. What do you -- what do you say, what does the President say to, you know, his generals and the people that are dealing with the situation in Afghanistan as to why we're now just weeks from this deadline and we still don't have an answer as to which way it's going to go -- whether the troops are leaving or not?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know there was a report with unnamed sources, so we don't know who those sources are, of course -- which I know is typically frustrating to all of you.

But the President's commitment is to bringing a responsible end to the conflict, removing our troops from harm's way, and ensuring that Afghanistan can never again become a haven for terrorists and would -- that would threaten the United States or any of our allies.

He wants to make that decision in close consultation with partners around the world, with the advice of his national security team, and do it in a way that ensures we are protecting our national interests and the safety and security of our troops -- all at the same time, where there's diplomatic negotiations with the Taliban.

So he has been clear -- publicly, I think -- that it is operationally challenging to get troops out by May 1st, but I certainly expect you will hear from him on what his decision is in advance of that period of time.

Q But is it responsible for the -- I mean, you talk about a "responsible management of the situation." Is it responsible to let a deadline like that come within a matter of days even perhaps, without -- with the military not really knowing for sure what their posture is going to be?

MS. PSAKI: I can assure you that the President's approach is responsible and that he is taking the advice, the counsel, the consultations of members of his military leadership, members of his diplomatic leadership, and also our partners and

friends around the world into -- into consideration as he s making his decision.

And his view is that s the responsible approach.

Q And one last thing that occurred to me -- I wouldn t want Friday to go by without asking --

MS. PSAKI: Is it about the dog?

Q No. No.

Q It s about the cat. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: It had a dog feeling in the air today. (Laughter.)

Q The speech to Congress.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, sure.

Q You know, you did a "week ahead."

MS. PSAKI: I know.

Q Didn t seem to have that included in there for next week.

MS. PSAKI: It will not be next week.

Q It will not be next week. So do you have any better -- I think you said, yesterday or the day before, you re still working with the Speaker s office, but nothing new to add?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing new to report. And I would just remind you that whenever a date is finalized, the invitation would be officially issued -- right? -- from the Speaker s office. So -- but we are --

Q I mean, I guess the more serious question -- part of the question about that would be, though, you ve obviously now -- you re stacking up things that you need to sell -- that you and the White House and the President need to sell to the American public. You ve got the Jobs Plan; now, you ve got the budget that, you know, you ve added on there.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You know, Presidents typically use these moments of a speech to the Congress and to the public as a as an opportunity to sell this, to kind of make the pitch. Are you guys depriving yourselves of some opportunities to do that by delaying this?

MS. PSAKI: I promise you we will have something to sell in the speech, and we will use it for that -- for that opportunity.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thank you. Jen, my question is about the U.S. global response to the pandemic. Now, we know that we ve given \$4 billion to COVAX, there s the initiative with the Quad, some vaccine sharing with Mexico. But what we haven t heard from the administration is a kind of comprehensive and detailed strategy in terms of what the U.S. is doing to help the world recover from the pandemic not just in terms of vaccine sharing, but also supporting a financing mechanism or manufacturing, what have you. And I know that you ve just appointed the Global COVID Response Coordinator. When can

we expect her to be here to share the administration's strategy with us?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're happy to invite her. She works out of the State Department. Right? So I would expect that she might speak there first, if you or a colleague is over there covering.

I would say, look, that our approach is that the President remains committed to playing a constructive role in the global effort to defeat the virus. That includes contributing through COVAX; it includes, obviously, lending support -- lending doses to Canada and Mexico; it includes considering a range of requests that are coming in from around the world.

But as we've also seen, this is a very unpredictable virus, and his first priority is ensuring that the American people are vaccinated. And that means we need to plan for supplies so that we can -- when we know what's most effective for kids, that we can plan around also, different things that come up -- as we've seen over the last week or so with Emergent and Johnson & Johnson -- that we have enough supply and enough capacity and we've done enough contingency planning for that.

That's our first priority, but we will continue to be -- work to play a constructive role in the global community.

Q I understand that the strategy is to be oversupplied and overprepared for domestic needs, but at what point should the administration consider pivoting from just focusing on domestic needs and start responding to global needs, particularly at a time when China and Russia, as you know, is increasing, in terms of their vaccine diplomacy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, when we are confident in our supply at home, we will share vaccines, including through COVAX.

Q And I have one more on --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Yesterday, you mentioned that the administration is concerned about Russia's increased military presence in the border with Ukraine. Can you confirm reporting that the administration is considering to send warships as a show of support to Ukraine in the region?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to DOD for anything about our military assets.

Go ahead, Jenny.

Q Thanks. On the climate summit, I think we're now two weeks away, and I --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- I asked a couple weeks ago if there was any plans to have a bilateral with the Chinese President on the sidelines of it. So, first, has the White House made a decision on that?

And then, two, do you plan any bilaterals on the sidelines to conduct any business outside of the overall climate summit that's taking place?

MS. PSAKI: It's a great question. We're still figuring out what the additional components -- or what the format of the summit will look like. We've invited about 40 leaders from around the world, so there's obviously a lot of scheduling to be done. But I expect we won't have a final update on that until we get to be probably within days of the summit.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you very much. Two questions if I might. One, on Ukraine: So you've had a response to SolarWinds and the

past election meddling pending for -- well, ever since we've been doing this.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is there -- is there any concern that the new challenges from Russia are kind of piling up now? And is the administration, which is obviously still a new administration, ready for that?

And, as an example, does the administration have, ready to go, a response if Russia were to send some of those troops or all of them into Ukraine, which is obviously, you know, not impossible?

And if you do have a response ready to go, have you communicated it to the Kremlin as a means of deterrence, you would hope?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that -- of the actions that have already been taken, that we've had ongoing reviews about -- we've been clear, but I will reiterate: There will be consequences, some unseen and some seen. We will hope to have more about those soon. I know you guys are tired of hearing that, but hopefully soon.

As it relates to the escalating Russian aggressions in Eastern Ukraine, including Russia's troop movements on Ukraine's borders, we are, of course, in close consultation and working with partners and allies in the region to assess, to share intelligence, to determine what's happening, and what can be done about it. But I'm not going to get ahead of that internal diplomatic process.

Q Have you -- have you, you know, made that call, as it were, to the Kremlin to say, you know, "You do this; this is what's going to happen" to try and put them off, or not?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say that's exactly how it goes down, but, you know, we --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: -- of course, communicate closely. I will say, we communicate at many levels, as you know. There was a call that was done at the defense-secretary level just last week with the Russians. There was also a call done by our Secretary of State. We, of course, communicate at many levels that are even far below that. And, of course, the President spoke with the President of Ukraine just last Friday.

So I can assure you there's ongoing diplomatic engagement between us and a number of countries in the region, including Russia, including Ukraine, including our European partners and allies who share a number of our concerns about the aggression of Russian movements on the border.

Q Thank you. And the other question -- domestic. On the infrastructure, where -- on a scale of 1 to 10, if you could do that -- does the --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, probably not, but try me. (Laughter.) I always love yes-and-no questions.

Q I know. Well, this is a 1-to-10, so --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- you've 10 choices.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Does the President, who is an avowed bipartisan guy, put getting one or more Republicans to support this -- I know

you've been saying consistently that it doesn't -- in a way, it doesn't matter what they do on the Hill because the public supports what the President is doing, and you point to polls, and they do say that.

MS. PSAKI: We don't say it doesn't matter; it's just an impact. And there's a question that I hope your colleagues on the Hill ask a number of Republicans, which is: Why would they oppose investment in our nation's infrastructure when the vast majority of the American public thinks it's imperative we do?

But as the Secretary just said, the disagreement is not really about the need to modernize our nation's infrastructure. It's about the size; it's about the payoffs. And we absolutely understand there will be compromise, there will be debate. That's all a part of the process.

Q Isn't it a little dangerous to be always citing the polls though, as you're -- basically all your credibility rests in the polls?

MS. PSAKI: Do you not think the American people's view is important as it relates to what elected officials do on the Hill?

Q Sure. But don't polls change a lot, whereas the elected officials are elected officials representing (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: There's been pretty consistent support for infrastructure. And I think it's an important point. We feel like it's an important point. Because when we talk about bipartisanship, we're talking about how we meet the needs of the American people -- Republicans, independents, Democrats. Rebuilding bridges is not a Democratic idea. Ensuring kids don't have access to -- have access to clean water is not a Democratic idea. Broadband access probably actually impacts more rural areas that might be leaning more Republican than Democratic, if you look at it -- the maps across the country.

So our point is: This is addressing not a political issue; this is addressing a vital need in the country that's not -- that impacts all of the American people.

Q I think that's a seven. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: A seven? (Laughter.)

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Okay, fair. I don't even know -- I don't even know what the rating numbers are about anymore.

Rob, go ahead.

Q We saw the statement earlier, but has the President been in touch with Buckingham Palace and Number 10 about the death of Prince Philip? And does he have any plans to attend the funeral?

MS. PSAKI: He has not been in touch directly himself, no. We put out a statement in his name and the First Lady's name earlier today. I'm not aware of any plans at this point in time.

Q And Hunter Biden's book is out this week. To what extent was the White House, the President, the transition -- whatever that timing might have been -- involved in vetting its contents?

MS. PSAKI: We were not. It was a book he wrote himself. The President and First Lady put out a statement making clear -- in February, I should say, when the book was announced -- that they're deeply supportive of their son sharing his account about his painful experiences with addiction, which is exactly what the book does, and that they're hopeful that it can help millions of people who have struggled with the same challenges.

Q And if I may, one for a reporter who can't be here for the COVID-19 restrictions, Allison Harris of NewsNation. A Blue Star Families report shows that almost half of active-duty troops won't get vaccinated against COVID-19. Members of

Congress have sent a letter --

MS. PSAKI: Because of their hesitation?

Q Yes -- or I believe so.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Members of Congress have written to the President, urging him to issue a waiver of informed consent so that troops would be mandatorily vaccinated. Is that something the President is considering -- would consider?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly think he would refer to the advice and view of the Secretary of Defense, so I'd point you to them for any point of view on that letter.

Q I think -- okay, thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead, Alana.

Q Thank you. CBP data said this week that the number of unoccupied migrant children crossing the border -- unaccompanied minor children, sorry -- had increased 100 percent from February to March. If these numbers continue to rise, is there a point that the administration would consider reversing or modifying the policy of accepting all unaccompanied minor migrants under -- using Title 42 authorities?

MS. PSAKI: Would be -- would we no longer accept -- just so I understand the question --

Q Yeah --

MS. PSAKI: -- children who are under 18?

Q Mm-hmm. Would you consider reversing or modifying?

MS. PSAKI: I would say, one, our -- the reason for accepting these children is that we feel it is not the humane step to send these kids back on their treacherous journey. Our focus is on addressing the needs, opening up shelters, ensuring there is access to health and educational resources, expediting processing at the border. And those are the steps we feel that are most effective from a policy standpoint at this point.

Q And then, just one more question on Amazon. The President supports the PRO Act, but how does he expect it to get through Congress, particularly if infrastructure is not done under reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: How does he expect to get the PRO Act passed through Congress? It is something that he certainly strongly supports, and it's consistent with his advocacy for the ability and rights of workers to organize.

I don't have anything on the legislative strategy and how -- what that will look like moving forward. I'd certainly point you to the Hill on that.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thanks, Jen. I want to ask you about the case of a 10-year-old Nicaraguan boy, who was -- videos went viral when he was seen walking the desert by himself, saying that he had been dumped by the group that he was with. Through our

reporting, we now know that this child had been deported with his mom days prior. His mom is kidnapped in Mexico. He was able to free himself through a family member who paid ransom, and that's how he ended up back in the U.S.

So I have two questions for you on that. One, why does the U.S. government continue to deport these people back to Mexico to dangerous situations and not to their countries of origin?

And the second question is: The President, back in October of 2020, in a conversation with Univision, said that he would grant deportation moratorium to Nicaraguans, as well as Venezuelans and Cubans. That happened for those two other groups and not for Nicaraguans. Do you have an update on that, and why that hasn't happened?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on the second. I'm happy to check and see with our diplomatic team what the status is and if there's any particular update.

I would say, in terms of deportation, it's handled, as you know, in a case-by-case basis. I would have to look into the specific details of this case. The Department of Homeland Security might have more specifics, if they can share them, on why they were sent back directly to Mexico.

Q But it's not just this family; all of the families are being sent right back to Mexico and not to their home countries. Do you know why?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more information. And they're all handled on a case by case. We don't typically speak about each case, given privacy concerns, but I can see if there's more we can share on this particular case.

Q I want -- and let me ask you what happened earlier in the week when the President of El Salvador did not welcome and did not want to meet with Mr. Zúñiga. What do you make of that? And how can you work with that government if those relationships seem fractured in a way?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you're right that when Special Envoy Zúñiga was in El Salvador, he did not meet with the President, but he did have productive meetings with the Foreign Minister and other senior officials, such as the Attorney General, OAS representatives, members of civil society, private sector leaders, and others.

So we felt it was still quite a constructive trip. These meetings, in our view, lay the foundation to build on the already strong bilateral dialogue we have with the administration at all levels, and we'll continue it from here.

Q So can you move forward without the President being involved -- the President of that country?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think they're predicting he won't be involved. They -- he just didn't have a meeting when Ricardo Zúñiga was in El Salvador, on the last trip. But he had a number of other constructive meetings, which we feel are a strong basis and foundation for moving forward.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you. Do you see any changes in the Chinese behavior or approach, of which the Biden administration is asking China to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, the masks make it hard sometimes to hear, and I know you're all the way in the back. Do we see changes -- do we -- say it one more time.

Q Yeah. You have reached out to Chinese -- even the President has spoken to the Chinese President. They're having several rounds of talks of -- over the phone with the Chinese. Do you see any changes in the Chinese behavior and approach to address your concerns?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say we're less than 100 days into our administration. What we can control is how we approach

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say we're less than 100 days into our administration. What we can control is now we approach our relationship with China. We see it as one that is about competition, not about conflict. And our focus is also on approaching the relationship from a position of strength. So that includes rebuilding, investing in our workforce at home. Things like infrastructure investment, ensuring we have broadband access across our country, certainly fit into that category. And also working very closely with our partners and allies in the region and also across Europe. So that's how we're approaching it.

In terms of assessments of their changes in behavior, I would leave that to all of you to assess.

Q But how do you characterize the response from the Chinese in the first 100 days?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not -- I don't have a new assessment from here. We are approaching this from a position of patience; we're not in a hurry. We are working to strengthen our conditions at home, better support our workforce, ensure that we are approaching the relationship from a position of strength.

Q In your week ahead, you said the Prime Minister of Japan will be coming here next Friday.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q This is the first foreign leader visiting this -- the White House under Biden. Can you give us a sense of what's the kind of preparation you're having? Is there going to be a joint statement or joint press conference with the foreign leader?

MS. PSAKI: I expect they'll have statements and will take some questions, as well, while they're here.

Q Okay. Just one more on Russia -- follow-up on Russia: The -- Bloomberg has said that the review is over and you -- the administration is discussing potential retaliatory measures at this stage. Can you confirm that? Is the review over? Are you considering some actions against Russia?

MS. PSAKI: I can confirm there will be consequences -- some seen, some unseen. And we hope to have more on that soon.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hi, thanks. I wanted to ask about the infrastructure plan and climate -- specifically, clean energy tax credits. Treasury released a summary recently with a few more details on this, but I'm just wondering if you guys have -- the White House has, kind of, a topline number for all those credits; how it affects the overall climate impact of the plan; and what role those might play in selling the plan to some Democrats on the left who have suggested they think the plan doesn't go far enough on climate.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I will say that the plan, we feel, reflects on the President's view that there is a profound urgency and existential threat that we are facing from our climate crisis. That the climate crisis is presenting an existential threat, I guess, is the more grammatically correct way to say it. And we believe that he wants to take every opportunity we can to help address that.

So, the American Jobs Plan will position the United States to meet President Biden's goals of creating a carbon neutral power sector by 2035 and a clean energy sector by 2050. It will do that by building modern, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure; ensuring clean, safe drinking water is a right and available to all communities; revolutionizing electric vehicle manufacturing; mobilizing the next generation of conservation and resilience workers.

This will not be the totality of what we do to address the climate crisis in the Biden-Harris administration, but it is certainly an important step and one that we've had positive response from, from a number of members.

Q But specifically on those -- on the clean energy tax credits, do you have any other, again, topline numbers or has it -- or do you have any idea of when those may be forthcoming?

MS. PSAKI: And just so I understand, the topline numbers in terms of the impact of the tax credits?

Q (Inaudible) if you add it up, it describes some of the credits you guys want to extend, et cetera. But does the White House have actual dollar figures for how many billions of dollars that represents, et cetera?

MS. PSAKI: We did put out a 25-page factsheet. If it's not in there, we will certainly get you more specifics. And we hope to have state-by-state details early next week.

Q Thanks, Jen.

AIDE: Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

Q We have a -- that's the other question.

MS. PSAKI: What? We --

Q Who's this?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, he's a new member of our -- I'm just kidding. What we're going to start doing is we are going to start taking a question from a regional reporter who does not live in Washington, can't be here. Many of you started your careers that way. So thank you for reminding me because I was going to walk off.

Hello, it's very nice to meet you. Thanks for -- and you're from Anchorage, Alaska -- come to us from Anchorage, Alaska.

Q Yes, I'm here at the state capital in Juneau today, though.

MS. PSAKI: Great, thanks for joining us. So this is the White House Press Corps. They won't ask you questions, but how can we help you? What question do you have for us today?

Q Well, thanks for the opportunity. The Secretary discussed the CDC limits on cruise ships, but here in Alaska, there's a second block that applies because ships must stop in Canada on the way to Alaska, and Canada isn't allowing cruise ships right now.

Here in the state, Republicans and Democrats have requested a temporary waiver of that -- of the law that requires that -- (audio technical difficulties).

MS. PSAKI: Uh-oh.

Q Oh.

MS. PSAKI: Oh no.

Q Did you hit your mute button?

MS. PSAKI: Uh-oh. You didn't hit your mute button, did you? That may be on our end.

Q Can you hear me now?

Can you hear me now.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, apologize for that. We heard the first part of your question, but you may have to repeat it so we can hear it.

Q Okay. So Republicans and Democrats here have requested a temporary waiver of the rule that blocks cruise ships from coming to Alaska without that Canadian stop. And I was curious what the administration thinks of those requests and whether action is possible before the end of the summer tourist season.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we heard about this earlier from some of your colleagues here in the White House Briefing Room -- not specific to Alaska, but the cruise industry in general. It's certainly an industry that we want to thrive, and we just want to ensure it is -- we are reopening capacity in a safe manner and doing that as quickly as we can.

I will say that we have been working with Senator Murkowski and Alaska officials on engaging Canada and finding ways to assist the cruise ships. That's a process that's ongoing.

Unfortunately, I don't have more details, but it is something we are fully aware of, that we are working with your senators on to help address. And we certainly recognize the importance of the cruise ship industry to the Alaska economy.

Q Thank you. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you so much for joining us -- we appreciate it -- from Alaska.

Okay. Well, thank you, guys. Happy Friday. Have a great weekend.

1:37 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on National Cyber Director and CISA Director Nominations
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 12, 2021 4:28 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2021

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on National Cyber Director and CISA Director Nominations

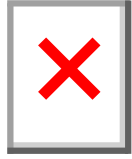
Today, President Biden took another important step forward in strengthening our nation's cyber capability. He announced his intent to nominate Chris Inglis as National Cyber Director and Jen Easterly as the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency. If confirmed, Chris and Jen will add deep expertise, experience and leadership to our world-class cyber team, which includes the first-ever Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology Anne Neuberger, as well as strong, crisis-tested professionals from the FBI to ODNI to the Department of Homeland Security to U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency. I'm proud of what we are building across the U.S. government when it comes to cyber. We are determined to protect America's networks and to meet the growing challenge posed by our adversaries in cyberspace – and this is the team to do it.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of White House CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 12, 2021 7:19 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2021

Readout of White House CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience

Today, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. briefly joined National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Director of the National Economic Council Brian Deese, and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo during a virtual event with CEOs and senior leaders from industries affected by the semiconductor shortage — including representatives from American semiconductor producers, tech companies, automotive manufacturers, and other companies that use semiconductors.

The semiconductor shortage, which is impacting American workers and families right now, is a top and immediate priority for the President and his senior most advisors on economic and national security. The White House heard directly from industry leaders on the impact of the chip shortage and discussed short and long-term approaches to address it. Participants emphasized the importance of improving transparency in the semiconductor supply chain to help mitigate current shortages and improving demand forecasting across the supply chain to help mitigate future challenges. They also discussed the importance of encouraging additional semiconductor manufacturing capacity in the United States to make sure we never again face shortages. Finally, they discussed how the President’s infrastructure investments in the American Jobs Plan strengthen America’s competitiveness and national security by building the infrastructure of tomorrow and strengthening supply chain resilience — ensuring that the United States remains a global leader in critical technologies and the transition to a clean energy future.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout from NSC Spokesperson Horne on National Security Advisor Sullivan Leading a Virtual Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 13, 2021 12:16 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 13, 2021

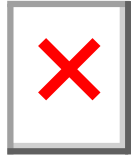
Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Leading a Virtual Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan led U.S. participation in a virtual meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group on April 13. This meeting was held as part of ongoing bilateral consultations on security issues of vital importance to the two countries. During the meeting, officials consulted in detail on opportunities to promote stability and security in the face of shared regional threats and challenges. Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed the Biden-Harris administration's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and to ensuring that Iran will never obtain a nuclear weapon. The officials expressed their shared interest in maintaining a close and open dialogue in the months ahead. Mr. Sullivan warmly invited his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat, to visit Washington before the end of this month for follow-up consultations.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Karin Wallensteen, State Secretary to Prime Minister Löfven of Sweden
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 13, 2021 4:00 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 13, 2021

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's call with Karin Wallensteen, State Secretary to Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Karin Wallensteen, State Secretary to Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden. Mr. Sullivan expressed the Biden Administration's appreciation for the strong relationship between the United States and the Kingdom of Sweden, and he underscored the desire to further strengthen transatlantic ties. He thanked Ms. Wallensteen for Sweden's leadership as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. The two discussed their shared concerns over Russia's sudden military build-up and provocations in occupied Crimea and on Ukraine's borders. They discussed the critical role the OSCE is playing in conflict resolution efforts in Donbas, offering support for increased monitoring and reporting in response to Russia's destabilizing moves. They agreed to work together on addressing the climate crisis, promoting democracy, and coordinating on shared foreign policy priorities, including achieving a ceasefire in Yemen and easing the human suffering there. Mr. Sullivan lauded Sweden's actions to protect its critical communications infrastructure and its strong stance on China human rights abuses.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 19, 2021 11:51 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council

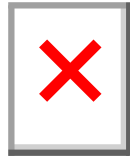
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council. The two discussed a number of issues in the bilateral relationship, as well as regional and global matters of concern. Mr. Sullivan and Secretary Patrushev also discussed the prospect of a presidential summit between the United States and Russia and agreed to continue to stay in touch.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, April 19, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 19, 2021 6:15 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, April 19, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:19 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Monday. Okay, a couple of items for you all at the top.

Today is an exciting day; we enter a new phase of our vaccination program and our effort to put the pandemic behind us. Starting today, everyone 16 years and older, in every state, is eligible for the vaccine. Thanks to the aggressive action we have taken through our wartime whole-of-government response, we have enough vaccine supply for all adults to get vaccinated; thousands of vaccinators -- we will have, I should say, thousands of vaccinators ready to get people vaccinated; and more than 60,000 places -- convenient places -- for people to get their shot.

So we have put up a couple of highlights here. More than half of all adults in America have now received at least one shot. More than 32 percent of adults are fully vaccinated. Eighty-one percent of seniors have at least one, and just about two thirds are fully vaccinated. At least 90 percent of Americans now have a vaccine site within five miles of where they live.

And in order to make sure people know that they're eligible, we're blitzing the airwaves, including local media, constituency radio and television, and also have a range of officials doing national interviews, especially health and medical experts. Google is providing information on its homepage to help people find a location near them. And there are notifications from Facebook and Twitter, as well as even a stat -- Snapchat message from Dr. Fauci. Never too -- never too young to Snapchat -- too old, too young, either way.

There's also a bipartisan AJP meeting happening today -- American Jobs Plan -- happening today. This afternoon, the

President -- shortly after the briefing, I should say -- and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg will host a meeting in the Oval Office with a bipartisan group of representatives and senators who are former mayors and governors.

There are, of course, more former mayors and governors than just this group; we will likely welcome them in the future as well. But the President is looking forward to tapping into their experience and expertise overseeing local communities and states. Hence, this is the group he'll be meeting with today.

They'll discuss the American Jobs Plan, the critical need for infrastructure investment in our nation's infrastructure. And their state and local executive experience, combined with their legislative experience, provides, in the President's view, an important perspective on how to invest in our roads, bridges, railways, and infrastructure across the country.

Two more quick items for you. Today, we congratulate the men and women of NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory for yet again making history in outer space. The space agency's aptly named "Ingenuity" helicopter lifted off of Mars early this morning, performed the first-ever powered flight on a world beyond Earth. And this brief flight now paves the way for more extensive exploration down the road. Future Red Planet missions could include choppers as -- as scouts or data collectors. Very exciting.

Finally, today the Department of Housing and Urban Development is announcing the obligation of \$8.2 billion in Community Development Block Grant Mitigation funds for Puerto Rico, along with the removal of onerous restrictions unique to Puerto Rico that limit the island's access to these funds that were allocated following Hurricane Maria in September. And these actions are the latest in an ongoing, whole-of-government effort to support the island's recovery and renewal.

Jonathan, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen, and happy Patriots Day. I know you're a New Englander, so --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q In terms of -- two matters for you: one domestic, one foreign. Starting here at home: The nation is obviously watching right now the closing arguments in the Derek Chauvin trial in Minnesota, and I was hoping you could, please, walk us through what the federal level of preparedness is right now for a verdict that could be coming in a matter of days.

What sort of coordination is there with the states, not just in Minnesota but elsewhere, you know, if there indeed will be, perhaps, unrest one way or the other, after the riot? Could you walk me through conversations being had with local officials, mayors, governors, and so on?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say, as you all know, the jury is deliberating, will come back with a verdict -- or they will be deliberating, I should say. After the closing arguments today, they'll come back with a verdict, and we're not going to get ahead of those deliberations. I'm not suggesting you're asking that, but I just wanted to restate that.

We -- what I can say is, broadly speaking, we are in touch with mayors, governors, local authorities. Of course, our objective is to ensure there is a space for peaceful protest; that, you know, we encourage -- we continue to convey that while this country has gone through an extensive period -- especially the Black community -- of pain, trauma, and exhaustion, as we've watched these -- not just the trial, but, of course, additional violence against their community over the past several weeks, we -- it's important to acknowledge that and elevate that at every opportunity we have.

But in terms of your question, Jonathan, we're in touch with local authorities. We're in touch with states, with governors, with mayors. And certainly, you know, we will continue to encourage peaceful protests, but we're not going to get ahead of the verdict in the trial.

Q Is there recommendations about -- in terms of the National Guard deployments? Have there been communi- --

conversations about that?

MS. PSAKI: There s a range of conversations about how to ensure that, no matter what the outcome, there is a space for peaceful protest. But, of course, we ll let the verdict -- the jury deliberate, and we ll wait for the verdict to come out before we say more about our engagements.

Q Okay. And the other matter: Aleksey Navalny -- obviously in a Russian prison. There are reports today that he has been removed to a hospital for medical treatment after the hunger strike he has been on.

Can you provide us the latest in terms of what the White House has heard about how he is doing and if you believe this is an acceptable motive -- if this is enough care for him? And what sort of conversations are being had right now with the Russian authorities as to that situation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I expect today, if not now, our National Security Advisor is going to have an -- a conversation with his counterpart, and we ll have a readout of that once that s concluded. That, of course, will cover a range of topics, but certainly the detention and treatment of Navalny will be a part of that.

Let me say that, as a reminder, in the President s first conversation with President Putin, he raised a range of concerns, including the treatment of Navalny. On March 2nd, we announced, in coordination with several key allies and partners, our response to Russia s use of a chemical weapon to poison Aleksey Navalny.

So our -- we continue to reiterate our view that what happens to Mr. Navalny in the custody of the Russian government is the responsibility of the Russian government, and that they will be held accountable by the international community. As National Security Advisor Sullivan has said -- he said just yesterday -- we re not going to telegraph our punches. If Mr. Navalny dies, well, there will be consequences to the Russian government, and we reserve those options.

But, in the interim, our objective is, of course, continuing to call for, push for his release and reiterate our view that he must be treated humanely.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Can you explain where things stand right now when it comes to the refugee ban? First off, the White House said on Friday that, actually, the 15,000 cap that was set by the Trump administration was -- remained justified. But then later, you said, "Actually, no, the number is going to go up by May 15th."

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn t -- I would dispute that being our characterization on Friday, but let me walk you through what we did announce.

Last week s announcement -- or Friday s announcement, I should say, was an effort -- an important step forward, in our view -- to reverse the Trump policy that banned refugees from many key regions of the world. So there were many parts of the Middle East, parts of Africa where refugees could not apply and could not come into the United States. And part -- as a result of that, there were very limited number of refugees -- in the low thousands -- that had come over in a extensive period of time during the Trump administration. That was an important step, on -- in our view.

In addition, there had been refugee flights that had not traveled, that had not been taking off to come to the United States, and we resumed those flights. This was always meant to be just the beginning.

In the announcement we made on Friday, we were clear in the emergency presidential determination that if 15,000 is reached, a subsequent presidential determination would be issued to increase admissions as appropriate. And that is certainly our expectation.

In addition, we also announced on Friday that the President -- while we are assessing right now what is possible in terms of -- given the fact that the processing -- the asylum processing has been hollowed out from the State Department, and also the ORR -- the Office of Refugee Resettlement -- has also been hollowed out in terms of personnel, staffing, and financial and funding needs, we are -- have every intention to increase the cap and to make an announcement of that by May 15th at the latest. And I expect it will be sooner than that.

The President also remains committed to pursuing the aspirational goal of reaching 125,000 refugees by the end of the next fiscal year.

Q And what role has the situation at the border, which the President called a "crisis" this weekend -- what role has that played in decision making around the refugee cap?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, if I walk you back just a little bit -- and hopefully this will be helpful to you -- during the transition, our team was -- made an assessment of what our refugee cap should look like.

And we looked back at the last few years and assessed that, because of the very low numbers -- the restrictions I just mentioned that were in place, restricting refugees from coming from the Middle -- parts of the Middle East -- most of the Middle East, I should say, and Africa -- we needed to go big and have a bold goal.

And so that's why we set the 125,000 cap objective by the end of fiscal year '22. 62,500 was a down payment -- meant to be a down payment in this year. That was why we set that goal. Now, that's an a -- that was an aspirational increase of 10 times what was being led in by the Trump administration.

In that period of time -- we came into office; the President made that announcement, made those -- put those aspirational goals out there -- there were a couple things that happened: One, as you alluded to, there was an increase of unaccompanied children at the border. Our policy was always going to be to welcome those children in, find a place where they can be sheltered and treated humanely and safely. That increase and that influx, as you all know, was higher than most people, including us, anticipated.

The second factor was that we did not -- it took us some time to recognize how hollowed out these systems were. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, which oversees -- while there have been different pots of money and different personnel -- has both the resettling of refugees as well as unaccompanied children. And there is -- there are questions and have been assessments about reprogramming of funds and how we can address both at the same time. And certainly, that ability and ensuring we can do that effectively has been on the President's mind.

Q And then, finally, on a somewhat related matter: The President has said that climate change is one of the factors that has created this surge at the border, but there are no Central American countries that have been invited to the Climate Summit that the White House is putting on. Is there -- how did you decide which countries to invite? And has it been considered whether or not to invite some Central American countries?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'll say that engaging Central American countries, countries in South America, many other countries around the world in the climate crisis is certainly our objective and our plan. And you will see that play out through diplomatic channels, whether it's through former Secretary Kerry, who's now our Envoy; or Secretary of State Blinken; or the President himself.

There were 40 global leaders invited -- this is our first summit of this kind -- and obviously, a number of them will be speaking. So I think the decision was made about how to impact and invite -- or how to invite, kind of, some of the largest economies in the world. That was the objective.

But engagement with these countries, having a conversation about the role many of them play in addressing the climate crisis is absolutely on our diplomatic agenda beyond this summit this week.

Go ahead. Go ahead, Kaitlan.

Q If it is a “not guilty” verdict, will the President be disappointed?

MS. PSAKI: I think we’re not going to get ahead of the jury -- the legal process and the jury making their deliberations, Kaitlan. And when the jury makes their deliberations and concludes and a verdict is found, I’m certain the President will speak to that.

Q And you talked how the White House is preparing for whatever that verdict is. Congresswoman Maxine Waters said, over the weekend, that they need to -- “We’ve got to stay on the street and we’ve got to get more active. We’ve got to get more confrontational. We’ve got to make sure that they know that we mean business.” Does the President agree with what she said about getting more confrontational?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can speak to the President’s view. He has been very clear that he recognizes the issue of police violence against people of color, communities of color is one of great anguish, and it’s exhausting and quite emotional at times.

As you know, he met with the Floyd family last year and has been closely following the trial, as we’ve been talking about, and is committed to undoing this longstanding, systemic problem.

His view is also that exercising First Amendment rights and protesting injustice is the most American thing that anyone can do. But as he also always says, protests must be peaceful. That’s what he continues to call for and what he continues to believe is the right way to approach responding.

Q Okay. Thank you. And on the refugee cap, you were saying that there have been other factors that have affected what that goal is now going to be with the limit that’s happened since he first announced he wanted it to be 62,500.

But can you explain why, two weeks ago, when I asked if he was committed to raising it to that number by the end of this fiscal year, you said, without hesitation, “yes.” So I don’t understand what has changed in the last two weeks to change those numbers, given, two weeks ago, there were the surging numbers at the border already happening.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I mean, he remains -- the goal he set was 125,000 by the end of the next fiscal year. And 62,500 -- sorry, that was a tongue twister -- is meant to be a down payment on that. And he will absolutely be putting out a cap -- an increased cap -- over the course -- in advance of May 15th.

So he would absolutely like to get to that goal and get -- reach that objective. But we also want to assess -- and that’s what we’re doing now -- what is possible, given the fact that the -- the Office of Refugee Resettlement has been hollowed out and given the fact that the system has been in worse shape. And we’re just taking the time to do that.

Does he -- that goal was always aspirational. It was always a huge goal -- 10 times what the Trump administration had welcomed, in terms of refugees. And so we’re going to put out an -- we’re going to put out a number -- he will put out a number in advance of May 15th.

Q But you say it’s “aspirational,” but clearly you thought it was possible, given the Secretary of State told Congress about it, the President committed to it. So why put a number out there if you can’t meet it? Because it does give people false hope that you’re going to let in 62,500 refugees by the end of September.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it’s also important for people to understand that the challenge is not the cap; the challenge is the ability to process, the ability -- the funding, the staffing, and welcome refugees in.

The cap is a number that anyone can set. The biggest battle to getting more refugees in during the Trump administration

was the fact that there were regional limitations put in on refugees coming in from the Middle East and Africa. We've changed that cap -- we've changed that policy, I should say.

So, the cap, the -- the number was always going to be. We made -- as I said in response to Nancy's question, we -- we knew it was an aspirational, big goal when we set it. It was going to be 10 times what the Trump administration had -- had set as their goal.

And we remain -- we are looking ahead to and we -- we hope -- we are hopeful about reaching that 125,000 number as we look to the next fiscal year. But as we came in and assessed and have had time to assess and have -- the teams to have had time to assess where the challenges are, we learned more about how hollowed out the systems were; we learned more about the challenges in processing; we learn mo- -- more about, of course, the impact of what the influx of unaccompanied children would be on these considerations.

Q But shouldn't you have assessed that before making a commitment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we made -- the President made the announcement in early February, and he felt it was important to send the message to the world, which remains his view, that we're now a country, again, that is going to welcome in refugees from around the world.

That continues to be his point of view. It continues to be his objective. It continues to be his policy. But sometimes it takes a little bit of time to lift up the hood, kick around the tires, and see what the big problems are. And we -- he made that announcement within two weeks of taking office, so clearly we've had some time to do it since then.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I'm still just a little bit confused about what changed between 1:00 p.m. on Friday and around 4:30 p.m. on Friday to go from "we're not raising the refugee cap" to "we are raising it by May 15th." What -- what changed in those three and a half hours?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, as I just outlined, we never said we're not raising the refugee cap. In the morning, we said actually -- and with the information we put out -- was that once we reach 15,000, we will raise it. That was not accounted for in some of how people were di- --

Q But you also said --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- some of how people were digesting the information. And we wanted to be clear and send a message that we are a country that is welcoming refugees. Let's be clear: We are changing the policies of the last administration. We are changing the policy of not welcoming in people from Africa or people from the Middle East. That was the biggest factor preventing refugees come -- from coming in during the last administration.

Q So are you saying this had nothing to do with the pushback from some Democrats on Capitol Hill -- from Senator Dick Durbin, to Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez? It had nothing to do with that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think you've articulated to me what our change in policy was. What was our change in policy from the morning until the afternoon?

Q The executive order from Friday morning said that "The admission of up to 15,000 refugees remains justified," period.

And yes, there was a caveat that you could raise that cap later, but, I mean, it explicitly says that right there.

MS. PSAKI: That's a pretty important caveat, that if we -- when we reach 15,000, a subsequent presidential determination could be made. And, again --

Q But then, why --

MS. PSAKI: -- the biggest challenge --

Q Then why the need to issue that clarification?

MS. PSAKI: But the biggest -- the biggest challenge --

Because people weren't understanding what we were conveying to the public and weren't conveying what we were trying to project to countries around the world.

And it's incumbent upon us to make sure there's an understanding of what the President's policies are, what he's trying to achieve, and what he feels morally -- is that we're going to welcome in refugees from around the world, change the policies from the past administration that -- where they were not welcoming in refugees from the Middle East and Africa.

And that was important to him to take that first step and move it forward.

Q The line said, "The admission of up to 15,000 refugees remains justified."

MS. PSAKI: And --

Q Can you understand how some people would interpret that the way we did?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we all have a responsibility to provide all of the context. And so what I'm conveying is that we also included, would also -- is read that "a subsequent Presidential Determination [would] be issued to increase admissions."

And again, the battle is not the cap; the issue has been the limitations that have been put in place in the past. We overturned those and changed those, and it was always meant to be a first step.

Q So, back to my other question.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Did this have anything to do with the pushback from Democrats on Capitol Hill? There was --

MS. PSAKI: I don't you've articulated what our change in policy is so -- go ahead.

Go ahead.

Q That's not my job to do that. That's not my job to do that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it is if you're asking a question.

Go ahead.

Q But I'm asking about the pushback from progressives on Capitol Hill. Did that --

MS. PSAKI: But what was -- was our change from the morning to the afternoon?

Q The change from the morning to the afternoon was that you explicitly said, "The admission of up to 15,000 refugees remains justified." And in the afternoon, you said that the President would be raising the cap on or before May 15th.

MS. PSAKI: In the morning, we also said that, if 15,000 is reached, that "a subsequent Presidential Determination [would] be issued to increase admissions."

That was not clearly understood. We felt it was incumbent upon us to make sure people understood and were clear that our objective was to welcome in more refugees, and we remain committed to our goal.

Q And I've got --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q -- one more question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q President Biden, over the weekend, called what happened at the border a "crisis." Is that now the official White House position, that there is indeed a crisis at the border?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that we have made some progress -- some progress in moving children from out of Border Patrol facilities into shelters. Nearly 1,000 unaccompanied minors were transferred out of CBP facilities and into the care of Health and Human Services just this weekend. We are -- still have a lot of work to do, but we -- that is a step forward, in our view.

The President does not feel that children coming to our border, seeking refuge from violence, economic hardships, and other dire -- dire circumstances is a crisis. He does feel that the crisis in Central America, the dire circumstances that many are fleeing from -- that he -- that that is a situation we need to spend our time, our effort on, and we need to address it if we're going to prevent more of an influx of migrants from coming in years to come.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The readout from Jake Sullivan's call just hit a little bit ago.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, good. Timely.

Q But it didn't mention Navalny. And the Russians, of course, last week, said that President Biden didn't mention him in their call. Any reason while -- why his name hasn't been in the readouts?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I reiterated that the President's first call with President Putin -- he conveyed a range of concerns we have, including the treatment of Aleksey Navalny. We issued, in coordination with our European partners, a number of steps to -- a number of sanctions in response to the poisoning of Aleksey Navalny.

I, obviously, haven't spoken to our national security team about the call, given I was out here for the call, so I'd have to check on that for you.

Q And then, another question on the refugee cap. You mentioned the infrastructure constraints, et cetera. I mean, how close do you think you all can get to the 62,500? I mean, is there an initial projection of what you're hoping to hit for that?

MS. PSAKI: We want to get to that, and we want to provide that to all of you. And we -- our team is currently assessing

MS. PSAKI: We want to get to that, and we want to provide that to all of you. And we're -- our team is currently assessing exactly that.

Q And then, lastly, on the Chauvin trial. We're expecting a verdict any day now. I know you said you're not going to get ahead of it. But we've also seen -- but, with that, we've also seen, of course, the shooting of Adam Toledo in Chicago. I mean, what is the White House doing to address policing? Are there any more executive orders in the pipeline or under consideration? I mean, what signal are you going to send to those communities?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a number of steps we've actually taken -- the Department of Justice has taken. Let me first reiterate that the President has said repeatedly that he believes we need police reform. That is why he's on -- calling on Congress to deliver that to his desk. It is incumbent upon Congress and the Senate to move forward. And, obviously, there are discussions and negotiations about what that looks like. But we've seen an unacceptable and a longstanding trend that is the cause of immense pain and hardship across the country.

During the campaign, then -- former Vice President Biden emphasized the importance of the Justice Department using the authority he spearheaded as a senator to investigate systemic police misconduct.

And there are a couple of steps that have been taken in recent weeks. Last week, Attorney General Garland reversed a Trump administration memo that limited the use of consent decrees with respect to investigation of police department -- departments. And reversing the prior memo returns DOJ -- DOJ to the use of all civil rights enforcement tools it has for its crucial work.

The President also pledged to appoint DOJ leadership that would prioritize pattern-or-practice investigations. That would, of course, ensure they were -- that investigations into racially unfair and inappropriate conduct were taken seriously and prioritized. And he has two critical nominees pending who would do exactly that: Vanita Gupta to be Associate Attorney General, and Kristen Clarke to head the Civil Rights Division.

He also, of course, supports -- firmly supports the George Floyd Act, as I've said. He believes there's a special -- there's definite urgency at this point in time, and he'll continue to convey that.

I'd also note our initial budget calls for increasing funding for the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division by millions of dollars in order to advance accountability and reform for abusive police practices.

And finally, multiple states have enacted bipartisan policing reform statutes in recent months. And we believe that those are encouraging signs in some states of the country. It's not the only thing that needs to happen; we need federal legislation. But that's also something we certainly have been encouraging.

Q One last question --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- domestically, if I may. Is the White House committed to including the \$400 billion for elder care in the AGP [sic] -- AJP package?

MS. PSAKI: The caregiving proposal we have in there? Obviously, we believe that that is important, imperative, and that will help address what we see as a caregiving crisis in our country where 2 million women have left the workforce. A lot of those women had -- did -- have done so because they are in what many call the "sandwich generation," where you're caring for elders and you're also caring for children.

Also, the caregivers themselves are only being paid about an average of \$11 an hour; that's completely unacceptable. That's why he put that -- we proposed that in that package.

There will be a range of views. There are a lot of members who are absolutely for that and adamant that it should be

There will be a range of views. There are a lot of members who are absolutely for that and adamant that it should be included. There are some who don't feel that way. So we'll have the conversation. More of those are happening this week, and we'll go from there.

Q Could he slip it into the next package just to make it more palatable for -- for this one to pass?

MS. PSAKI: You know, it's a great question, but we're not quite there on the mechanics or the mechanisms for what different components will be -- will be -- how they will move forward on the Hill. We're eager to have those conversations with leaders in Congress.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. India is facing a critical shortage of raw materials necessary to make vaccines. And officials there are urging the U.S. to lift the U.S. embargo of exporting those raw materials. My colleagues in India are reporting today that the Biden administration recently told them -- recently told India that its request was being considered and would be active, in quotes, "at the earliest." Could you provide some more details on that and maybe some timeline?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So Ambassador Katherine Tai, of course, gave some remarks at a World Trade Organization virtual conference last week, and she highlighted a couple of pieces that -- a couple of points, I should say, that are very representative of our view. The significant one being: "...the significant inequities we are seeing in access to vaccines between developed and developing countries are completely unacceptable. Extraordinary times require extraordinary leadership, communication, and creativity."

We are, of course, working with WTO members on a global response to COVID. That response -- that includes a number of components, whether it's \$4 billion committed to COVAX, or discussions about how we can aid and assist countries that need help the most.

But our focus is on determining the most effective steps that will help get the pandemic under control. We don't have anything further in terms of next steps or a timeline, but we are considering a range of options.

Q I did a quick review of the President's daily schedule, and I found that the White House had 38 listings that dealt with the COVID pandemic.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q You conducted 32 COVID press briefings, 20 items dealing with the economy and jobs, 6 on infrastructure, but just 2 on guns. One was happenstance in Georgia. You know, if the daily schedule represents a public expression of the White House's priorities, why shouldn't we conclude that the guns and violence is not a top priority?

MS. PSAKI: Well, having played some role in some White Houses on the daily public schedule, I will tell you that it often includes the issues that the public, one, has the appetite most to hear updates on. And certainly the COVID pandemic is front and center for people across this country for understandable reasons; more than 550,000 -- more than 560,000, I believe, people have died. People are worried about their loved ones, their family, and they want to hear more on what we're doing.

I will say that there are also some discussions and policies in -- to go back to an earlier question, the discussions about Aleksey Navalny, in a separate category, are actually an example of this as well, where conversations in private can be more effective.

And, on guns, there's no confusion about where the President stands on guns. He spoke to this issue quite passionately on Friday. He's been an advocate through the course of his career for decades -- not only verbally, but he's led the fight to get background checks in place; to ensure the assault weapons ban was placed; to -- lead the effort to get 20 -- almost two dozen executive actions in place during the Obama-Biden administration, and just announced a few recently

dozen executive actions in place during the Obama-Biden administration, and just announced a few recently.

There's no confusion about his view. The American public also supports background checks -- more than 80 percent.

So I would -- I would say that this will continue to be a central focus of his presidency, of his time in public office, and he will use every lever he can to get it done. But I wouldn't confuse public speeches for what actions or commitment he or any President has to an issue.

Q One other quick question. There's increasing evidence that methane emissions are much higher than what's been accounted for. Is the President committed to releasing a specific target for methane reductions as part of the U.S. announcement this week?

MS. PSAKI: I know we'll start some preview and background calls tomorrow, and, hopefully, we're going to have some climate experts come to the briefing room later this week as well. But I'm just not going to get ahead of our planned public announcements or decisions that are still being finalized.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. There were some reports in recent days about people counterfeiting their vaccination cards, going around with cards that say they're vaccinated so they can maybe get in places where they otherwise couldn't. Is the administration aware of those reports? Concerned? Having conversations with local folk -- local officials about how to counteract that, potentially?

MS. PSAKI: We are certainly aware of them. We've seen the reports. And we, of course, defer to law enforcement and other authorities who are overseeing and -- and cracking down where this has come up.

I don't have a number or percentage or data to give you on how expansive this is. I mean, the fact is, as of today, every adult American over 16 is now eligible. So the best way to get a vaccine card is to get vaccinated, and that's what our focus will continue to be.

Q Another question on Navalny, given Jake Sullivan's comments yesterday about consequences.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q President Biden, obviously, has requested a summit with Vladimir Putin.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q If Navalny dies in Russian custody, is that summit still on the table?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's certainly all hope and pray that that is not the outcome we're looking at. And again, there are a range of private conversations that occur diplomatically, and we continue to reiterate publicly as well our call for him to be released, to be treated humanely. And -- but I'm not going to get ahead of a horrible outcome like that.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, Jen. I've got a vaccine question. But just, first, a quick follow-up to my colleagues' --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- questions about the refugee --

MS. PSAKI: Yen.

Q -- cap earlier. You -- you said that the issue about the cap statement on Friday was not clearly understood by some people. Would some of the President's Democratic allies on the Hill be some of those people that did not clearly understand?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't think I was placing blame; I was more characterizing that we recognized that we needed to be clear and make sure people were understanding what our objective was and that the President remains committed to welcoming in refugees from around the world.

That -- the announcement on Friday was intended to be a first step intended to convey clearly that we are overturning what we felt was a xenophobic policy of the past administration to prevent people from many parts of the Middle East and Africa from applying for refugee status and to resume flights and that we remain committed to welcoming refugees in. So we provided more information, as sometimes is necessary to do.

Q Okay. And then on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine: It's been almost a week --

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q -- since it's been paused. The indication is that it may still be a few more days before we understand what the next step will be.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Is the White House concerned -- or what is the level of concern that J&J's reputation may be harmed during this -- this time period and it could hamper the administration's efforts to reach out to skeptical or hesitant Americans about getting vaccinated?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's interesting; we actually haven't seen data -- unless you have, which is possible -- that has suggested that has been the outcome. The FDA is the gold standard. They took this step out of an abundance of caution, as they've said, to ensure that the American people could have confidence in their actions, their -- the high level of review and the high standards that we have in the U.S. government.

They're convening again on Friday, as Dr. Fauci, I think, spoke to over the weekend. So we'll see what comes out of that.

But what we've seen as it relates to confidence or hesitancy is that, broadly speaking, it's really an issue of access. And we've seen that as the case in many communities across the country. And our focus is on working to address that. In part access, I should say -- but also, in part messengers, and that's why a huge amount of our \$3 billion in funding is focused on empowering and funding local messengers, whether it's doctors or clergy or local civic leaders, because we know they are the most effective in conveying the efficacy of these vaccines.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. Just a couple on the Jobs bill and Climate Summit. Senator Cornyn and Senator Coons spoke about the possibility for a smaller, narrower infrastructure bill in the range of \$800 billion. Does the President see that as a viable alternative to what he's proposed?

And then: How does he view this idea that there might be an opportunity to get some kind of, you know, bipartisan agreement on infrastructure before you move on to the care economy? That if you could do it in the near term, as President -- as Senator Coons suggested, that, you know, that would be the way to go?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a range of ideas and proposals out there -- some Senator Coons, Senator Manchin, some -- some Republican senators, and some Democrats who may be more on the progressive wing of the party as well. And our objective, at this point in time, is to hear and listen to all of those, and to determine what the path forward may look like in coordination and cooperation.

We have -- the President's bottom line here is that the only thing we cannot do is -- is fail to invest in our nation's infrastructure, rebuild our economy, and create millions of jobs. That's the only piece he does not want to see us fail to do as a country, and fail to do as, hopefully, in a bipartisan manner, ideally.

But in terms of the ideas being put forward, we're quite open to a range of mechanisms for agreed-upon legislation moving forward. Smaller packages, pieces being peeled off -- right now there's the nitty-gritty work going on in Congress where members are meeting, staffs are meeting, committee staff are meeting to discuss what's possible, where there's agreement. We welcome that.

But, you know, in terms of what the package or size looks like, we're -- we're just not quite there yet.

Q On the Climate Summit, I know you don't want to get ahead of the decision on emissions targets for 2030, but broadly, how is the administration thinking about striking the balance between a target that's aggressive and that will meet the needs of -- the demands of climate change, versus ones that may not be achievable and could lead to job losses in the next 10 years? How is the President looking to strike that balance?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President believes that inv- -- cli- -- green jobs are jobs, right? I mean, they are a way to invest in our -- and this is very central to the American Jobs Plan. And when we talk about the Climate Summit and how we're thinking about setting these targets and how we're going to achieve them, a big part of that is investing in areas of our economy where there are industries of the future -- where we can create and build out industries, and create jobs where we're also able to meet our targets that we'll set.

So, he thinks of them as in lockstep. And that's one of the reasons why, when he put out his climate plan during the campaign, he had labor leaders and climate advocates meet together and discuss how we could work together on a path forward.

But, you know, if you look at areas like electric vehicles or, you know, re- -- weatherizing infrastructure, these are areas where there -- there's alignment on -- they're creating jobs, they're investing in industries, they're putting people back to work, and they're also doing it in a way that is, you know, helping us reach our climate targets.

Q Can I just do one more?

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q Just to follow Nancy's question: You know, you mentioned the Office of Refugee Resettlement, that -- that it's exhausted its funding. Do you expect the administration to ask for some type of supplemental for that office in the next few weeks to help them meet their demands?

MS. PSAKI: I would say the first step -- there are some considerations of reprogramming funding, which is, of course, a factor internally. But I'm not aware of an intention to request additional funding. I can -- I can check and see. Obviously, we'll put out our budget that is forward-looking in May.

But in terms of -- I think, you're asking about an emergency supplemental -- I'm not aware of that consideration, but I'll check on that for you and others who, I'm sure, are interested.

Q Jen, can I jump in real quick?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Are we still on track for the one o'clock presidential meeting? The pool call?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, yes.

Q Okay, so you --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. We're almost wrapped here. Let's just go to one in the back, go ahead. Sorry, we --

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: I was not paying attention to the time. Thank you for the reminder.

Go ahead.

Q Just a couple quick ones. On Johnson & Johnson: Between the pause and then the issues at the Baltimore plant, is -- is the administration still expecting Johnson & Johnson to be on track to deliver its promised amount of doses by the end of the month?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the next step with Johnson & Johnson is for the FDA to meet and determine what the considerations are for the path forward. As we look at our own preparedness here, we have ordered enough supply to ensure we can meet the demand by the end of May and have enough supply to vaccinate every adult American by the end of July without Johnson & Johnson. So that's where our objective and our focus remains.

Pfizer has also announced that they are going to try to expedite some of their production as well. But in terms of Johnson & Johnson, the next step is really Friday and whatever comes from there. And we certainly will refer to the FDA.

I'm sorry. We have to wrap up because you guys are gathering in about 30 seconds here. But thank you everyone so much.

1:00 P.M. EDT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, and
National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy, April 22, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:44 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone.

Q Hello.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Happy Earth Day, everyone. And joining us in the Briefing Room for the second time -- I told you they'd come back and take more questions; I deliver on my promises -- is National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy and Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry.

We're, of course, very excited to have them here. After their short remarks, they will be able to take just a few questions because they have a busy Climate Summit under way.

With that, I will turn it over to Gina McCarthy.

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Thanks, Jen. And thanks, everybody. It's great to be here. Happy Earth Day.

On day one, President Biden fulfilled his promise to rejoin the Paris Agreement. And as part of reentering the Paris Agreement, the President launched a whole-of-government process that was organized through his Climate Task Force to

establish the 2030 emissions target, which is known as the “nationally determined contribution” or “NDC.” And it’s a formal submission to the United Nations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The NDC is a commitment. And it says -- and our NDC basically says that the United States will reduce our net economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

And this target builds on U.S. leadership at all levels of government and programs to-date, and positions American workers and industry to help us tackle the climate crisis.

Today’s announcement is a product of this government-wide assessment on how to make the most of the opportunity of combatting climate change and what it presents for us and our future.

To get here, we went sector by sector -- electricity, transportation, building, industry, and lands and oceans -- and we looked at the wealth of already-existing, cost-effective clean technologies and products that are ready for deployment; and innovation trends that we see in the marketplace that will allow us to win the clean energy future; and the opportunities we now have to create good-paying union jobs, improve public health, keep our communities safe, and advance environmental justice.

Over the past nearly 100 years of this administration -- I’m sorry, 100 days -- feels like years at times -- (laughter) -- 100 days of this administration, we met with and listened to cities and states, businesses, workers, scientists, economists, young people, parents -- grandparents like me who were around during the first Earth Day and hope to be around for quite a few more.

The output of these -- the bottom-up analyses and robust engagement is this: And that is that we see multiple pathways across all sectors, across all policy levers, across federal and state and local actions to grow our economy and reduce our emissions.

Look, President Biden has always believed that tackling the climate crisis presents a valuable economic opportunity. And the fact is: Creating jobs and tackling climate change go hand in hand.

We invest in the competitiveness of our industry and empower U.S. workers to build more resilient and sustainable infrastructure and propel us. That is how we lead and move forward in manufacturing and exports of clean energy technologies.

In some ways, for my team, every day since January 20th has been Earth Day and Jobs Day; every week has been Infrastructure Week and Innovation Week. We have marshalled the whole-of-government, the fantastic Cabinet, and the remarkable team of climate and clean energy experts across the federal government behind this President’s vision not just to develop the target, but to unlock the opportunity that achieving this target represents.

Because when President Biden hears climate, he thinks “jobs.” And it’s no wonder. The work we need to do is -- is not just about avoiding an existential threat -- which climate change is -- it’s about how we create jobs for line workers, building thousands of miles of transmission lines for a clean, modern, resilient grid; workers in energy communities capping abandoned wells and reclaiming mines and stopping methane leaks.

It’s about autoworkers building modern, efficient, electric vehicles and charging infrastructure to support them. You can follow me right after this briefing if you want to go hang out at Union Station; you can get a close look at EV infrastructure in action.

And engineers and construction workers expanding carbon capture and green hydrogen to forge cleaner steel and cement.

It’s about farmers using cutting-edge tools to make American soil the next frontier of carbon innovation.

So, let's be clear: The American Jobs Plan will help us more fully tap the economic upside here, investing in infrastructure, innovation; in our workers and communities. It's something we cannot afford to pass on.

Let me close by reiterating what brings me here to work every day, especially at this moment in my career: It's Joe Biden's unwavering focus on people, on the air they breathe, and on their health; on the strength of their communities and environmental justice; on the dignity that comes with good work and jobs we can create; on how we keep working together to move beyond a year we all would love to put behind us to one of renewed hope and opportunity. Because after all, this day is all about investing in America and winning the future for our children. That's why we're here: Earth Day, Jobs Day - every day.

Thank you. And now let me pass it on to my good friend and fellow Bostonian, Secretary John Kerry.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you, Gina. Hello. And thank you very much, Gina. I'm really happy to be here and share this day and this subject matter with all of you.

And I want to begin by just sharing with you what a spectacular job Gina and her team have done. You may remember the executive order which said the President will aim to announce the NDC at the summit. The aim was not that he had any question about wanting to do that; the aim was whether or not Gina or anybody could pull together all the parties that had to be part of preparing an NDC -- a gigantic, administrative, organizational task, which Gina and her entire team have done really superbly. And I mean that. That's not a pro forma comment. It is hard to get all of the disparate elements of your government together.

And the President, by issuing his executive order to make this -- the climate issue -- an all-of-government enterprise and instructing every single Cabinet officer and every single agency officer to comprehensively factor climate consequences into every decision that they were making. And they have done that.

And Gina created this task force. We've never had an all-of-government task force on this subject ever before. We had it now because of Gina's creation, and -- and it's worked. And that's what brought everybody together to get this ambitious but appropriate, achievable goal in place. So I salute her and I thank her for that; it's a great service.

And everywhere that I went in the world, in the course of the last months, first question out of people's mouths was, "What's your NDC going to be? What are you guys going to do? You've destroyed your credibility. You've left the Paris Agreement. How can we trust you? What's going to happen in the next four years?" To which there is a very, very powerful answer, which is: No politician, I think, could change what is now happening globally in the marketplace. And that is part of the message of what's happened here today and in the last few days.

You've had -- yesterday we announced the Net-Zero Bank Alliance; we announced that the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero; and we have some 43 financial institutions across the world worth some -- I forget the exact sum -- forty-some trillion dollars or something, in terms of assets managed.

And just yesterday, a number of banks announced -- six banks, to be precise -- that they are allocating or setting -- or making a commitment that they will invest into climate-related efforts, initiatives, investments -- \$4.16 trillion over the next 10 years. That's been a really missing element in all of this.

So I'm really happy to be here today for a number of reasons. First of all, just parenthetically, five years ago today, I had my granddaughter on my knee in New York and signed the Paris Agreement. And that was a great moment for everybody in the world when everybody came together in New York excitedly to set out on this venture.

Regrettably -- without any facts, without any science, without any rationale that would be considered reasonable -- the former President decided to pull out. He was the only President in the entire world -- the only Chief of State in the entire world, who, without any scientific evidence, decided to pull out of the Paris Agreement.

So, when President Biden was elected -- having made climate one of the most critical issues of his agenda -- we had a big step to get up. We had to restore America's credibility. We had to prove that we were serious. And, I think, today does that in many ways, and not in a chauvinistic -- in a way that's, sort of, inappropriate to our relationship with other countries, but in a way that reinforces the fact that this is multilateral; that we need to bring all the countries of the world to the table; and we all need to raise ambition. That's the central theme of this meeting today. We must all raise ambition.

And you heard that in, I thought, profoundly, meaningful, moving, understandably frustrated and angry words -- tame for anger -- words that came from Xiye Bastida. And that's where a lot of the younger generation is today, appropriately -- pretty upset at the adults -- the alleged adults who are not getting their act together to make happen what needs to happen. We aren't there yet either.

But today we built a huge, foundational building block in the effort to get there. So, the importance of today in my judgment is this: The world came together. President Xi, Prime Minister Modi, President Putin, presidents of small countries and big countries, President Macron, the Chancellor of Germany; the EU itself, independently; people in the financial marketplace and others -- all of them in agreement that this -- this is a crisis. It is the climate crisis, and it's going to require an enormous lift to get where we need to go.

So, what happened today -- just to underscore where we are -- on January 19th, we were nowhere; we were in deficit with respect to our efforts. And because of President Biden's leadership in calling the summit, in putting us on the line to do this, we now have about 55 percent of the global GDP committed to levels of reductions that keep faith with holding the Earth's temperature at 1.5 degrees.

That is a big chunk of difference. And we've done that working with countries -- sitting down with them -- with Japan; with Korea; with Australia; with -- you have Indonesia; with India; with the Middle East -- with 11 countries at one meeting where even oil-producing countries stepped up and made things clearer; and, of course, China, included; as well as some Latin American countries and African countries.

So, I'm pleased with where we are, but I'm -- I'm not sanguine. The next six months of diplomacy are going to be absolutely critical to the capacity to make Glasgow what it needs to be.

I do believe Glasgow remains our last best hope to be able to coalesce the world in the right direction and to get the critical mass of countries of the 20 biggest emitters, who are responsible for 81 percent of all the emissions -- all 20 of them were here today, and almost all 20 of them were pledging to do additional things. So that's our job is to be to clarify it over the course of these next weeks and months.

I'd just clarify very quickly: Japan said they'd cut emissions 46 to 50 percent by 2030 -- strong efforts towards achieving a 50 percent reduction -- up from its existing 26 percent reduction. Canada strengthening from a current 30 percent to a 40 to 45 percent. The Republic of Korea terminating overseas coal finance and preparing to update its NDC consistent with the 2050 net-zero goal. India, in partnership with the United States, to deploy 450 gigawatts of renewable power. Why is that important? Because if we can do that -- which is where our finance component of this is so critical -- if we do that, India is on track to hold the 1.5 degrees centigrade. So, Argentina announced a package of important measures. The UK, last week, just announced 78 percent target by 2035. And yesterday, EU announced a new law to embed the 55 percent reduction for 2030, and also the net zero.

So, you know, I think that it's progress, but we still have a heavy lift, and no one should doubt the challenges of the road ahead. So, I'm happy to be here.

MS. PSAKI: All right. I know we're very close to the tail end of when Gina has to go, so let's try to get around very quickly.

SECRETARY KERRY: Yeah, let Gina (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Secretary Kerry, to you, first: When it comes to the pledge, how can you realistically make this pledge to the rest of the world when there's no guarantee that Republicans will get on board with your plan once you release it?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, a lot of the plan is executable through just executive order -- I'm going to let Gina speak to this -- but a lot of the plan is executable through order. But that's the power of having the private sector here. That is the real reason why I'm saying to you that no politician in the future is going to undo this because, all over the world, trillions of dollars, trillions of yen, trillions of euros are going to be heading into this new marketplace. And the future belongs to the countries, as you heard today from any number of leaders, that are the ones who develop hydrogen -- green hydrogen fuel, or storage, or battery storage, or direct carbon capture for the atmosphere. Some technology is going to break through here, folks.

And one of the things I know the President is thinking about is how to accelerate the innovation and the research and development that's going to push that curve.

Gina, do you want to talk to that a little bit?

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: Sure. Just to indicate to you that this is -- is really a result of understanding what our authorities are at the federal government, but also what's happening at the local and state level, what's happening in the business community, what kind of technologies that are ready to be deployed now, how many jobs can be created by this. This is not just a bottoms up; it's also a values down. It's also looking at how we grow as a country and be sustainable.

The plan that the President has put in place and the plan that we're relying on here is a plan that we can deliver because we have the wherewithal to do it in terms of policies and programs, but we also have carefully looked at what we can deliver in terms of change. And the world is changing: It's not going backwards; it is moving forward.

And the exciting thing about this is that this plan has received endorsements from the AFL-CIO, the Chamber of Commerce, the Edison Electrical Institute, and the IBEW. Does it get better than that? You know, this is because all of them recognize that we have to invest in America again. That's what the American Jobs Plan is all about. That's what we anticipate our country will do, because we know how to make this happen, we can put people back to work, and it's time for us to think about hope and opportunity and get past the year that we're finishing.

MS. PSAKI: Why don't we --

SECRETARY KERRY: What --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

SECRETARY KERRY: No, I just had a lot of people who would say -- stay here if (inaudible) -- a lot of people would say, you know, if you hadn't -- if the President hadn't put the plan forward, you'd be asking why you haven't put the forward to do the building out of a transmission system for America or whatever it is. He put it forward, and it's a legitimate thing to say, "Now can it get passed? Can you get there?"

But this is the -- this job future is not something conjured up out of anybody's imagination. This is the most real thing in the world. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says there are three jobs that will actually more than 50 percent this year. The first is 62 percent growth in wind turbine technician. The second is nurse practitioners, for obvious and unfortunate reasons. And the third is solar panel installer at 51 percent.

So, the jobs are growing there. I'm not offering that job to somebody who may feel, "Oh my God, I got a better job. I don't want to lose that job," et cetera.

But the job market here is going to be gigantic. And for electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, steelworkers, heavy-equipment operators -- all of these people -- building out America's grid and transitioning us to this new future is -- is going to happen

operators -- all of these people -- building out America's grid and transitioning us to this new future is -- is going to happen in countries all over the world. We need to make sure we're not left behind -- in fact, that we're leading in the creation of the new technologies and new opportunities.

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: And the only other thing I would I would mention is that, you know, wind and solar had the biggest year they've ever had last year. And -- and what we saw last year was a continuation of tax credits that passed through a Republican-controlled Congress.

So we all know where this is heading. The real question is: Do we want to have the courage to grab it here, to prosper from the jobs here, and to stabilize our economy and our planet at the same time?

MS. PSAKI: I can hear your staff, Gina --

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: They're yelling at me.

MS. PSAKI: -- trying to pull you to Union Station.

ADMINISTRATOR MCCARTHY: And the only thing I will tell you is: Electric vehicles are another interesting piece. That's actually going to be a big part of our future. I'm going to go check out a charging station and look at some of those vehicles.

But the thing I would encourage you to think about is that we've had many of the large car companies stand up and say, "100 percent EVs by 2035." We didn't say that. I didn't even say "electric vehicles." It was the very first thing they said to me is that that's the future. And that's what this is all about: What does our future look like? Who are we grabbing it for?

Happy Earth Day.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Do you have a few minutes?

SECRETARY KERRY: I'll take a couple more, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Okay. Go ahead, Peter.

SECRETARY KERRY: (Inaudible.)

Q Secretary Kerry, thanks so much. So pledges, obviously, are important and they are great, but how do we realistically get there without turning the economy on its ear? As best you can, put this in real terms for folks. Does this mean the U.S. has to reach 40 percent renewable power by 2030; that we have to have 25 percent of the cars on the roads, by 2030, be electric? What does this mean to folks listening to you?

SECRETARY KERRY: What it means is that we're going to be investing. This is not an ex- -- you know, this is not a throwaway. This is an investment in new ways of getting energy to people that's more efficiently delivered; that's lower cost, in the long run; and that it's -- it's really going to open up a whole group of employment opportunities that we know -- that are beginning to be seen in America today.

And it's not because the government is directing those things to happen; the marketplace is doing this. You can't build a coal-fired power plant in the United States with a bank funding it, and no individual is going to throw their money down there.

Same thing in Europe today. Now starting in other countries -- you just heard Korea to say, "We're not going to fund any

same thing in Europe today. Now starting in other countries -- you just heard Korea to say, "We're not going to fund any external coal."

So there's a transition that the market has undertaken, well before anybody proposed the program or anything. This is a transition that's taking place. And we've historically always gone through these periods when, in America, we innovate, and we do the R&D, and we come up with a new product of some kind or another.

You know, I lived and represented for years -- had the privilege of representing communities like Lowell and Lawrence and Brockton and plenty of places -- you know, Fall River -- that have these huge mills that were, you know, teeming with people working in the early 1900s, and then that changed. And it went south in our America -- in our country, and then it went abroad.

Because that's the transition in economies. And it happened in the Industrial Revolution, it happened in the revolution of technology in the 1990s, and it's going to happen now. We always replace it with a different kind of -- or some, you know, new opportunity.

And I don't think it's going to mean that much dislocation, frankly. It's going to mean some greater opportunity.

Q What specifically can you -- you probably can't give specific numbers to those things on electric vehicles on the road then. But given what you witnessed with the last President, what -- if President Biden is not to win again in 2024, what specifically can you do now to make sure that the next President, with a stroke of the pen, can't reverse progress you're trying to make right now?

SECRETARY KERRY: I'll answer that very directly, but I want to begin by pointing out to you that there's a company called Tesla, which is the highest-valued automobile company in the world. Why? All it makes is one product: electric vehicles. That is what is happening. That's a signal. That's the market saying, "Here we are. This is going to happen."

And GM has now already announced, on its own, that they are only going to produce electric vehicles, as of 2035.

And Ford Motor Company -- ask the president of Ford. I heard him at an event, standing up and saying the electric car is a better car. They love it. And I don't know if you've driven one, but they're fabulous. They're really great.

And so, my -- my feeling is that -- that is going to take place because the market is sending signals and the consumer is sending signals.

Now, that said, how do you prevent somebody from coming along and preventing the stroke-of-a-pen change? Here's -- here's what is going to happen, no question about it: Because the world, as a whole, is moving in this direction; because these companies have made this critical, long-term, strategic marketing judgment -- and that is the way the market is moving -- no politician, no matter how demagogic or how potent and capable they are, is going to be able to change what that market is doing, because it will have moved. It'll have four years of entrenchment. And those jobs will be there. And people will see that this is the product people want to buy.

And they will also increasingly, I believe -- more and more are convinced by the heat in the summer, by the floods, by the weather, by the intensity of storms, by the rising of sea level that we got to get moving. And I don't think anybody is going to get back from that fast, because we're way behind the eight ball on that. And the chances of seeing more damage before we see the progress is very, very real.

MS. PSAKI: We can do one or two more.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Thanks, Jen. Secretary Kerry, President Putin and Bolsonaro today both threw a little bit of shade at the United States with their comments about historical emissions. I was wondering what's your take on their plans and your response to

from their comments about historical emissions. I was wondering what your take on their plans and your response to those criticisms, and whether or not you have an intention to travel to those countries.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, at some point, probably, travel will be warranted. We've been in conversations with both -- with their teams -- on this subject. We're not at a place where we feel like we're prepared to, you know, make the journey because there's a sense that there may be something concrete that we can define, but I think there may be chances of it.

I listened to President Putin today. I thought he was pretty rational and put some decent, visionary thoughts on about things we might want to be looking at and cooperating together, and he talked about that possibility.

So, just as with China, where we found a way to try to at least create this chain, this line of communication, and where we have a long way to go -- but it's a beginning. And that's the nature of diplomacy.

But I think that -- I think that we're in a place where we will have the ability to be able to create enough progress with other countries that those countries are going to come along, too. And I sense from both of them -- I -- some of the comments that President Bolsonaro made today surprised me for their -- you know, that -- that's pretty good, that works if you do those things. The question is: Will they do them? And the question is: What's the follow through and enforcement?

Now one of the things you ought to take note of is this program -- the Trace Program -- which Al Gore and different entities have been involved in, which is now the satellite capacity to measure in real time what the footprint is of corporations or countries all around the world.

And -- and so there's no hiding anymore, and there's going to be real-time tracking. And that's one of the things that will come out of Glasgow, I think, is sort of what's the accountability structure going to be here for countries to be able to move.

So I think that, you know, Russia has reduced some emissions. Their economy is very different from ours and a lot of people on the planet. It's mostly gas-based, as we know. That presents challenges for them going forward.

So I think there's room to hopefully have a discussion about this, and we'll see if we can find some common ground. I think that's the most important summary of what I heard, in terms of their comments today.

Q And do think that the 50 to 52 percent that the President unveiled today, that Gina McCarthy put together is far enough for the U.S.?

SECRETARY KERRY: I think it's -- it's doable. It's a tough -- it's not -- it's not easy. Is it doable? Yes. Will we probably exceed it? I suspect yes.

I think a lot of us will wind up exceeding the predictions we're making because we're measuring predictions by the economies we have today and by the technologies we have today.

But five years from now, we may have a major breakthrough on batteries, on storage, on green hydrogen, on direct air carbon capture. There are so many things out there that people are chasing and working on, and that's part of the value of the -- sort of the investment in -- and the venture capital business.

I mean, people are looking to -- you know, to be the -- the entity that hits pay-dirt with the patent on the best storage system that there is. And whoever does that will make more money than Jeff Bezos pretty quickly. That's going to be a big deal.

Green hydrogen -- there are a whole bunch of countries working on hydrogen and green. And if you can bring it up to scale at a cost that is not prohibitive so you're competitive with other things, it starts to take off. I think these things are going to happen.

I tell you, I'm genuinely optimistic because so much is beginning to happen and because I believe in our ingenuity and our capacity. I know President Biden does. I've heard him talk about it. He believes we can do anything. You've heard him say it.

And think about it: We are the country that went to the Moon. And we didn't know how we were going to get there when President Kennedy announced that goal, but we did it. We are the country that invented the Internet. Some people might regret that today, but we did that. We also got vaccines that are working, and we've shown we have the ability to get them out and put them in people's arms.

So I believe that we have the ability. When -- when, you know, you talk to Rafael Reif, the president of MIT, and you listen to what they're trying to do at MIT or at Stanford or at CalTech or, you know, a number of other tech colleges and universities in America -- if we were to join forces, as we're going to try to, with other efforts around the world, we think there are just great opportunities, and I believe we're going to -- we're going to break through. We're going to know how to do hydrogen, and there's plenty of it.

And this, I think, is the -- is really the future. It's why so many people are chasing it.

MS. PSAKI: Jen, last one.

SECRETARY KERRY: Maybe last one. Last one.

MS. PSAKI: But I will also give you the contact information for his team for anybody who wants to talk to him more. He has lots of thoughts, as you all know.

Go ahead.

Q Kind of piggybacking off of Jeff's last question: You know, there have been some groups that have been really positive about the NDC and the other steps that the administration has taken today -- the climate finance stuff.

But there are also some who are saying it's insufficient. And you referenced the young woman who spoke this morning, you know, and that deep passion about the crisis that previous generations have put on her generation.

What do you say to those people who say that 50 to 52 percent is not enough or that, you know, the several billion dollars that you're committing for climate finance for developing countries is also insufficient, you know, when you consider just how big the U.S. budget is -- that you're talking about, you know, under \$10 billion?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, let me just say to you that

I loved her passion and I loved what she said. I mean, I didn't agree with every step of it. You can't do some of this stuff overnight, just physically, and there are impediments to getting some of that done. But, boy, do I understand where she's coming from.

I told you this was five years to the day that I signed the agreement. It's also 50 years to the day that I testified before the United States Senate and I was camped on the Mall here with a bunch of veterans opposing the war in Vietnam.

And, you know, that was a period of time when young people -- our generation -- stood up and made our voices heard. And we had -- we were part of the Civil Rights Movement -- 1964-65; we were part of the women's movement; part of the peace movement; part of the environment movement.

The environment movement back then produced. I was part of the first Earth Day. And we organized -- I organized in Massachusetts, then we organized for the election. We targeted 12 Congress people who were labeled the "Dirty Dozen" -- the worst of the Congress -- and we beat 7 of them.

And that's when we passed the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Marine Mammal Protection, the Coastal Zone Management, the Endangered Species, and we created the Environmental Protection Agency for our country. It all happened, folks, back then. Richard Nixon signed it into law -- 1972, I think.

So, I believe in what the young folks are doing out there today. They're trying to get adults to be adults and do what we're supposed to do, which is take facts into consideration and respond to those facts and, as public officials, exercise the precautionary principle of governance that when you get information that says X, Y, and Z are going to happen, and there's not a 5 or 6 or 10 percent chance it's going to happen -- like whether you might have a car accident and you get insurance, or your home might burn and you get insurance, or you might get sick and you get health insurance -- it's 100 percent certain that most of these things are going to happen -- that the ice is melting; that the sea is rising; that -- warming -- and yet, we're not buying insurance.

And so you're darn right they're angry, and I share that anger. It's a frustration. But how do you get from here to there to get it done?

And I believe what President Biden is doing is leading to get us from here to there. What's happening here today is a huge step forward to get us from here to there by setting these targets, by getting nations invested. By getting leaders to say publicly, "We have to do this," you begin to get a foothold on holding them accountable and on moving forward and getting it done.

Is it enough? No, but it's the best we can do today and prove we can begin to move and get the technologies and find the easier path and then, hopefully, get the job done. And I really believe that. I think we will get the job done, as President Biden said today, because of our capacity for innovation and research and development, and producing great products in the future, and meeting big challenges.

And we've always done that. And I think Americans are really anxious to do something like that. That's why I'm here doing this, folks, and not, you know, in the private sector or retired and doing some things. It's because I believe this moment is the moment, heading to Glasgow, where we need to get on track.

As I said to you earlier, over 50 percent of global GDP agreed here today that they're going for 1.5 degrees, and what they're doing will get them on track to do it.

So if we're on track to do it, that's pretty darn good, even though we know we need to move faster and we're not, as a planet, as a group of countries, where we need to be. It's probably a good note to end on.

Thank you all.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you so much, sir.

Q Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY KERRY: Let me get that. Are you now stepping out for your --

MS. PSAKI: No, I've got to do the briefing now. I'll call you later. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY KERRY: Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. See how it was so great to work for him several times over? Okay, a couple -- I think I just have one or two more items for you at the top. Just one more.

As you saw this morning, the latest unemployment insurance claims came out. They provide a welcome sign that our economy is slowly healing and also provide a reminder of the importance of both the pandemic programs, expend- --

extended by the American Rescue Plan, and the 200 million shots we've gotten into the arms of Americans in less than 100 days.

While these weekly numbers can be volatile, we are encouraged by the fact that the four-week average is also down. It demonstrates that the administration's combined efforts are building confidence in our economy and that the President's approach can both create good-paying jobs and address the climate crisis.

With that, why don't we go over to you.

Q Thank you. New York Times is reporting that the next phase of the American Family Plan will include tax increases on the wealthy to help pay for human infrastructure, like education. Could you confirm any of the details that tax increases are in the offing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me just reiterate: The President remains committed to his campaign commitment of not raising taxes for anyone making less than \$400,000 a year, and that will certainly be reflected in his proposal he makes next week.

Let me also say that you can expect that he'll outline the details of the American Families Plan in his Joint Session Address to Congress next Wednesday, April 28th.

But I will also say that he's continuing to meet -- despite how busy it is around here with the Climate Summit -- with his policy team, and will be, over the coming days, to finalize the details of the package, including the investments in areas like child care, education, and other areas that are big priorities to him that we've talked about, as well as the payfors.

So I can't get ahead. I'm not going to get ahead of him making final decisions, but the package will be laid out in the speech next week. It will focus on the areas that we've outlined: child care, education -- historic investments in those. And as he has -- did with the American Jobs Plan, he will also propose a way to pay for it.

Q And if I could just -- very quickly: Some Republican lawmakers put out a slimmer infrastructure plan. It includes roads, water, some broadband -- some things that the President wants in his plan, but smaller. Any reaction to the plan? And is it -- do you guys see it as a legitimate starting point for a conversation?

MS. PSAKI: We do. The President has said from the beginning that he would welcome any good-faith effort to find common ground, because the only unacceptable step would be inaction.

We've seen some topline proposals or topline details, as you all have reported on. We're looking forward to reviewing the details of the proposal. We would expect the next steps would be a full briefing and conversations on a staff level that will continue over the coming days, and an exchange of ideas from there.

And then we'd also expect -- or I would expect that -- you should all expect the President to invite members to the White House after -- soon after the Joint Session Address.

But we certainly welcome any good-faith effort, and certainly see this as that. But there are a lot of details to discuss and a lot of exchanges of ideas to happen over the coming days.

Go ahead.

Q Is President Biden going to extend his call for Americans to wear masks beyond 100 days?

MS. PSAKI: You know, Peter, he is working and in discussions with our health and medical experts about what we need to do to get the pandemic under control, including providing clear guidance to the American public about what the benefits of -- are of being vaccinated, including getting it to communities and meeting people where they are. So I don't have any

update on that at this point in time.

Q And so then, I guess maybe this is the same but a little bit different: Should the CDC change its guidance right now that says that vaccinated Americans should be wearing masks when they're outdoors -- when they're outside in public?

MS. PSAKI: We're going to leave that to them to determine and to announce. And obviously, we would follow and abide by their guidance, and certainly would recommend that the American people do as well.

Q May I have a quick last one then on --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- on Armenian genocide. Should we expect President Biden, in the course of the next several days, perhaps this weekend, to make any formal announcements recognizing the Armenian genocide?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand the question and there's a great deal of interest in this particular topic, but I don't -- I'm not going to get ahead of the President and I also don't have anything else to provide from the podium today.

Go ahead.

Q Back on trying to reach this 50 to 52 percent reduction goal, many of the measures that you've pointed to are ones that are included in this broader infrastructure plan. If you can't get this plan passed though, can you still reach that target?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our view is that there are multiple pathways for each economic sector of the economy to -- that produces greenhouse gases -- including electricity, transportation, buildings, industry, and lands -- to make adjustments and changes, some through executive action, some through passing legislation, some through the steps -- as Gina and our envoy alluded to -- the private sector is taking steps on their own.

So, you know, just to give you a couple of examples: You know, we, of course, have set a goal to reach 100 percent carbon pollution-free electricity by 2035, which can be achieved through multiple cost-effective pathways, each resulting in meaningful emissions reductions in this decade. That's a step that is already underway.

We can create good-paying jobs and cut emissions and energy costs for families by supporting efficiency upgrades; that's another area where it would have an impact.

We can reduce emissions from the transportation sector by reducing tailpipe emissions and boosting the efficiency of cars and trucks -- something the President has talked about that he's committed to do. And we can also invest, as you alluded to, in a wide array of transportation infrastructure.

But one of the arguments that we will be making -- and continue to make, I should say, around the American Jobs Plan is that these industries are -- we are moving in the direction of these industries. These are the industries of the future.

The big question is whether we are going to lead that effort or not -- or is China going to lead that effort. And the last -- the meetings today and tomorrow are just a reminder that the world is moving in this direction. So we either get on board and lead or we don't, and there may be a disagreement about that.

Q You talked a lot, obviously, about job creation and the potential for that with this plan.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But can you put this into further perspective for Americans? How does this new reduction target impact their everyday lives? What kind of changes can Americans really expect to see.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think, as we've talked about a little bit -- or as I just alluded to a little bit, but let me try to get more directly at your question: There are steps that are already underway. Right? There are steps that industries are already taking: investing in the future of electric vehicles, investing in the future of electric cars. That is something that if you talk to many automakers, they're already moving toward that.

I think the question here -- maybe it's less for Americans. It is for Americans in the sense of: What is your government going to do to help ensure we are on the path to create -- to make this a job-creating opportunity for the American people? You know, how are we going to prepare and invest in industries now so that your children and your grandchildren have opportunities in these industries that are growing?

But this is already where the private sector is going. This is already where the jobs are in the future. So what we're really questioning now is how we can incentivize and how we can prepare the economy and opportunities for the next generation.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You just mentioned and Secretary Kerry mentioned the fact that the market is already heading towards electric vehicles. There's no turning back from that; it's an unstoppable force.

If that's the case, why should taxpayers pay for 500,000 electronic -- electric vehicle charging stations? Isn't that something that will get taken care of by the market?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I think there's a role for government to play. Our view, the President's view is there's a role for government to play to incentivize, to ensure that there is continued movement in this direction, but there's also a great deal -- a lot of the investment that's in the American Jobs Plan is about ensuring that there are industries and jobs that are created in sectors in the future to help the next generation survive and prosper.

So, yes, there is a private-sector partnership here. There's a role of the private sector. But our view is there's also a role of the public sector, and that this is a -- these are industries that are also going to create jobs, and that's part of the role we can play.

You know, and I don't think -- I know there's been criticism out -- there are questions about how this is going to impact job creation, today -- right? -- and job creation in our economy today -- or some criticism, I should say, from some -- some Republicans in Congress that I've read, this morning -- seen on the Twit- -- on Twitter.

But, you know, the President is somebody who has created -- will be the first in history to create a million jobs in his first 100 days in office. He's on track for that, in our view.

And a lot of these critics are the same people who advocated for the policies of the last administration and the last President who oversaw an economy that lost more jobs than any President since Hubert Herver [sic] -- Hoo- -- Herbert Hoover. It's quite a -- quite a name.

So join us on the journey. We feel clean jobs can be -- good jobs can be -- create millions of jobs in the future. And that's, I think, what we're conveying to the American public.

Q I want to go back to taxes for a moment because the Dow is down about 350 points on reports that the Biden administration is going to propose doubling, essentially, the capital gains rate for high-income Americans. Can you tell us any more about that plan? And do you have any concerns that that would discourage long-term investing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're still finalizing what the payfors look like. But I will say that the President's calculation is that there's a need to modernize our infrastructure. There's a need to invest in childcare. There's a need to invest in early childhood education and making our kids and the workers of the next generation more competitive. And he should propose

a way to pay for it.

His view is that that should be on the backs -- that can be on the backs of the wealthiest Americans who can afford it, and corporations and businesses who can afford it. And his view and the view of our economic team is that that won't have a negative impact.

There are alternative views -- or there are proposals that don't exist yet on how to pay for it. That will be a part of the discussion.

But he stays firm to his commitment to not raise taxes on Americans making under \$400,000 a year, and he'll have a range of proposals on how to pay for his plans to invest in education and child care.

Q Got it. And then finally, can you tell us anything about these reports that the Pentagon has been investigating suspected directed attempt -- energy attacks, likely by the Russians, against U.S. troops?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I believe the head of -- one of -- a very high-level member of the military spoke to this and denied those accusations or allegations and said there were no -- he did not have any evidence of those reports. And that's in some of the stories now.

So, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. There's been a lot of talk about innovation in the private sector, but going back to the public sector: Today, putting out the international climate finance plan -- kind of piggybacking on another question -- when you're giving money to developing nations, raising that amount of money, what kind of strategy does the White House have for dealing with maybe some opposition in Congress there and also changing within the government? Like is the administration planning to spend less on fossil fuels, relying more on green energy? What's your strategy for reaching Republicans in Congress?

MS. PSAKI: For com- -- oh, about the importance of doing this?

Q About how to, you know, get them to raise the amount of money that are going to developing nations and the importance of -- of doing it. But also, I mean the wheels of government sometimes turn slowly, and you're talking about -- a lot about the industry innovation, but getting the government on board -- the federal government -- Congress on board with the plan.

MS. PSAKI: Well, some of this commitment -- I think, as you're alluding to -- of the climate finance announcement is asking Congress to appropriate the \$1.25 billion. Is that what you're talking about? The --

Q To get the --

MS. PSAKI: For the Green Climate Fund. And we're obviously going to have to work with Congress on that.

I -- you know, I think our collective view here is that it is not -- the United States is a major emitter in the world. We're not the only emitter. And that, in order to address the climate crisis, we need to work with developing countries to ensure they have the resources to help meet those obligations. That's certainly the proposal and the pitch we would be making. We're not saying it's going to be easy, but that would be the pitch we'd be making around that financing.

Q Jen, do you know when you might make a pitch like that -- when that might be coming up?

MS. PSAKI: Well, with members or with --

Q With members, yes.

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly we just announced it today, and I'd expect we'd have conversations soon with members about the importance of moving this forward.

Q And one more question from a colleague.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q I'm looking for a reaction to the apparent pullback of Russian troops along the border of Ukraine. Do you know if the President is going to speak with President Putin about this reported plan to move troops away from that border by May 1st?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President, of course, has expressed -- he had a call with President Putin just last week -- if I'm remembering the date, the timing correctly -- and we've expressed our concerns over the course of the last few weeks about the buildup of troops and what we had perceived as aggression on the border, and conveyed our clear push, in coordination with the global community, to -- for troops to move back and to reduce that aggression. We obviously want to deescalate tensions not only in the relationship, but certainly at the border.

I don't have any predictions of a call with President Putin to make. Obviously, he participated in the summit this morning, and they spoke just last week. Our National Security Advisor spoke with his counterpart earlier this week. So I would expect the conversations will happen at that level for the time being.

Go ahead.

Q I just want to circle back on Russia again. So, Navalny's health is continuing to deteriorate, and I know that you had said, along with the National Security Advisor, that you've made clear to Russia that there will be consequences if he dies. But I'm wondering if there's anything you can say about what the administration is willing to do now or communicate to the Russians now about the need to get him out before he does die.

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, Jake Sullivan, our National Security Advisor, had a conversation with his counterpart, just a few days ago, where this was certainly a part of the discussion and conveying not just the consequences, but certainly our call for and our push for him to be treated with humanity and also to be released. And that continues to be a message that we are conveying clearly.

I will say that we have found in diplomacy that sometimes those conversations -- and the contents of them, and the level of them, and the number of them -- need to happen privately, and that is a more constructive way to reach our outcome. So, we are conducting our strategy through that prism.

Q Is the administration considering any additional sanctions on perhaps the oligarchs that Navalny had listed prior to his arrest in January -- saying that these are the people that, if sanctioned, it would really, kind of, change Putin's behavior definitely?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, because I know you cover this closely, we issued, just earlier in May -- in March, I should say -- in coordination with Europeans, a number of sanctions. We obviously reserve the right to issue additional sanctions in the future. The executive order the President signed just last week gives us authority to do that on individuals or industries. But, obviously, our objective here and our focus and our hope is that -- that Mr. Navalny will be treated with humanity and kept safe and, of course, ultimately, be released.

Q And my last one: Is there anything you can say about additional Nord Stream 2 sanctions or what the administration is planning on designating additional entities?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to predict for you. We continue to believe that is a bad deal, and we continue to convey

that not just directly -- with a range of counterparts, including the Europeans.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Jen, can you -- you mentioned that the President will lay out his plans for the American Jobs Plan.

MS. PSAKI: American Families Plan.

Q Sorry. Thank you --

MS. PSAKI: It's a lot to keep track of.

Q -- for that correction.

MS. PSAKI: I know they sound similar.

Q On next week, can you give us a sense of what else he plans to unveil at his Joint Address?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he is currently thinking through which -- what priorities he wants to focus on in the Joint Address. He certainly recognizes this is an opportunity to speak directly with the American people -- one of the highest-profile opportunities that any President has in their first year in office.

So, the core of that will be him laying out the specifics of the American Families Plan, his commitment to childcare, to education, and to delivering on those priorities and -- middle-class priorities -- and ensuring that there's an investment in economic security from the federal government.

I also expect -- or on his mind are issues like police reform, health and his commitment to expanding access to healthcare. So, I'd expect he'd talk about a range of issues.

I will say -- because I've been through a few journeys with these speeches before -- that it is a very important speech -- a very high-profile speech -- but it is happening around the 100th day of his presidency, and it won't represent or touch on the totality of every issue that's a priority. So, it's -- we are working through what the totality -- the end content will have. Unless you want to sit through a seven-hour speech, which I don't think you do. (Laughter.)

Q Just one other quick topic, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, go ahead.

Q The House today passed a bill to make Washington, D.C., the 51st state. It obviously faces some tough odds in the Senate. What's the White House's take on that? And to what extent is President Biden involved in that going forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, President Biden strongly supports D.C. statehood, and he doesn't -- and we will all -- our administration will work with Congress to get it passed. We put out a statement of administration policy in strong support of H.R. 51 just this morning. His view is that we are -- the denial of voting representation in Congress and local self-government to 712,000 residents of our nation's capital violates two of our nation's founding principles: no taxation without representation and consent of the governed. And he will continue to advocate for this passing.

I will also note an interesting detail I didn't know until this morning is that there are a number of members, of course, of the -- of the armed forces, retired military, who, of course, live in the District of Columbia and are denied, as a result of having the lack of statehood, the rights that many others around the country have. So, there are a number of issues why this is absolutely the right step, and the President will continue to advocate for it.

Go ahead in the back.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q I wanted to follow up on the questions about the climate and the NDC.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Secretary Kerry and you talked about how important Glasgow will be in November --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- when all of the countries come together to meet to ratify their NDCs. And given the importance of that meeting and the importance, I think, for the United States to demonstrate its commitment to action prior to that -- how essential is it that Congress passes the administration's infrastructure plans with the green energy investments in it, given that you're also up here saying the market will, kind of, take care of this?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly am not trying to imply that. The market is part of it, and the private sector is part of it. And I think that's an important component of the very good question of, you know: How will we ensure that these changes are engrained in the future? But there is absolutely a role for government to play -- some through executive action; some through legislation.

The President wants to sign the American Jobs Plan into law this summer. So that gives us ample time -- ample room between that timeline and when Glasgow will happen. But we also believe that there are a number of pathways to meeting our goals and meeting our objectives, and we certainly hope to move forward on a number of them in advance of that meeting in November.

Q So it sounds like you're saying that's not the only way that the U.S. can demonstrate its commitment to action prior to November.

MS. PSAKI: Correct. There are a number of pathways that include steps that can be taken within each sector, or steps that can be taken by the government or local governments in partnership with a range of sectors. So, we see a range of pathways to get to that -- to keep moving forward toward that goal.

Q Just one other question about your response to the initial overtures from Republicans on the infrastructure package.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q You said you do see that as a good-faith effort. It's roughly a quarter of the size -- topline number that the administration is proposing. Back during the COVID-relief talks, when Republicans proposed a number that was roughly a third of what the administration wanted, you dismissed them pretty quickly. What's different about this situation and this policy proposal compared to the relief package where you seem willing to take Republicans where they are and maybe allow more time for debate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one, it's the beginning of a discussion. Right? And the next steps will be conversations at the staff level, conversations between senior members of our administration, members of Congress, appropriate committee staff through the course of next week. And then, as I noted, the President will invite members down to the White House. But there are a lot of details to be discussed.

The American Rescue Plan -- but we do see them differently. The American Rescue Plan was an emergency package. We were trying to deal with what we saw -- continues to be an emergency fight against a global pandemic, a situation where 10 million -- more than 10 million people were out of work. Obviously, we've seen some progress. There's still more work to be done. And it -- the President felt it was imperative that the size of that package, the scope of that package met the moment and that it happened quickly.

We have a little bit more time here, and we are very open to hearing a range of mechanisms, a range of options for moving this package forward. There could be smaller packages that pass. There could be different mechanisms for moving things forward, and we think it can be done on a bipartisan basis. And so we're looking for the opportunity to do that.

Go ahead, Jen.

Q You mentioned this \$400,000 a year level for -- you know, nobody's taxes will be raised above that. But there's been some -- some confusion or lack of clarity around whether that's individuals or couples or families. So what is the actual \$400,000 definition?

MS. PSAKI: Individuals.

Q Okay, so -- okay.

MS. PSAKI: But I understand the question, and there'll be more specifics about any of these tax proposals when we lay out the plan.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you. So, it's a question related to the President's upcoming speech on Wednesday. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about why it was important for the President to actually deliver the speech at the Capitol Building versus, you know, remotely here from the White House, given everything that happened on January 6th and given the concerns about, you know, the coronavirus. Why is it important for him to, you know, physically be there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, you know, the President was in the Senate for 36 years, and he is a person who has not just a long history, but a great deal of respect for the institution of government that is Congress.

And he also recognized -- as -- recognizes, as we all do, that it's an opportunity to speak to the people who you will work with in partnership to get business done for the American public, but also to speak directly to the American people, as this will be a primetime, timed address, as it always has been throughout history. And so, it is an opportunity that he's been eager to take advantage of.

Obviously, we've been working in partnership -- or in cooperation with the Speaker's office for the last several months. And as you touched on, certainly there were unique factors this year. You know, obviously we always take into account security. But -- and doing this in a way that is COVID safe is something that the Speaker's office and leaders in Congress are very cognizant of.

Go ahead.

Q Hi. Two questions. First, from someone who can't be here due to --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- coronavirus restrictions. The New York Times is reporting neither drug pricing nor health coverage will be part of the American Families Plan proposal. Is that accurate? And is the President still committed to getting those done and discussing them in his speech next week?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I expect the President, as I noted, to talk about the American Families Plan in his Joint Address, as well as a number of other issues -- as you know I answered in response to Jeff's question -- important him, including healthcare, the need to put in place police reforms

the need to put in place policy reforms.

He's made clear his commitment to expanding access to healthcare. It's why he opened a special enrollment period during this pandemic. We're excited by the progress we've made. More than 500,000 Americans have signed up for coverage since the President was inaugurated. It's why he put into the American Rescue Plan subsidies to make it more cost effective for many Americans.

And, of course, the President's number one priority has been tackling the greatest health crisis our country has faced in generations. And just a reminder, again, this is a speech; it will -- it is an important moment, it is an opportunity to lay out his agenda, but it will not represent the totality of every proposal he wants to achieve during the course of his presidency.

It is also still being finalized. And the President will do some thinking work himself on it over the coming days.

Q On a very different note: Obviously, the President played golf over the weekend. Is there anything else you can tell us about how he spends his evenings and weekends? Is he -- is he reading books? Is he listening to music? Is he -- is he watching movies? What does he do?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Look, one, the President is very close with his family -- not just Dr. Biden, of course, but his grandchildren. And he has the opportunity to see them, at times, over the weekend and also see his kids. And that's important to him and an important way of how he spends time. Like many Americans, of course, he enjoys movies. And he has two dogs he loves.

And, you know, I would say, you know, I think he likes to spend time with family and loved ones, and take a moment to take a breath -- just like most people across the country do -- when he has the limited amount of free time you have as leader of the free world.

Go ahead, George.

Q Yeah. Thanks, Jen. Has everyone on the White House staff now been vaccinated, especially those who come in contact with the President?

MS. PSAKI: It's been a priority, George. I'll have to get back to you on the specific numbers -- and we've tried to be quite transparent about that, and I'm happy to do that. It's been a priority, of course, to ensure that the White House staff, especially those who have close contact with the President, are vaccinated.

But every member of the White House staff -- as you well know from covering this place -- I don't think that would be accurate at this point in time, but we'll check on the numbers. I will just reiterate or restate that we also take a number of precautions, including, of course, wearing N95 masks when we are in meetings. We have very limited meetings. There's a very limited footprint in the White House. We have, also, a number of staff who are working from home still who would normally be working on the complex.

So -- but we're working to vaccinate staff. I'll see if we can get an updated number to you and others who are interested.

Q Acknowledging that the White House is not a normal workspace --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what are you looking for that would allow you to make the decision that the President doesn't have to wear a mask when he's around people who have been tested and vaccinated?

MS. PSAKI: I expect, just like all of you and like many Americans across the country, we're going to wait for the health and medical experts to provide guidance on when it is safe to do exactly that.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. Two Climate Summit questions.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Secretary Kerry, yesterday, said, "Without China at the table, there is simply no way to resolve the climate crisis." How will the U.S. work with China in the field of climate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Secretary Kerry has already had discussions, and I expect we'll have -- I was talking to him right before we came out here -- we'll have follow-up questions after President Xi's remarks this morning -- or follow-up conversations.

And there's no question that China has an important role to play in working with the global community to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address our climate crisis. That was the case when the Paris Climate Agreement was signed five years ago and continues to be the case today.

Q And also, the credibility issue: Market matters, but government matters too. Can you guarantee the United States can follow through its commitment until 2030?

MS. PSAKI: That's absolutely what our commitment is: is to not just lay out goals, but to take steps to achieve it, and we have a number of pathways to get there.

The President has identified the climate as one of the four crises facing his presidency, and the fact that we are hosting a global climate summit under 100 days of his presidency certainly speaks to how important it is.

Go ahead, in the --

Q (Inaudible) administration in office in 2030, the U.S. will carry out its commitment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think as my colleagues here all -- spoke to, this is where the private sector is going. This is where government is going. This is -- these are industries that are going to create jobs in the future. And we certainly have every expectation and hope that future administrations will deliver on the groundwork we do over the next several years.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have a couple of questions, if I may. One on -- today is the first anniversary of the murder/disappearance of the soldier, Vanessa Guillén, of Fort Hood, Texas. That family is still asking -- they held a press conference today, asking this Biden administration for justice. They want to meet with the President. Is the President aware of the case, and would he be willing to meet with the family?

MS. PSAKI: He's certainly aware of the case, as we all are, and know the -- the family has been heartbroken. I didn't see the press conference this morning but have certainly followed the case myself. I don't have any planned meetings or commitments to read out from here.

Q And then, on Tuesday, when the Hispanic Caucus was here, they said that the President committed to putting together sort of a task force on an emergency basis to send to the border when there are surges of migrants coming in. Is this something that the President would work on right away? Could we see such a task force go to the border in the next few months?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on what the specifics of that are. I mean, we have already sent DART teams to some of

these countries in the region to help address and provide additional humanitarian assistance. I don't know if there was a reference to that.

We've also worked with a number of countries in Central America to help increase personnel and resources at the border, to reduce the influx or movement of migrants to our own border. But I'd have to check on what the specifics of that actually are.

Q And the last one on the Climate --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- Summit today. Do you have any idea why the Mexican young lady who spoke, Xiye Bastida, came in before she was supposed to -- why she was moved up on the agenda today?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check on her schedule. I don't -- I don't know why things -- sometimes things move in the schedule. As you saw this morning, there was an enormous Herculean, technological effort underway here, and sometimes there are movements in schedule because of that. But we're happy to check on that for you too.

Great. Thanks, everyone.

2:53 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 23, 2021 8:09 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone yesterday with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia. Mr. Sullivan conveyed his deep concern regarding the missing Indonesian submarine off the coast of Bali, underscoring that the United States would do everything possible to support Indonesia's search and rescue effort. He highlighted the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to deepening the U.S.-Indonesia Strategic Partnership and promoting ASEAN centrality. They discussed the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Burma and agreed that democracy should be swiftly restored. They also discussed the importance of upholding international law in the South China Sea.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the appointment of Ambassador Jeff Feltman as U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 23, 2021 3:25 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2021

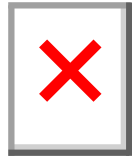
Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the appointment of Ambassador Jeff Feltman as U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa

Today, the State Department announced the appointment of Ambassador Jeff Feltman as the U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. Ambassador Feltman's work will build on our ongoing efforts to address the urgent crises in Ethiopia, where we continue to urge the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean forces, the cessation of hostilities by all parties, and unimpeded humanitarian access. We also urge leaders of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan to come together and resolve their disputes around the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam and their shared water resources. The United States is ready to work with our allies and partners to promote shared peace and prosperity across the Horn of Africa.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Fire at Ibn al-Khatib Hospital in Baghdad
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 25, 2021 9:18 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2021

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Fire at Ibn al-Khatib Hospital in Baghdad

We mourn the loss of life in the fire at Ibn al-Khatib hospital in Baghdad. We are in touch with Iraqi officials and have offered assistance. Our strategic partnership with Iraq is first and foremost a partnership between our two peoples. We are prepared to support the Government of Iraq and its people at this tragic moment.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Rome on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval of India
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 25, 2021 12:36 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan’s Call with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval of India

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, expressing deep sympathy for the people of India following the recent spike in COVID-19 cases. Mr. Sullivan affirmed America’s solidarity with India, the two countries with the greatest number of COVID-19 cases in the world. Building on the seven-decade health partnership between the United States and India —including battles against smallpox, polio, and HIV — they resolved that India and the United States will continue to fight the global COVID-19 pandemic together. Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, the United States is determined to help India in its time of need.

To this end, the United States is working around the clock to deploy available resources and supplies. The United States has identified sources of specific raw material urgently required for Indian manufacture of the Covishield vaccine that will immediately be made available for India. To help treat COVID-19 patients and protect front-line health workers in India, the United States has identified supplies of therapeutics, rapid diagnostic test kits, ventilators, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that will immediately be made available for India. The United States also is pursuing options to provide oxygen generation and related supplies on an urgent basis. The U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is funding a substantial expansion of manufacturing capability for BioE, the vaccine manufacturer in India, enabling BioE to ramp up to produce at least 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2022. Additionally, the United States is deploying an expert team of public health advisors from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and USAID to work in close collaboration with the U.S. Embassy, India’s health ministries, and India’s Epidemic Intelligence Service staff. USAID will also quickly work with CDC to support and fast-track the mobilization of emergency resources available to India through the Global Fund.

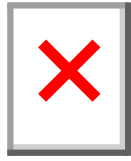
The two National Security Advisors agreed that the U.S. and India would stay in close touch in coming days.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on COVID-19 in India
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 26, 2021 10:20 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2021

Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on COVID-19 in India

Via Teleconference

2:47 P.M. EDT

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us. Sorry for the delay. We will be discussing the COVID-19 situation in India today.

A reminder too that today's briefing will be on background, attributable to "senior administration officials" and embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

With that being said, I'm going to kick it to [senior administration official]. We'll go through a few other people, and then we will have time for your questions.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us. As Americans, we have felt the devastating impact of rising COVID cases in India -- this recent surge -- among our family and friends. And, you know, the U.S. and India have had the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the world. Our two nations have suffered greatly.

And we remember India's generosity to the United States in the early days of the pandemic, when India offered medications to us as our hospitals were strained. And the U.S. and India have been partners on global health for seven decades. We've had a very strong health partnership. Over the years, we've battled polio, smallpox, HIV, and now we're fighting the COVID-19 pandemic together, including through the longstanding collaboration between our respective -- between our Center for Disease Control and India's Epidemic Intelligence Services.

This weekend, we had several high-level calls with Indian officials about the best ways that we can support India's fight against this current surge of COVID-19. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval yesterday. Secretary Blinken spoke with his Indian counterpart late last week. And we've now shared the range of support that we are prepared to immediately start deploying.

As you all have seen, earlier today, President Biden spoke with Prime Minister Modi. It was a warm and positive call. The leaders affirmed the strong ties between our nations, both of which have suffered so much under this pandemic.

We are in close touch with Indian officials at all levels. And we're also closely coordinating with our allies, friends, and Quad partners about how we can collectively support India in its hour of need.

Before we go through the specifics, I'd like to turn it over to [senior administration official].

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks. So, hello everybody.

So, before we get into some details on the specifics to the assistance to India, I want to take an opportunity, just a second here, to discuss a bit of the confusion -- clear up some of the confusion around the Defense Production Act.

So, basically, the world has embarked on an unprecedented level of manufacturing around vaccines -- something in the order of 14 billion doses more than the 4 billion a year that we typically manufacture around the world. And the -- while we've made great progress across the world, making vaccines requires a great deal of specialized materials and there's just not enough to go around.

So, to the manufacture of the vaccine: Here in the U.S., we used the Defense Production Act. The DPA priority ratings requires U.S. companies to prioritize U.S. government contracts ahead of other contracts that they have in place for U.S. manufacturing. But what it does not mean is an export ban or a de facto ban or an embargo or any restrictions on sales to any other outside clients or customers anywhere. Companies are able to export however they need.

And, in fact, all of the companies that we work with are also exporting materials all across the world. We are just one client of many in the consumption of raw materials from these companies. The DPA isn't the cause of any shortages as well -- doesn't cause shortages. There's just more global manufacturing happening everywhere in the world than suppliers can currently support.

So my job -- our job here -- the supply team -- is understanding the complexities of the global supply chain. So I monitor this every day. There's changes and challenges, of course, but we respond as necessary. And our response will always work to find ways to address these challenges.

So, then, to discuss momentarily our assistance in vaccine manufacturing: So, as requested by the Government of India, we will be providing raw materials for the production of the AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine at the Serum Institute of India.

So, given that there is not enough of the supply for the entire global manufacturing effort and in light of the current crisis, we, the United States, are diverting our order to India.

So, I want to be to be clear here that we did not intervene with the manufacturer to make them fill the Serum Institute's order; we don't have that power. Instead, what we are doing is diverting our own order of our own supplies to the Serum Institute for their manufacturing.

Because of the scope of the current situation in India and the stake of our -- state of our own production here at home, this was the most effective and rapid step we could take at this stage to provide support at scale.

So, USAID and CDC will also provide technical assistance and materials, and strengthening vaccine communications related to confidence in vaccination, and support (inaudible) of vaccine readiness at the national and subnational levels.

And many of you have asked in recent days why we're not just loaning or giving AstraZeneca doses to India like we did with Canada and Mexico, and we will defer to that a little later here in the conversation.

And I'll turn that -- with that, I'll turn it over to [senior administration official] to go through some of the other measures of assistance.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, [senior administration official]. Thanks, everybody. And obviously, the inputs that [senior administration official] spoke about are hugely important. But India is facing a huge surge right now, and there's a lot of support that we're currently exploring and what we're providing that will be helpful on the ground immediately.

At India's request, we're exploring options to provide oxygen and related supplies. These are resources that India has specifically requested and are very high on their priority list.

I'll start first with oxygen. There's a number of different buckets -- oxygen transport, oxygen generation, oxygen cylinders, the oxygen supply chain. And, in particular, our Department of Defense and our U.S. Agency for International Development are pursuing options to provide oxygen generation systems. We might be in a position to reroute shipments. We'll have detail -- many more details on exactly where these will come from and where they will go as soon as possible. But we do have the Department of State working to finalize options for contracting oxygen, including cylinders.

We also have the Department of Defense working on oxygen generation systems, including larger-scale as well as smaller-scale units. And USAID -- and we also have the Department of Defense exploring the provision of field oxygen generation systems, which we've used in our own field hospitals to provide oxygen for 50 to 100 beds. And I'll stress that some of these elements are in the exploration phase; they're shorter- and longer-term options that we're providing in the immediate, and then we plan to continue to be engaged over the longer term.

DOD is also, as I said -- we also are exploring options to provide oxygen concentrations and ventilators. And we're in technical discussions with India to ensure that the equipment we supply will connect to devices in India. And we're also going to be providing training associated with all of these requests as needed.

The U.S. government is also preparing to help with transportation of these and other supplies to India.

The next category of assistance that we're prepared to provide are therapeutics, personal protective equipment, and tests. The United States has identified U.S. commercial suppliers of remdesivir that are immediately available to help relieve the suffering of COVID-19 patients in India. And we've identified rapid diagnostic testing supplies, as well as personal protective equipment, that will be available to be transferred to India immediately.

Finally, we mentioned the antiviral remdesivir and rapid diagnostic tests, but also facilitating India's own access to those supplies through U.S.-based sources.

The fundamental category, last but not least, is public health assistance. And as [senior administration official] already mentioned, we have the only two CDCs in the world -- that includes, specifically, Epidemic Intelligence Services, named the "EIS" services -- and we have a long, long history of working together closely and helping one another.

The U.S. CDC, working with USAID, will urgently deploy a strike team to India which will include public health experts to work in close collaboration with our embassy, with India's health ministries and experts, and with India's Epidemic Intelligence Service staff.

That strike team will work hand in hand with India's experts in a number of areas, including laboratory services; surveillance and epidemiology; bioinformatics for sequencing and modeling of the disease; infection, prevention, and control; vaccines rollout; and risk communication.

The strike team will also include CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service officers and laboratory leadership service officers who will work directly with India's experts in peer engagements for the model for areas to allow support at the state and the local level. Support from the strike team could also support India being able to immediately add residents to an epidemiology class sizes to add new training experts in the Field of Epidemiology Training Program frontline cohort, where we're already working together.

USAID will also work in the public health arena with CDC to support and fast track the mobilization of emergency resources available through the Global Fund. India's base allocation through the Global Funds COVID-19 resource mobilization round is \$75 million.

Finally, in the broader healthcare service support and supply chain and manufacturing assistance, we're offering assistance to also help with the supply chain of oxygen -- which is part of the sustainability that I mentioned -- and related healthcare supplies. And that'll include building public-private partnerships (inaudible) for smaller-scale production plants for the compressors that I mentioned.

I'm going to it over to [senior administration official] to talk a little bit more about vaccines.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Hi, everyone. I'm [senior administration official]. I thought we might just -- you may have seen the news out earlier today on AstraZeneca. So, I thought, since we had you all here, we'd give you a quick topline from that.

So, first, as you know, the United States has three safe and effective vaccines for use in this country: Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. A fourth vaccine, AstraZeneca, has not been authorized for use in the United States. And, in fact, AstraZeneca has not yet even applied for the EUA in the United States yet, but it is being used -- this vaccine is being used in many countries around the world.

As part of the U.S. strategy to be ready for a range of scenarios, the United States has produced some AstraZeneca doses already. Given the strong portfolio of vaccines that the United States already has, as I mentioned, and given that the AstraZeneca vaccine is not approved for use in the U.S., we do not need to use the AstraZeneca vaccine here during the next few months.

Therefore, the United States is looking at options to share the AZ doses with other countries as they become available. Importantly, though, before any AstraZeneca doses can be shipped from the United States, the FDA will confirm that any such doses meet its expectations for product quality. This is being done in the context of FDA's ongoing review of all doses made at the plant where these AstraZeneca doses were produced.

And because of that process, at this moment, contrary to what some have heard -- may have heard, there are no AstraZeneca doses that have completed and cleared that process to be sent to other countries.

But here is where we do have doses in production process and just wanted to share those with you: We expect that there are approximately 10 million doses that could be released if and when FDA gets -- gives its concurrence, which could happen in the coming weeks. Further, there's an estimated additional 50 million doses that are in various stages of production, and these could be completed in stages across May and June.

So, in sum, we expect to have about 60 million doses of AstraZeneca that the U.S. could share with other countries as they become available over the next two months. As these doses become available, the plans will be finalized as to where they would be sent.

And, with that, I'll turn it back to you, [senior administration official].

Q Yes, hi. Thank you so much for doing this call. First and foremost, I wanted to ask about travel restrictions: Both

Canada and the UK have temporarily suspended travel from India, despite the fact that they have quarantine and testing requirements in place. So why is the U.S. not also suspending travel from India given concerns over the variant there?

And can you also comment on efforts by both China and Russia to kind of step in, and -- effectively saying that they're filling a void with respect to extending support for -- toward India?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks. Thanks, Sabrina. This is [senior administration official]. I think I can take that one.

Of course, we're -- on travel restrictions, we're always looking at whether there's a need to add additional layers to the travel restrictions we have in place. And we'll -- we'll obviously continue to look at that. But I would remind you, I think as you mentioned, we do have, globally, the requirements to have a test pre-departure from any country coming into the United States, as well as to quarantine upon arrival and do a second post-arrival test.

Q Hi. Thanks for doing this. Two questions, if I may. First, at any point during the recent discussions between the Indian and U.S. governments, did the Indian government make a specific request for some of the ready-to-use vaccines that the U.S. has?

And the second question is: The Prime Minister of India's office, in their readout of the call between President Biden and Prime Minister Modi today, said that Prime -- the Prime Minister had brought up the issue of waiving intellectual property rights for COVID-related products, vaccines, therapeutics, et cetera.

As you're probably aware, a group of 10 senators, including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, wrote to President Biden earlier in April, asking about the U.S. support of the India-South Africa initiative at the WTO along these lines. Did the Prime Minister and the President discuss this today? And where does the President stand on the issue? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sure. On the question of whether vaccines were requested, the answer is no. And on your second question, it was discussed briefly. We are looking at it, but I have nothing to say about our position right now.

Q Thanks.

Q Hi, this is -- this is an extension to what has just been asked by Sriram. Since you are saying that you have nothing more to say so far on IP or patent waiver, I'd like to know whether the U.S. doesn't consider it their moral obligation at this point to actually waive IP and patent on the mRNA vaccines, which are proving to be better in fighting the mutated virus?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't have anything to share with you on that.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: [Senior administration official], I can take just one point of that. This is [Senior administration official], which is just to say that it is true that the mRNA vaccines have performed really well.

And, I think, overall, we have a supply constraint and a production constraint for mRNA vaccines around the world. And so while [senior administration official] is quite right, we don't have more to say about our position on TRIPS at this point.

And in coordination with the U.S. Trade Representative that has the lead on that issue, we do very much and are very much working with partners like India to bolster manufacturing of vaccines and to look at how we can boost production globally of supply, including for the mRNA vaccines.

Q Okay. Thanks so much for doing this call. I'm hearing from a lot of global public health advocates who say that the Biden administration really needs to do more. The ONE Campaign said that, "The [U.S.] has secured [more than] 550 million excess doses that could be used to help end the global pandemic." And we know that a lot more than 60 million doses will be needed. So can you articulate what your broader vision is going forward for addressing the global pandemic?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Sheryl. This is [senior administration official]. I can start.

I mean, I think, as the President said, we know that this pandemic will not end unless it -- we help the world end it in countries around the world.

Obviously, we've spent a lot of time focused on this country, but we've also spent a lot of time, you know, rebuilding American leadership in Global Health Security -- rejoining the WHO; you know, investing the most funding, I believe, in COVAX of anyone in the world; you know, spurring production, as [senior administration official] was saying, including with the Quad partnership that was announced earlier this year.

And now, as we said, we always would we -- we're ready to start sharing and we announced the sharing of the AZ doses that are in production still, but hopefully we will be able to share them over the course of the next two months.

So I think we're not taking any one way to approach this pandemic and help the world. We know there's lots of different ways, including, as [senior administration official] mentioned earlier, boosting production of vaccines across the world and then sharing one when we can.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yeah, [senior administration official], I'd only -- only just add that we -- you know, we have \$11.5 billion now in funding for the global response from Congress to the American Rescue Plan.

And that funding is going to fight the pandemic to help readiness in countries, including vaccine administration efforts, to get shots into arms; to reduce specific threats posed by new variants; to expand humanitarian assistance; and to address social and economic impacts, including secondary impacts; and also to mitigate the really -- real impacts that we're seeing all over the world of backsliding on health and development aims for HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, vaccine-preventable diseases, et cetera.

And so we are dedicated to the global COVID response and to ending the pandemic ultimately.

Q Hey, all. Thanks so much for doing this. I have just one specific question about the timeline here. You mentioned that the U.S. is -- does not need these doses over the next several months. Can you talk about what happens after the next several months, and if there is some other kind of risk calculation that needs to be done then toward the beginning of the Merck deal? Can you just talk about the timeline more specifically? Thanks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sure. Thanks, Erin. I think we -- you know, generally, our approach has been to have -- be prepared for a range of scenarios, and I think you've seen that over the last -- the last few months of the Biden administration.

And so, we, obviously, had started to produce some of the AstraZeneca vaccine, and we hope soon, in the coming weeks, that some of it will start to be available to share.

And given our portfolio and given our approach of having a range of options and having a range of -- being ready for a range of scenarios, we just don't think we're going to need it in the next few months. And so we're ready to share what we know is coming, which we believe to be the 60 million doses.

Q Thank you. On the filters you're diverting to the Serum Institute of India: Which vaccine or vaccines would those filters have been used to make in the United States?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Hi, this is [senior administration official]. I can -- I can handle that.

These are -- there have been -- these are 36 millipore filters that would have been used to manufacture AstraZeneca vaccine that will be used to manufacture the Covishield AstraZeneca vaccine -- vaccine serum.

Q Thanks. Do you have any updates on the Quad plan to finance vaccine production of India's Biological E.? Is that still on track?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I can -- I can take that one. This is [senior administration official].

It s absolutely still on track. And our Development Finance Corporation is working regularly, hand in glove, with Bio E., and it s -- it s moving forward expeditiously.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All right. I think that s all the time we have. So, again, thank you.

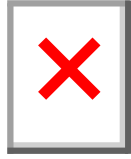
As a reminder, this call was attributable to "senior administration officials." And any follow-ups, you know where to find us. Thank you.

3:09 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of Jake Sullivan's Bialer Meeting with Israeli NSA Mer Ben-Shabbat
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 27, 2021 4:46 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2021

Readout of Jake Sullivan’s Bilateral Meeting with Israeli NSA Meir Ben-Shabbat

Today, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met in Washington with Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat to continue the close bilateral consultations between the two governments on a range of regional issues. The U.S. and Israeli officials discussed their serious concerns about advancements in Iran’s nuclear program in recent years. The United States updated Israel on the talks in Vienna and emphasized strong U.S. interest in consulting closely with Israel on the nuclear issue going forward. The United States and Israel agreed on the significant threat posed by Iran’s aggressive behavior in the region, and U.S. officials underscored President Biden’s unwavering support for Israel’s right to defend itself.

The United States and Israel agreed to establish an inter-agency working group to focus particular attention on the growing threat of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Precision Guided Missiles produced by Iran and provided to its proxies in the Middle East Region.

The two sides also shared concerns about recent violent confrontations in Jerusalem and the U.S. officials welcomed Israel’s recent calls for calm.

The U.S. strongly condemned the recent indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. U.S. officials affirmed this administration’s continued support for efforts to advance peace between Israelis and Palestinians and a two-state solution to the conflict.

The United States remains unyielding in its commitment to Israel’s security and will work to strengthen all aspects of the U.S.-Israel partnership.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with CARICOM Leaders
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 7, 2021 2:19 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with CARICOM Leaders

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke on May 7 with Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General Irwin LaRocque and leaders from the CARICOM member states. Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed the Biden-Harris administration's unwavering commitment to work together with the Caribbean region on managing the COVID-19 pandemic, advancing economic recovery, addressing climate change, and strengthening regional democracy and security. Following up on Secretary of State Blinken's April 21 virtual roundtable with CARICOM Foreign Ministers, Mr. Sullivan proposed regular high-level U.S.-CARICOM engagement, including a meeting between the President and CARICOM heads of State. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of St. Vincent & the Grenadines and foreign ministers from Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, along with the Permanent Secretary of Barbados and the Premier of Monserrat, participated in the call.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, May 7, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 7, 2021 8:15 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, May 7, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:29 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hey. Hi, everyone. We were a little early today. I apologize for that. Okay, so good afternoon and happy “Jobs Day.” Today I’m honored to have Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen join me here.

Secretary Yellen has almost 50 years of experience in academia and public service. She’s the first person in history to have led the White House Council of Economic Advisers, the Federal Reserve, and the Treasury Department.

Her scholarship has focused on a range of issues pertaining to labor and macroeconomics. And her work on efficiency wages with her husband, George Akerlof, showed that firms that offer better pay and working conditions tend to be rewarded with higher morale, reduce turnover, and greater productivity.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Dr. Yellen to the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Three years later, he named her Chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

In 2004, Secretary Yellen began her third tenure at the Federal Reserve, this time as President of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. From that post, she spotted a worrying economic trend: a bubble in home values -- a bubble in home values. When the housing bubble popped in 2008, Secretary Yellen helped manage the resulting financial crisis and recession.

And in 2010, President Obama appointed her Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve before nominating her to succeed Fed

Chair Ben Bernanke as the nation's top central banker.

She can take a couple of questions. As always, I will be the bad cop. And again, thank you, Secretary Yellen, for joining us.

SECRETARY YELLEN: Thank you, Jen. And hello, everyone. It's a pleasure to join you this morning. I'll be pleased to take your questions, but first I thought I'd spend a few minutes on the state of our labor market.

When our administration took office, our economy was in a state of crisis. Our most pressing concern was providing a lifeline for Americans suffering under the weight of the pandemic. Our solution was the American Rescue Plan, which the President signed back in March. It was designed to provide enough relief for Americans to make it to the other side of the pandemic with the foundations of their lives intact: providing nutrition for hungry families, rental assistance for those at risk of eviction, and a lifeline for businesses on the brink.

We knew it would be a long road back to recovery. That's why the legislation provided lasting support rather than just a few months of relief. We knew this would not be a 100-day battle. And today's jobs report underscores the long-haul climb back to recovery.

But let me be clear: The 266,000 jobs added in April represent continued progress. We've added an average of over half a million jobs during the past three months. And we saw a promising growth of 331,000 jobs in leisure and hospitality, which includes the restaurants and bars that have been so badly battered by this pandemic.

We should also be encouraged by the ongoing expansion of the labor force. It's a promising sign of our economy winning out over the pandemic. Last month, the labor market expanded as more people reported they are looking for work, hours are increasing, and the share of workers forced into part-time jobs is declining.

Indeed, we've made remarkable progress. After all, one year ago, we learned we'd lost over 20 million jobs in one single month. I believe we will reach full employment next year.

But today's numbers also show that we're not yet finished. As our economy continues to heal, it's important to consider ways in which we can build back better, and one of those ways is removing barriers to higher labor market participation. Even though we're seeing sustained job growth now, more jobs ultimately will require more individuals to participate in the labor market.

As you know, the topline unemployment rate you see doesn't include the many millions of Americans who were not seeking work, and progress here is critical.

When I first came to Washington in the early '90s, a higher percentage of American women worked than almost any other developed nation. Out of the 22 wealthiest countries, we ranked sixth in the labor force participation. By 2010, America fell to 17th. By the eve of the pandemic, women's labor force participation was hovering somewhere near where it had been in the late '80s and early '90s.

Male labor force participation has fared even worse. A smaller percentage of men are working now than at any point in the last 70 years.

There are many drivers of these trends. But as my colleagues at the Council of Economic Advisers have pointed out, an undeniable one is a lack of support for people as they raise children and care for older relatives. Our policymaking has not accounted for the fact that people's work lives and their personal lives are inextricably linked, and if one suffers, so does the other. The pandemic has made this very clear.

Between February and April of 2020, 4.2 million women dropped out of the labor force, in large part due to an unexpected caregiving burden. Nearly 2 million have not yet returned.

The challenge before us is to help these 2 million women to return to the labor market, but to help the millions of other workers who left prior to the pandemic to do the same. It's a core reason that, last week, President Biden proposed the American Families Plan. The plan offers up to \$8,000 to pay for childcare and make sure kids from lower-income families can attend for free. It offers universal pre-K to three- and four-year-olds, and it provides up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave.

With today's jobs numbers, I'm confident we will have a strong, prosperous economy this year and in 2022. But what about the rest of the decade and the years beyond? Our country's long-term economic health depends on whether we invest in American families and workers, and I'm very hopeful we will.

Let me stop there. And I think I have to take some questions.

MS. PSAKI: Alex.

Q So President Biden suggested that the increase in unemployment benefits has not affected the jobs report, but the Chamber of Commerce and some business leaders are arguing that it's easier for people to stay home; they're receiving more money than they would for them to go back to work.

So what's your response? How do you explain the slowdown in hiring that we saw in this jobs report? And is there talk about reducing that unemployment benefit in the future to get people back in the work -- back to work?

SECRETARY YELLEN: So, first of all, I'd note that the jobs report is a little bit stronger than the headline numbers might suggest on the hiring front.

The number of people working part time for economic reasons, namely involuntary part-time work, that number declined by 600,000, and hours -- average hours of work ticked up by a tenth. So, that means that an extra margin in which -- in which employers are able to boost their labor is by adding to hours of existing employees, and that those employees want that extra work. They were involuntarily working part time.

You know, the labor market is volatile from month to month, and I think the best thing is to average through and say we've been creating over 500,000 jobs a month, on average, over the last three months.

Look -- but, you know, it's clear that there are people who are not ready and able to go back into the labor force. Many children are back in school -- school, but not on a regular schedule. It's a challenge for parents to manage schedules where one child is in school a couple of days a week and another child is in school some different days during the week.

So caregiving responsibilities and absence of childcare are still important reasons why people are unable to return to work. You know, concern about the pandemic and the health consequences, I think, remains a factor for many.

You know, I don't think that the additional -- the addition to unemployment compensation is really the factor that's making a difference. There's no question that we're hearing from businesses that they are having difficulty hiring workers. Although over 300,000 workers, I'd point out, ha- -- were added this last month in leisure and hospitality, which is the most badly affected sector.

But, you know, when we look across states or across sectors or across workers -- and if it were really the extra benefits that were holding back hiring, you'd expect to see that in -- either in states or for workers or in sectors where the replacement rate due to UI is very high, you'd expect to see lower job-finding rates. And in fact, what you see is the exact opposite.

You know, we've had a very unusual hit to our economy, and the road back is going to be somewhat bumpy. We have to expect that there are a variety of bottlenecks that are also relevant. So we've just seen motor vehicle production shut down in some places because of a shortage of semiconductors. There was a loss of jobs there this month. There were

setbacks in the lumber industry because of shortages there.

So, you know, starting up an economy again, trying to get it back on track after a pandemic in which there are a lot of supply bottlenecks is going to be, I think, a bumpy process. But I really don't think the major factor is the extra unemployment.

Q Madam Secretary --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead, Kelly.

Q Were you surprised, Madam Secretary, about the number? Because we've heard so much about a pent-up demand, a desire to get back; we've seen vaccinations rise; and we know that some of the funding in relief packages targeting businesses is in the bloodstream now. So, were you surprised by the number? And how much of a change would you anticipate as the summer season and the reemergence continues?

SECRETARY YELLEN: Well, I believe that we're going to -- the recovery will remain on track, and it may be bumpy from month to month for a variety of factors. You know, there are often quite large revisions to months as well.

There is data -- two days before this, the ADP data that suggested over 700,000 jobs would be created, unemployment insurance claims had gone down. So, if I had had to write down a number as my best guess, it would have been higher. But I've watched data for a long time, and I know that it is extremely volatile. There are often surprises and temporary factors, and one should never take one month's data as an underlying trend.

Besides -- remember I said the -- the -- actually what happened is stronger, I think, than the headline number looks.

Q Madam Secretary --

Q And do you see -- do you see the relief money in the bloodstream of the economy now making a difference?

SECRETARY YELLEN: Oh, absolutely. I mean, we saw very robust spending -- consumer spending -- in the first quarter of the year. The stimulus checks getting out there stimulated a surge in spending. We're seeing services begin to pick up from very low levels.

I think there's absolutely no question in my mind that the money that the ARP has put out there and will continue to put out there in the coming months is going to boost spending.

And as things open up with further success with vaccinations in the pandemic, people are going to go back to eating out and traveling and doing all the things that they did. And I -- I absolutely expect to see continued progress in the (inaudible) probably bumpy. And there is --

You know, look, we're still down net 8.2 million jobs from where we were in February of 2020. That is a big hole, and we're going to hit back, but, you know, it's going to take a little while.

MS. PSAKI: Steve.

Q Thanks, Jen. Madam Secretary, what's your advice then to the employers who say they are having difficulty hiring workers? One suggestion has been made to perhaps raise wages. But if businesses have to compete with plussed-up unemployment benefits, won't that result in an increase in consumer prices and touch off an inflationary cycle that so many experts have been worried about?

SECRETARY YELLEN: Well, I really doubt that we're going to see an inflationary cycle, although I will say that all the economists in the administration are watching that very closely.

As my colleagues have said -- the CEA put out a blog post on this -- we expect somewhat higher inflation over the next several months for a variety of, essentially, technical reasons because of something called "base effects" that, in year-over-year comparisons right now, the months in which prices fell the most are moving out of the average, and that leaves us with a number -- with the months in which they were rebounding toward more normal levels. But that's -- that's a transitory thing, not something that's associated with a buildup in wage -- in wage pressures.

I mean, with respect to wages, the best data that we have suggests that wage growth has really not picked up meaningfully. And in areas where you do see some pickup -- for example, this month, in services, there was a pickup in wages -- but still, that's an area where wages actually fell at the beginning of the pandemic. And, you know, we're seeing a revival not back yet up to normal levels.

So, you know, in -- in areas where wages are more flexible, they fell a fair amount. As the economy revives, we expect to see a return to more normal levels. But I don't think we're seeing meaningful upward pressure through -- throughout much of the economy, but we'll watch that very carefully.

Q Madam Secretary --

MS. PSAKI: Sal- -- I was going to call on you, Saleha. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Madam Sec- --

MS. PSAKI: And then she's going to have -- sorry. This is going to have to be the last one. And she's always welcome back any time -- I think, it's safe to speak for all of you.

Go ahead.

Q Madam Secretary, is there any more that you can share on how long Treasury's extraordinary measures on the -- extending the debt limit may last? There were some comments yesterday from the agency, but if there's anything more you can share on that.

SECRETARY YELLEN: So all I can really tell you is that the debt ceiling comes back into effect on July 31st, and there are a series of so-called "extraordinary measures" that are ordinary in the sense that they've been used many times in the past.

But it's exceptionally challenging this time to try to figure out just how long those measures are going to last, in part because of higher and more volatile spending in revenue numbers associated with the state of the economy and the pandemic.

So we've evaluated a range of scenarios, and we are concerned that there are scenarios that would give a very limited amount of additional time through the use of extraordinary measures, but I can't really be more precise than that.

Q You don't know if it's into October or further?

SECRETARY YELLEN: I -- I'm just saying near -- there are scenarios in which so- -- you know, sometime during the summer, wi- -- the extraordinary measures would run out.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, Secretary Yellen, for joining us.

SECRETARY YELLEN: My pleasure. Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

Q Thank you very much.

SECRETARY YELLEN: Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Thank you, everyone. All right. I have just a couple of other items for all of you at the top here.

As part of the American Rescue Plan, today, we announced an allocation of \$21.6 billion in emergency rental assistance to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. This much-needed funding will help prevent evictions and ensure basic housing security for millions of Americans, including middle-class landlords who rely on rental income to support their families.

In addition to the funding, the administration announced new updated guidance to make sure that these funds get out quickly to those most in need of assistance.

For the first time, the new guidance requires the program to offer assistance directly to renters if landlords choose not to participate. The new guidance also cuts down wait time before renters can access assistance and makes clear that funds can be used for moving-related expenses, security deposits, and other costs if a family is displaced.

While the economy continues to recover, nearly 7 million Americans reported being behind on rent in the second half of April. More than 40 percent of those renters worry that they could be evicted sometime in the next two months, and almost 12 million Americans lack confidence that they can meet next month's rent. So, this is clearly critical to a large swath of people across the country.

I have a little bit of a week ahead for you here, I believe. Well, we'll get it you to immediately following the briefing afterwards.

Alex, you want to kick us off? Or -- okay, go ahead, Steve. I like it.

Q Does the --

MS. PSAKI: Secretary Yellen gave her more than she needs. Go ahead.

Q Does the April job report affect how you approach the negotiations over the infrastructure plan?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Steve, let me say, first, that when we give you the week ahead, some of the components in there will include a leadership meeting that will be happening next Wednesday that we announced a couple -- last week, I believe. It feels like a long time ago. That will certainly be an opportunity to discuss the American Jobs Plan, discuss ways we can work together on putting people back to work.

But we've always felt, as you heard Secretary Yellen convey and as you heard the President say earlier today, that the road to recovery would be up and down, and that there would be -- that was -- it was going to be important for us to put in place -- pass a package -- the American Rescue Plan -- that addressed the crisis that was meant to rescue the country and the economy, and that we needed to invest far more than that to get to the point of recovery.

So, you know, certainly our focus will be on working with Democrats and Republicans -- that hasn't changed -- to get that done as quickly as possible, hopefully in a bipartisan way.

Q And following up, is it time to reconsider encouraging people to stay home with unemployment benefits, given the rising vaccination rates, the CDC guidance, this -- this April jobs report?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that we're not encouraging -- you mean in terms of CDC guidelines or in terms of supplying unemployment benefits?

Q Yes --

MS. PSAKI: Sorry?

Q Supplying unemployment benefits.

MS. PSAKI: Unemployment benefits. Well, let me -- well, let me first say -- because there's been a little bit of confusion about this -- that there are certain requirements. In order to receive any kind of unemployment benefit, claimants must be able, available, and actively seeking work. And workers are not permitted to refuse suitable work and continue to receive benefits.

That all remains true, including under the pandemic UI program. You're only allowed to refuse work and continue to receive benefits if you're sick with COVID, taking care of someone sick with COVID, or offered a job at an unsafe workplace.

As the Secretary alluded to, there also continue to be challenges that are unique to this moment we're living through, including childcare restraints, the fact that 2 million women are still left the workforce, and that has an impact, of course, on people rejoining the workforce.

But, you know, our view is that these benefits continue to provide necessary assistance to families, to people who are out of work to address what remains a challenging point in our economy.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Given the President's frequent encouragement that people get vaccinated, where do things stand as far as the President deciding whether or not he will mandate that federal employees must be vaccinated or members of the military must be vaccinated? Or would he work in conjunction with private sector employers who want to have those kinds of requirements for a return to work?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wouldn't anticipate that we would be putting requirements on private sector companies. And I would expect that we would allow the space for them to put those requirements in place themselves or decide what is best for their workforces.

Obviously, I don't have any update. There's no new information I can provide on -- on any requirements as it relates to federal employees. And certainly, as it relates to the military, we would rely on the advice and guidance of the Secretary of Defense.

Q So that's not something that's kind of in the works to consider whether the President would have that kind of a requirement?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on that at this point in time.

Q Does the President have a reaction to the indictments of four former police officers in Minnesota related to the George Floyd case and civil rights allegations against them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, obviously, we have seen the reports, and we have -- are watching any follow-up closely. But we don't have any specific reaction to the legal actions that were announced today.

I will say that, again, it's a reminder -- as was the verdict in the Chauvin case just a few weeks ago -- that there's still more that needs to be done. While that was a moment of justice, certainly, that it is just the beginning. And it's a reminder of the need to put police reform in place through our legislative process and put those reforms in place across the country.

Go ahead, Weijia.

Q Thank you, Jen. Secretary Yellen said that the recovery would be "bumpy" and there would be "different factors" every month that contribute to it. What factors do you think led to what happened last month and the numbers dropping from an average of 500,000 to just over half of that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Secretary Yellen said -- I like saying that, since she was just here -- you know, we look at monthly averages. We don't -- it's -- one of the reasons why we don't celebrate and bring champagne and balloons in when the numbers are far above expectations is because we know that there -- that we have to look across a span of time and not overanalyze one particular month.

So we look at it as: Across the course of three months, there was an average of 500,000 jobs that were created. The prior administration created an average of 60,000 jobs per month. So that certainly is a positive trajectory.

In our view, as we look at this report, it's just a reminder -- and our biggest takeaway is that it's going to take time and effort to heal the economy. It emphasizes the steep climb out from this economic crisis and the fact that more is needed. We need to do more, because recovery for some, even when there are very high jobs numbers, is not recovery for all. And we will continue to advocate for moving forward with the American Jobs Plan as a result.

Q Thank you. President Biden just said that he was "confident" that he would be meeting with Putin in June, next month, and suggested that it was only a matter of logistics -- where and when the meeting will take place. Can you confirm that he will meet with Putin when he visits Europe next month?

MS. PSAKI: There's not a meeting with the President locked in yet. Obviously, the President -- our President -- invited him to participate in that meeting because he thinks it would be a good step forward in the relationship to deescalate, to ensure we have a more stable relationship moving forward. But there's no meeting to confirm at this point in time.

Q So has the -- have the Russians not accepted?

MS. PSAKI: There's a --

Q Well, have they -- have they accepted?

MS. PSAKI: There's a -- as we said when the President had the discussion with President Putin, it would then be at the point where it would be discussions at a staff level about what it might look like, where, the timing, the components of an agenda. Those are still ongoing.

Q Got it. And just one more on the voting laws that passed in Texas and Florida: Does the President have anything to say about these laws? And do you -- does he -- will he ask the Justice Department -- or does he believe the Justice Department should intervene in any way to try to prevent the implementation of these laws?

MS. PSAKI: Well, on the second question, he will leave that up to his Attorney General and leaders at the Justice Department. I will say the President's view -- the fact of the matter is that these laws make it harder to vote. That's not a good thing.

And his view is that any law that passes across the country should make it easier to vote, should not place limitations on giving food or water to people in any capacity in the line, should not limit the number of mail ballots you can help others return, should not allow challenges to voters based on their address, even when they show up -- show up with that address on a photo ID.

You know, these are making it harder to vote, not easier. And that's a fundamental view for the President. There's obviously federal legislation -- legislation at the federal level. I should say -- that he strongly supports

obviously federal legislation -- legislation at the federal level, I should say -- that he strongly supports.

And, you know, these are not the only states -- as you well know, Weijia -- where there are efforts to make it more and more difficult to vote.

So he will continue to redouble his efforts to move legislation forward with Congress. And his overall view is there's no good reason to make it more difficult for people to exercise their right to vote across the country.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q So on expanded unemployment, there was talk of making those benefits permanent; Democrats had been talking about that in Congress. Has the latest jobs report impacted the way that the White House is looking at that possibility?

And then, can the President do anything to try to help pick up the pace of hiring? I mean, could you see a world in which he'd be talking to CEOs about raising their, you know, salaries, that kind of thing? Has he been looking at options?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I will say, first -- one, the President supports an increase in the minimum wage. The President also believes and would love to see action in moving forward the American Jobs Plan by this summer, because he is the first to tell you that we need to do more, the economy needs more, American workers need more -- obviously for the short term, but also the long term.

And we know that the combination of the American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan would have a large, net-positive benefit in -- on bringing our workforce back in. And also, the American Families Plan would have a huge benefit in addressing some of the impacts of childcare, on educational needs -- on covering that. That is preventing women from rejoining the workforce.

In terms of UI benefits, I know that a number of Democrats have talked about that in the past. And we're, obviously, in the discussion phase at a staff level, in discussion with committees, from senior leadership here, with members and their staff.

Next week, I expect we'll have a range of conversations to the high -- up at the highest level on down, where those discussions will continue, and we'll see what they bring to the table as important priorities for them.

Q And then, when it comes to the American Jobs Plan, how long do you see -- or how quickly do you see that money, sort of, making an impact on an issue like childcare? I mean it's going to take a while for it to be implemented, that money to get out there. We likely won't see impacts until earliest next year. Isn't that right?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, first, the American Families Plan, which has the biggest components of the five-year extension of the Child Tax Credit -- obviously there are still components of that that are being extended -- that are being implemented now from the American Rescue Plan. And other pieces have -- they are meant to have a longer term-benefit. You're right. They're not all meant to have an immediate benefit; they're meant to address and build us out of recovery over the long term.

But certainly, for the American Jobs Plan, there are efforts in there that we certainly would hope to be underway as quickly as possible and as quickly as they can be.

I don't know that we have an assessment at this moment in time on, kind of, when the first project could start. It really depends on when a bill would pass.

Q And then one quick one on Russia. Secretary Blinken has warned Russia against, sort of, further aggression. That seems to run a little bit counter to President Biden saying he's still expecting a meeting with President Putin. So how does

seems to run a little bit counter to President Biden saying he's still expecting a meeting with President Putin. So how does the White House and President Biden square having a meeting with Putin despite this aggression? And is there a point at which the meeting could be broken off if Russia doesn't listen to U.S. warnings?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that it's a relationship where, while we feel we want to move toward a more predictable and stable relationship over the long term, we also are going to reserve our option of putting in place consequences if their actions warrant.

And that was certainly what Secretary of State Blinken was saying, and that is reflective of also of the President's view that we will continue to defend our national interests, impose costs for Russian -- the Russian -- for Russian government actions that seek to harm our sovereignty. That has -- was also the message around the call that the President had with President Putin just a few weeks ago.

We want to move to a more stable and predictable place, but we also -- when we announced our sanctions, we left in -- in their maximum optionality to put in place additional actions should their actions warrant. No one wants to get to that point, but we reserve that right should we decide it's warranted.

Go ahead.

Q What's your message to Republican lawmakers who see today's jobs report as a reason not to pass this additional \$4 trillion in spending? And how are you going to continue those negotiations, given the report today?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's hard to square if they are suggesting that it is not a report that meets expectations while also saying that they don't think we should work together to do something to help put more people back to work. So that's kind of hard to understand.

Q We have yet to see the effects of this \$2 trillion get through the economy, and we're losing jobs. Why is that?

MS. PSAKI: Of the American Rescue Plan? I actually don't think that's what economists would convey or -- nor is it what they have conveyed. We've created about an average of 500,000 jobs a month over the last three months. That's in stark contrast to about 60,000 jobs a month during the final three months of President Trump's administration.

And there's no question -- by data, by economic standards, by economic experts' standards -- that the money that has been put into the economy -- the \$1,400 checks and the stimulus -- has helped put people back to work.

We also know we're continuing to make progress, and we -- this is going to be a long road, as we've always said. So it just requires additional assistance, additional stimulus, additional work together to put more people back to work, which is why the President proposed the American Jobs Plan.

Q On the FDA's approval -- expected to authorize the vaccine -- the Pfizer vaccine -- for 12- to 15-year-olds any day now. What specific plans does the White House have in place to get the vaccine distributed to that age group?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President talked about this just a couple of days ago. And if and when -- we'll see -- the FDA approves the EUA for 12- to 15-year-olds, we will absolutely operationalize and ensure that we're distributing that vaccine out into the country and in a way where we're meeting people where they are -- working with primary care physicians, working with pharmacies, community health centers -- and ensuring that we get that vaccine and those doses out to meet a new group of Americans who might be eligible.

Go ahead.

Q President Biden has a meeting next week with congressional leaders. What is he hoping to accomplish?

MS. PSAKI: He does have a -- on Mar- -- on May 12th -- excuse me -- March 12th? -- May 12th -- sorry -- he has a meeting

MS. PSAKI: HE DOES HAVE A -- ON MAY 12TH -- EXCUSE ME, MARCH 12TH. -- MAY 12TH, SORRY -- HE HAS A MEETING -- bicameral, bipartisan meeting here in the White House. He's hoping to talk about ways that we can work together to put people back to work, to address -- to ensure we are making our workforce more competitive to -- competing with China.

And, you know, he knows that the American people elected him to solve problems and to represent and govern for all people. And he's hoping that these leaders will come together and join him in the Oval Office to have a discussion about doing exactly that.

Q And just one more. Is there a time that's been set for the meeting with the President and Capito on infrastructure?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. We are working with her and her team on -- and a -- and a group of Republican members of her choosing on identifying a time and day that will work. Hopefully, we'll have more on that later today. We will see. And as soon as we do have that locked in, we'll share it with all of you.

Oh, go ahead.

Q Jen, we did notice the President meeting yesterday briefly with Senators Kennedy and Cassidy on the tarmac in New Orleans.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Was that a substantive conversation? Were any deals reached or was it just pleasantries?

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) It was -- if -- if deals were reached, that would've been very efficient of all of them.

I would say that, you know, I haven't talked to the President about his specific private conversation with them. Certainly they could speak to what they discussed, but the trip -- the trip yesterday to -- and where the President stood in front of a 70-year-old bridge, one that's 20 years in the making of having upgrades done -- should be seen and viewed as his effort to send a message to leaders in that state, but also to people across the country that bridges and rebuilding bridges is not a Democratic idea; it's an American idea. And the same with rebuilding roads. And the same with ensuring that we have efficient ways to travel, that kids have access to clean drinking water.

And the fact that they joined him on that trip is an example of how the President is reaching across the aisle. He wants to do work together. He's committed to doing that. And I know he enjoyed his trip yesterday.

Q Quick question to drill down on something you were asked a couple of days ago.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q It was about the debt ceiling.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q Just to nail it down, because every -- for the last 10 years or so, every time this issue comes up, there's been a robust debate in legal circles about whether the debt ceiling itself violates the 14th Amendment and the clause that says the debt of the national government should not be questioned. What's this administration's position on that question?

MS. PSAKI: I will -- here's what I know, Steve -- and I will talk with our legal experts on that because I don't want to speak out of turn: The President obviously has voted to increase the debt ceiling in the past and advocated for it as Vice President. And he believes that it should be a process that Democrats and Republicans move forward on, just as they did three times during the Trump administration -- including the same year, where they passed -- where Congress passed \$2 trillion in tax cuts for the highest income. That's his view. But I will see if there's any legal -- legal response to that particular question.

I remember this debate, so you're bringing me back.

Go ahead, please.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions. Several states, including South Carolina and Montana, are already looking at trimming unemployment benefits, saying that the labor shortage is created by the federal government's supplemental employment programs. Is the administration worried about a domino effect or that other states would do this? Is there any outreach plan to stop states from doing this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have, of course, seen that. I will say that though some individual employers may be experiencing increased difficulty finding workers, we haven't seen -- widespread labor shortages are not yet evident in the data.

And obviously, there's always going to be a look -- a look at the data by our economic experts. And we are seeing little evidence that enhanced unemployment benefits are currently impacting or affecting Americans' willingness to work.

We do recognize, as Secretary Yellen talked about a bit, that labor supply has been affected by the pandemic for a range of reasons, including childcare and schools fortunately beginning to reopen more than 50 percent, five days a week -- just to note the data that came out just a few days ago.

But there are lingering challenges that are unique to this moment, and we're certainly hopeful -- as schools reopen, as employers are better positioned -- that we will be able to move to a different place. But we're not seeing that as a -- an impact -- as labor shortages as a mass widespread impact -- in the data.

Q One more question. Last month, you said that you'd provide an update on the President's medical records. I was trying to get a sense of when do you think there's going to be an update, seeing as he hasn't released them since -- in December 2019?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update at this moment. But certainly, when he has his next medical appointment, we will be transparent about that and provide that information to all of you.

Q Is one scheduled?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I'm not aware of one being scheduled, but cert- -- cert- --

(A phone rings.)

Q Sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Weijia, you're fine. It's okay.

Q Uh-oh.

MS. PSAKI: It's a Friday. Give everybody a break.

Q I'm so sorry, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: You're fine. You're fine. You're fine.

Q I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: This was falling down last week. We had a plane flying over a few weeks -- you never know.

We don't have -- I'm not aware of one scheduled at this point, but -- but we certainly will provide you all information and data in a transparent -- data -- information in a transparent way when it is scheduled, and once he has that appointment.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. There have been a number of media reports in recent days on a series of newly reported cases, over the past 12 months, of Americans experiencing "Havana Syndrome" at home and abroad, including CIA officers, U.S. troops, and U.S. government officials in the Washington area. So a couple of questions on this: How concerned are you about these newly reported cases over the past couple of months?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first let me say that the health and wellbeing of American public servants is of paramount priority to the administration, and we take extremely seriously reports by our personnel of anomalous health incidents.

Our national security staff is working closely with agencies and departments across the federal government to address unexplained health incidents that some government employees have suffered, and to ensure the safety and security of Americans serving around the world.

And we are, of course, investigating incidents in which personnel have reported experiencing sensory phenomena, such as sound pressure or heat, concurrent with or followed by physical symptoms, such as sudden onset vertigo, nausea, and head or neck pain -- pain.

At this point -- at this moment, we don't know the cause of these incidents, which are both limited in nature and the vast majority of which have been reported overseas. So right now we are working to investigate, taking every report seriously, and our national security team is overseeing that process.

Q You say the vast majority have taken place overseas. How many cases have been reported to have occurred in the United States?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more specifics on reported incidents. I'm happy to see if there's more we can provide on that.

Q And how many cases total have been reported over the five years that this phenomenon has been known to us?

MS. PSAKI: It's an excellent question. It's limited, but let me see if there's a more specific number we can provide to all of you.

Q And my last question on this: What is the NSC doing that is new? That -- again, over the five years, three administrations -- we've seen this phenomena -- phenomenon occur. What's new that they're doing to try to get to the bottom of it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't obviously speak to what the last administration did or didn't do. What I can tell you is that our team is coordinating a full review of intelligence reporting to ascertain whether there may be previously unreported incidents that fit a pattern.

We are also working closely, as I noted, with agencies and departments across federal -- federal government to address unexplained health incidents that -- sometimes they're reported in to different agencies and it hasn't all been gathered into one place. So that's how you can look at it across the board and see if there are patterns. So that's a way we are approaching it. And I can't, obviously, assess how that compares with past administrations.

Q Just one last question on a different topic. On Russia: What gives this administration the impression that Vladimir Putin wants a "stable and predictable" relationship?

MS. PSAKI: Well, all I can speak to, Michael, is what our intentions are and what's in the interest of the national -- of the United States. And in our view, it's in the interest of the United States to have a stable and predictable relationship with Russia.

It doesn't mean that we are going to hold back, as we've talked about a little bit before, from implementing consequences when their behavior warrants, as we -- as we did just a couple of weeks ago. But that's the reason that the President offered to have a meeting.

Again, we're working through the question of -- you know, some logistics, but place, location, time, agenda, all the specifics. And that was always going to happen at a staff level.

It's really up to them what they want to achieve, but here's what we know: The United States is a member of the G7. We're working in close partnership with our partners and allies around the world from Europe to Asia to -- you know, on a range of shared global interests. And I think the question for Russia is whether they want to be a part of that global community.

Go ahead, Geoff.

Q Hey, Jen. How you doing? The first one -- I know you're just doing your week ahead; it's not settled. But do you have a time for the bicam meeting? Because, as you know, House Republicans are going through some leadership elections.

MS. PSAKI: I've heard that. I -- we don't have a time. It may be set, Geoff. Let me see. I think we'll put out some more details on the -- on the week ahead, but I don't have the time in front of me.

Q Whether it's the first part of the day or the second part of the day?

MS. PSAKI: Correct. Correct.

Q Okay. Back on the Russia issue. I know you've done a lot of these.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And you mentioned "U.S. sovereignty," but Putin -- you know, there's also a movement in Russia to crack down on -- on internal dissent, accusing -- including declaring Navalny's party as a -- it was called an "extreme" -- an "extremist group," which has caused his offices to shut down across the country. Could Russia do anything internally that would cause the summit to be off?

MS. PSAKI: Say it -- I'm sorry. Say the last part again.

Q Is a crackdown on internal dissent something that would stand in the way of the summit?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that the United States put in place a number of sanctions in reaction to the treatment of Navalny, in coordination with our European partners, several weeks ago. It was separate -- or it was earlier than the other set of sanctions that we announced. But we did put those in place because exactly of their treatment of Navalny.

Obviously, human rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression values are all issues that the President, Secretary Blinken, National Security Advisor Sullivan raise with their counterparts.

But the invitation to have a discussion and have a meeting was not -- was not offered with the prerequisite that every issue is resolved in advance. We expect we will still continue to have disagreements. And we will certainly voice those if -- if and when that meeting happens. So, no, that wouldn't be a predetermined component of it, but certainly we will continue to voice concern and we will put in place consequences as actions warrant.

Q And just one more on vaccines -- a holdover from Tuesday. The President said -- he talked up these ideas of incentives for people to get the shot, including sports tickets and shopping discounts and stuff like that. He said he liked that idea. Does he like the idea that some governors are floating out payments to people? And is there an issue of sensitivity when Americans are getting paid to get a shot but people are dying in Brazil and India and all kinds of places?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a number of states who are implementing different programs to ensure they are meeting people where they are, they are reaching people who are less inclined to get vaccinated for a range of reasons.

What we've actually seen in our data is that the big driving factor is access, and that's why we have massively increased our efforts to put more supply in pharmacies, to have mobile units, to partner with pharm- -- with primary care physicians and doctors.

But we know, as the President said, that states will take different actions and take different steps to ensure that their populations are vaccinated and that they're getting the shots in the arms of as many Americans as possible. That remains our first priority.

At the same time, Geoff, as you know, we have also announced a number of steps we're taking to contribute to -- to be a part of the global effort to defeat the pandemic, because we know that the pandemic will not be stopped by borders, including the intention to distribute 60 million doses to share -- to donate 60 million doses of AstraZeneca. And we also are going to work with international partners, with the pharmaceutical companies to up the supply, to get as much supply out into the global community as possible.

Q So he's okay with the idea if it works -- if it's effective?

MS. PSAKI: He supports -- he -- we all support -- the administration supports efforts by different governors to take steps to ensure there's more vaccines in the arms of Americans.

Let me just -- go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. On the subject of the stimulus checks, the President sent out a letter to millions of Americans who have gotten these checks. And just a few weeks ago, when you were asked if his name was going to be on the checks, you said, "This is not about him." So why did he feel the need to send this letter?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the primary driving reason at the time, several weeks ago, was that it could potentially delay the direct payments going out if they needed to be signed by the President, and we just didn't think that was an appropriate step to take. So this is a pretty standard letter that goes out with physical checks that are made, of which there are a small percentage of these checks that are actually physical checks.

But it was just a letter that went out with them, but not intended to make it about him; it's about the American people. And we didn't have him sign the checks because we were concerned about any impact that would have on delaying them going out to the public.

Q Okay. And a couple more questions for some colleagues who cannot be here.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q The first is from some of our friends in Atlanta and it's about the Atlanta mayor's announcement that she is not going to seek reelection. She, of course, was a supporter of the President's, just a few weeks ago even participated (inaudible) --

(A noise outside interrupts the briefing.)

So was he given a heads up that she was -- about this announcement? What is his reaction to the announcement? And are there any discussions to bring her into the administration?

MS. PSAKI: I believe she's already announced what she intends to do -- I'll let her speak to that -- which is to go into the private sector, but I don't have any other insight into her decision making. And she remains, of course, someone who the President has a fondness for.

And, you know, they got to know each other a little bit during the campaign. But beyond that, I'm not aware of a heads up that he in-pers- -- personally had.

Q Okay. And one more for another colleague. Given today's jobs report, does the White House any -- have any concerns about raising taxes on the wealthy, as the President has proposed?

MS. PSAKI: We don't. What we're talking about here, just as a reminder, is bringing the highest income bracket up to what it was during President George W. Bush's administration, impacting about 1 percent of the public. No one making under \$400,000 a year would have their taxes go up. That's a line in the sand for the President, and that remains his approach and policy moving forward.

And also, what these tax -- these tax proposals are meant to do is to pay for historic investment in infrastructure, historic investments in childcare and education -- something that there is broad support for across the country.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have two questions. I just asked President Biden if he believes the Iranians are serious about negotiation in Vienna, and he said "Yes. But how serious and what they're prepared to do..."

So after three rounds of talks, is the White House frustrated with the lack of progress? Are you there where you want to be? And if diplomacy fails, what are your options to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we always knew that this would be a long process and challenging, and -- but we also feel that it has been a good sign that there have been diplomatic engagements over the past several weeks, even through indirect channels with the Iranians. Some progress has been made. And we have a better idea of what we need to do moving forward, both to come into -- of what we need to do to come back into full compliance; and Iran has a better idea of what it needs to do to come back into compliance.

Returning to the deal, as you know, would require Iran to significantly roll back its nuclear program and block every available pathway to a nuclear weapon. But the talks are continuing; that is a good sign. And I'm not going to get ahead of -- prediction of what the outcome will be of them.

Q Right, okay. On Yemen, the President's envoy, Lenderking, just got back from the region, as you know -- from the Gulf. And he said that they offered a fair deal to the rebels in Yemen -- the Houthis -- and they rejected it. What leverage does the White House have considering that the President put it as a top priority for him to end the war in Yemen and the suffering of the Yemeni people?

MS. PSAKI: Are you talking about the group that the bi- -- the inter- -- the administration group that was just overseas on a trip to --

Q This is part of it, with the (inaudible) and the U.N. as well -- they've been part of this as well.

MS. PSAKI: You know, I -- I would have to talk to our national security team about, kind of, the status of those and where things are. And your leverage question is an excellent one, but I haven't gotten a briefing from them after their trip. I can --

Q Right. But you -- your general policy towards Yemen and ending the war -- do you still believe that you re on track as well? Or is this another setback in foreign policy for this administration?

MS. PSAKI: No, we -- we still are moving toward -- moving forward on our path. Obviously, we want to get to a point where there is stability, where there is a lasting ceasefire in the region, and that certainly is our objective.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I have questions on a couple of different topics. First, given the number of former Obama administration officials that are now in this Biden administration and the President s relatively light schedule, there s a growing perception that this is really just the third term of President Obama. What do you say to people who say that?

MS. PSAKI: Who were saying that? Who s saying that?

Q You ve heard that a lot in the media.

MS. PSAKI: Who in the media?

Q Different people.

MS. PSAKI: Like?

Q Well, there was lots of questions about when you had Japanese Prime Minister Suga here on the one and only, so far, in-person bilateral head-of-state meeting. It was Vice President Kamala Harris who greeted the Prime Minister, and many people found that odd. She s already taking independent, one-on-one calls with key allies, like Prime Minister Morrison and Justin Trudeau. So I just want to get your reaction to people who question that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it s hard to react when I don t know what people you re talking about. I will say that the President met with the Prime Minister, as you know, and had a full meeting, a full press conference afterwards, and they even shared a meal.

So -- and the President has had dozens of conversations and calls with world leaders, and should be no surprise that the Vice President is also playing an important role engaging with and having discussions with foreign leaders.

Q It -- it s more so than other Vice Presidents have.

MS. PSAKI: How so? I d love to see the data if you want to give me --

Q Well, sure --

MS. PSAKI: -- present that to us.

Q I could provide you with that sometime --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- and would love to get your reaction on it.

MS. PSAKI: Happy -- we d welcome it.

Q Excellent. And then on the coronavirus: It's a matter of public record that Dr. Fauci and the NIH funded gain-of-function experimentation, research at the Wuhan Lab of Virology. And given the questions about that lab, why would Dr. Fauci and the U.S. fund that kind of experiments, that kind of research at a Chinese lab?

MS. PSAKI: The -- I'm sorry. I can't hear you super well. What was the beginning part of your comment -- of your thing -- of your question?

Q I said that the NIH and Dr. Fauci had provided funding to the Wuhan Lab of Virology. That's the lab in question when we talk about the lab-leak theory. And given that gain-of-function research is dicey, why would the U.S. fund that in China? Why would Dr. Fauci?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to send you to the NIH about more specifics of what program they funded and more details of that.

Q Now, I do have one more follow-up on that --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- because the President hasn't really weighed in. Dr. Fauci is one of the voices who discredit the lab-leak theory, but now there is more officials in the Biden administration -- like the Director of National Intelligence, the CIA Director, and now also the NIH Director -- who say that this cannot be ruled out, and there is calls for more investigation into it.

Who does the President agree with -- Dr. Fauci or the other officials? Does he think this -- it was a lab leak?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has said, and I've said from here many times, that there needs to be a credible, independent investigation through the World Health Organization, and tha- -- one that relies on data, relies on participation from China and other countries that may have information. That s certainly something everybody has called for, and we look forward to that happening.

Q Why hasn't the President spoken with President Xi about the origins of the coronavirus yet? He said, just a few weeks ago, he hadn't yet.

MS. PSAKI: I think we have given a readout of his call. And also that the President believes there should be an independent investigation led by health experts, and one where their data is provided -- that s provided transparently to our medical and science experts here in the United States. And we look forward to reviewing that.

We re going to have to go on. Go ahead. I m sorry.

Q If that was a lab leak, will the President be committed to (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry, Emerald. I think you've had plenty of time today.

Q Just one more.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Do you have -- Secretary Yellen talked today about how schools being opened kind of unevenly -- you know, hybrid -- some days it's in person, some days it's not -- can affect people's ability to go back to the workforce. Secretary Walsh mentioned that earlier. And I think both Secretary Yellen, Walsh, and you have all mentioned childcare as well.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Given today's jobs report, is that an indication that the -- that there is more the administration needs to do to get more schools opened faster or -- and/or an indication that childcare needs to move higher on the priority list?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say, what Secretary Cardona has conveyed, which is consistent with the President's view, is that we need to have schools open five days a week -- 100 percent of schools across the country.

We've seen data come out -- that's from March. There's a little bit of a delay in -- not delay, it's done on a monthly basis, but it's done about a month later -- which shows that more than 50 percent of schools are open five days a week. That's moving in the right direction, but there's certainly more we -- work that needs to be done. And they're looking toward, of course, the fall.

As Secretary Cardona has said, he wants schools to open quickly. They have the resources now. We have mitigation steps and measures that have been put out by the CDC, and he is working -- this is his top priority -- and he's working with districts across the country to do it as quickly as possible.

So there was already an urgency in doing that, ensuring that was happening as quickly as possible. But there's no question that the impact of the pandemic -- the fact that 2 million women have left the workforce; the burdens of -- you know, the challenges of balancing work, childcare, eldercare at times -- has had an impact on women and on our economy overall.

Q Okay. Can I do a quick follow-up on the Iran question?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The -- Iran's top negotiator is quoted as saying, today, the United States expressed its readiness to lift many of its sanctions on Iran at the Vienna talks, but Tehran is demanding more. Is that a fair assessment of where things stand?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say -- the State Department has done briefings on this, but let me reiterate what they have said, which is that: We will not get into a situation where the United States does more than is required by the JCPOA agreement, in terms of sanction relief, and Iran does less.

So, what we're really talking about is mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA. We'd be prepared to lift the sanctions necessary for our JCPOA compliance only if Iran were prepared to return its nuclear program to its JCPOA status.

So that is our view and how Special Envoy Rob Malley, who's been exploring concrete steps concerning -- concrete approaches concerning the steps both Iran and the U.S. can take. That's what our approach and the bottom line is from our end.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q When you give us the week ahead and you talk more about the Leader meeting --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- what impact do you think Leader McConnell's comments about working with great focus against the Biden agenda -- he said it a number of times now. And does the President view that as an impediment to having a productive meeting? Or is that just politics that he's willing to write off? How does the President view that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's view is that he's ready to have a clean slate, and let's welcome the leaders here. Let's -- he believes his -- his goal and his -- his -- what the American people elected him to do was to bring the country together, to bring leaders together, too, to discuss how we can move together and put people back to work, put in place an agenda, put in place policies that will help contribute to doing exactly that.

He also has said -- and we're not at this point -- that inevitably there will be some strong disagreements with Republicans, and we know that. He was in the Senate for 36 years. He is certainly no stranger to that, and that -- he's ready to debate. He's ready to -- but he's also ready to press forward in work -- doing work on behalf of the American people.

So he will continue to seek bipartisan paths forward. Doesn't matter the language or the rhetoric of -- of folks on the other side of the aisle, because he believes it's what the American people elected him to do.

Go ahead in the back.

Q Just a quick follow-up on your -- on your answer before. Given that you guys say childcare is so important to -- to the labor market, wasn't it -- was it a mistake to put childcare in the second part of the infrastructure plan? Should it have actually been included in the first? Should it be an even higher priority?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, the Child Tax Credit was extended in the American Rescue Plan, and those benefits, which are currently being implemented and going out to families across the country, is something that we think will help reduce poverty and help families who need help the most at this time.

You know, he proposed it as part of the -- they're not seen at -- the American Jobs Plan, the American Families Plan are both seen as pivotal priorities to the President, and ones where he's looking forward to talking with leaders in Congress about how to move them forward. And if they come to the table and want to push for the ordering of things or the mechanisms for the components moving forward, he's happy to hear from them on that as well.

Thank you, everyone.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Jen, you forgot her.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, hello. I forgot it was Friday. (Laughter.)

Hello. Well, as --

Q She's been very patient.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. I apologize. Well, thank you.

As a part of our effort to bring more people into the briefing room, today we have Chabeli Carrazana -- tell me if I butchered your last name -- as someone with the last name "Psaki," I certainly understand if I did that, and I apologize -- joining us from The 19th.

So, welcome. How can I answer your questions today?

Q Well, thanks so much, Jen. And it's okay, everyone butchers my name, so I'm kind of used to it at this point, but you didn't do too bad.

I have two for you. One of them is on childcare. The American Rescue Plan included a \$39 billion investment to stabilize the childcare industry. That money has already gone out to states. But the administration also said it would provide guidance on how the states should best disperse those funds. It's an important question considering the massive administrative challenge this poses for states.

So, considering that money has been out for about a month now, or almost a month, when is the guidance from the administration coming? And what can we expect it to say about what states should prioritize when distributing the funds?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, in mid-April -- I know you've been following this closely, but for others -- the administration -- we announced \$39 billion to help early childhood educators and family childcare providers keep their doors open, and those

announced \$39 billion to help early childhood educators and family childcare providers keep their doors open, and these step- -- these -- this funding is, of course, a critical step for childcare centers around the country. You're right that the next step is providing this guidance for how it should be distributed.

We're also working at the same time to implement and get a lot of programs up and going, and implement the American Rescue Plan as quickly as possible.

I asked our team about this, and what I can tell you is it's going to come soon. And we are eager to get it out the door. And we are finalizing components of that guidance to get it out to states, to childcare providers, to territories so that they can implement -- they can get this funding into the communities that need it the most.

Q Great, and I have one more -- sort of a similar theme. A coalition of groups recently sent a letter to the administration about the establishment of the Equitable Data Working Group, which was part of an executive order in January that was around, you know, beginning the work to collecting better data on sex and gender and different topics.

The coalition also requested a meeting with Ambassador Susan -- Susan Rice. So I'm wondering what you can tell us about when the administration plans to convene this working group on data, and what we should expect to hear from the group? You know, does it plan to collect better intersectional data, which we know has been missing from the vaccine data, for example? And is there a plan for a meeting?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so let me say that the Equitable Data Working Group was stood up around Inauguration Day as part of the equity executive order the President signed. The group meets weekly and is evaluating data disaggregation, transparency, and sufficiency. And it's charged, overall, with identifying inadequacies in federal data collection, so program- - from programs to policies and infrastructure across agencies.

And the hope is that refining and measuring this data will help address equity over the long term. So they do meet on a weekly basis.

In terms of Ambassador Rice, I know pushing for the racial equity EO and overseeing the implementation of a number of components of our racial equity agenda is under her purview. And I can certainly check if she's been a part of those meetings. I wouldn't be surprised if she has been.

But it's very nice to meet you over the screen. We'll look forward to welcoming you into the White House soon.

Okay. Thanks, everyone. Have a great weekend.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q And will week ahead come out later?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. That -- that is -- I take full blame for that.

Thanks, everyone.

Q Happy Mother's Day.

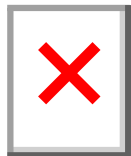
MS. PSAKI: Oh, Happy Mother's Day to everyone, too.

1:35 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout on National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with Israeli National Security Advisor Ben-Shabbat Regarding the Situation in Jerusalem
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 9, 2021 6:52 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat Regarding the Situation in Jerusalem

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat to express the United States' serious concerns about the situation in Jerusalem, including violent confrontations at the Haram al-Sharif / Temple Mount during the last days of Ramadan.

Mr. Sullivan highlighted recent engagements by senior U.S. officials with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials and key regional stakeholders to press for steps to ensure calm, deescalate tensions, and denounce violence. Mr. Sullivan also reiterated the United States' serious concerns about the potential evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. They agreed that the launching of rocket attacks and incendiary balloons from Gaza towards Israel is unacceptable and must be condemned.

Mr. Sullivan encouraged the Israeli government to pursue appropriate measures to ensure calm during Jerusalem Day commemorations.

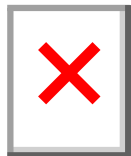
Mr. Sullivan expressed the administration's commitment to Israel's security and to supporting peace and stability throughout the Middle East, and assured Mr. Ben-Shabbat that the U.S. will remain fully engaged in the days ahead to promote calm in Jerusalem.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Psaki, Homeland Security Advisor Dr. Sherwood-Randall, and Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies Anne Neuberger
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 10, 2021 5:56 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, Homeland Security Advisor and Deputy National Security Advisor Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, and Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies Anne Neuberger, May 10, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:38 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi everyone. Happy Monday. Today, we are joined by Homeland Security Advisor and Deputy National Security Advisor Dr. Liz Sherwood-Randall and Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies Anne Neuberger.

I know you all know who they are, so I'm going to skip the introductions so we have more time for questions. We have very limited time, but we will try to take as many as possible.

So, with that, I'll turn it over to Liz.

DR. SHERWOOD-RANDALL: It's great to be with you today. Thank you, Jen.

I have an update for you on the Colonial Pipeline and what the Biden administration is doing to provide assistance through a whole-of-government effort.

On Friday evening, May 7th, Colonial Pipeline reported that its pipeline system had been subject to a ransomware cyberattack. Colonial chose to shut down its pipeline operations as a precautionary measure and to ensure that the

ransomware could not migrate from business computer systems to those that control and operate the pipeline. We've been in ongoing contact with Colonial, and the President continues to be regularly briefed on the incident and our work.

Colonial is currently working with its private cybersecurity consultants to assess potential damage and to determine when it is safe to bring the pipeline back online. Thus far, Colonial has told us that it has not suffered damage and can be brought back online relatively quickly, but that safety is a priority given that it has never before taken the entire pipeline down.

Beginning on Friday night, soon after we learned of the shutdown, the White House convened an interagency team that included the Department of Energy, which is the lead agency for incident response in this case; the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency -- or "CISA"; the FBI; the Department of Transportation Pipeline Safety and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration; the Department of the Treasury; the Department of Defense; and other agencies.

To give you a sense of what we've been doing together since that first meeting, we have met throughout the weekend. The Department of Energy's Information -- Energy Information Agency -- or "EIA" -- is in contact with state and local agencies to assess current supply and impacts due to the shutdown.

DOE has also convened the oil and natural gas and electric sector utility partners to share details about the ransomware attack and discuss recommended measures to mitigate further incidents across the industry.

DHS's CISA is preparing a release to go to the broader critical infrastructure community to ensure it has visibility into the ransomware attack and it's taking appropriate measures to protect its networks.

Colonial is responsible for safely returning the pipeline to service.

And our role in the federal government is to take proactive steps to analyze the impacts of the shutdown on the delivery of gasoline, diesel, and aviation fuel in states that are dependent on the pipeline; and to identify federal options for alleviating supply shortfalls should they develop.

For example: To help address potential supply disruptions, the Department of Transportation issued an hours-of-service waiver yesterday, which provides greater flexibility to drivers transporting gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, and other refined petroleum products across 17 states, as well as the District of Columbia.

Right now, there is not a supply shortage. We are preparing for multiple possible contingencies -- because that's our job, especially on the Homeland Security team -- and considering what additional steps may be useful to mitigate any potential disruptions to supply.

This weekend's events put the spotlight on the fact that our nation's critical infrastructure is largely owned and operated by private-sector companies. When those companies are attacked, they serve as the first line of defense, and we depend on the effectiveness of their defenses.

To improve the cybersecurity of our critical infrastructure, the Biden administration has already launched a high-priority initiative to collaborate with our private-sector partners to harden our defenses and to build our nation's resilience.

And that is a perfect segue to my colleague, Anne Neuberger, our Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies.

Thanks.

MS. NEUBERGER: Thank you, Liz. Good morning everyone.

So, building on Liz's comments: As you know, on Friday, Colonial shut, proactively, its pipeline operations as a

precautionary measure to ensure ransomware would not spread to its sensitive operational networks.

In response, we're taking a multi-pronged and whole-of-government response to this incident and to ransomware overall.

First, we're actively engaged with the company and offered support as needed to restore their systems. Right now, they've not asked for cyber support from the federal government, but we remain available to meet their cybersecurity needs.

Second, we're aggressively investigating the incident and its culprits. As part of their work today, FBI released a flash alert with indicators of compromise and mitigation measures once infected.

The FBI identified the ransomware as the DarkSide variant, which they've been investigating since October of last year. It's a ransomware as a service variant, where criminal affiliates conduct attacks and then share the proceeds with the ransomware developers.

We recommend all critical infrastructure owners and operators use the indicators that came out in the FBI flash to protect themselves. And if other entities are infected, please notify the FBI.

Third, the government is convening stakeholders more broadly to ensure everybody has the information needed to protect themselves and to rapidly share information.

This morning, the Department of Energy convened calls with the electricity and oil and gas sectors to keep them informed. The Departments of Energy, Transportation, and DHS, and others will be sharing further indicators of compromise with the sector Information Sharing and Analysis Centers -- or "ISACs."

And the Department of Energy will be holding additional calls with critical infrastructure sector owners as well as state and local leaders to ensure everyone has the latest information about how to protect themselves.

Fourth, we're taking the threats posed by ransomware seriously with several initiatives. First, we'll focus on industrial control systems. Critical infrastructure, as Liz noted, in the United States is largely owned and operated by the private sector, which determines their cybersecurity protections are applied to their systems.

Under that context, in mid-April, the administration launched a new public-private initiative to enhance the security of critical infrastructure systems and improve visibility across their operational control systems -- the systems on which all Americans depend.

The Department of Energy had the lead for the first 100-day sprint focused on the utility sector, and we will follow with follow-on sprints with natural gas pipelines, water, and other sectors.

The administration encourages all private-sector owners of critical infrastructure to focus on improving cybersecurity, and the government remains open and willing as a partner to support those efforts.

Second: In tackling ransomware, we're working to disrupt ransomware infrastructure. The FBI recently worked with international partners to disrupt two particular strains of ransomware: the Emotet and NetWalker strains.

More recently, DOJ has established a ransomware taskforce to ensure it can better investigate and prosecute ransomware actors.

Third, CISA is leading a counter-ransomware sprint, which is focused on helping small- and medium-sized companies, who are often the targets of ransomware, better protect themselves.

Finally, we're pursuing greater international cooperation -- ransomware affects countries around the world -- to address ransomware because transnational criminals are most often the perpetrators of these crimes and they often leverage global

infrastructure and global money-laundering networks.

Indeed, to combat the exploitation of virtual currencies that are often used for payment in ransomware, the U.S. Treasury has also been leading international efforts, including driving development and adoption of virtual assets standards under the Financial Action Task Force.

With those updates, I welcome your questions, turning it over to Jen and Liz. Thank you for your time today.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Aamer, kick us off.

Q Thanks. Just to clarify something: Has Colonial paid any ransom? And has there been any advice on that?

And then, secondly, is there any timeline for when Americans should be certain that this is going to be taken care of? People are getting ready -- Memorial Day is not that far away, and we're -- everyone is concerned about their gas prices. What's the timeline on when this thing is going to be under control?

MS. NEUBERGER: Absolutely. I'll speak to the first, and then I'll turn it to my colleague, Liz, for the second.

So, first, we recognize that victims of cyberattacks often face a very difficult situation. And they have to just balance off, in the cost-benefit, when they have no choice with regard to paying a ransom. Colonial is a private company, and we'll defer information regarding their decision on paying a ransom to them.

Q Did you -- would the administration offer any advice on whether or not to pay a ransom?

MS. NEUBERGER: So, typically, that is a private-sector decision, and the administration has not offered further advice at this time. Given the rise in ransomware, that is one area we're definitely looking at now to say, "What should be the government's approach to ransomware actors and to ransoms overall?"

Liz.

DR. SHERWOOD-RANDALL: So, on the issue of gas prices: As I indicated, right now there are no supply disruptions. And the Department of Energy's Information Agency -- the "EIA" -- is doing the analysis right now about potential supply disruptions and what price effects that could have. And we're working with other agencies to consider how, if necessary, we can move supplies to a place where it might be needed if it turns out that there is a shortfall.

MS. PSAKI: Nandita.

Q Thank you, Jen. My question is just a follow-up on what Aamer was asking. Has the White House broadly considered advice for companies who are victimized by -- you know, in such incidents going forward? Is there any advice that you're considering when it comes to paying ransom in the future?

MS. NEUBERGER: So that's a really good question. The first and most important advice is: Secure your systems. In this case, the ransomware that was used is a known variant. The FBI has investigated many cases of this in the past, as I noted, beginning in October. So the first and most important thing is to ensure that systems are patched and that cybersecurity is maintained at the level needed in a given network.

We want to see ransomware not be successful, and that begins with greater resilience, particularly in critical infrastructure networks.

Q And another question. You mentioned perpetrators are usually transnational criminals. Do you have any information on whether this particular incident has any ties to Russia or other Eastern European criminals?

MS. NEUBERGER: At this time, we assess that DarkSide is a criminal actor, but that's certainly something that our

MS. NEUBERGER: AT THIS TIME, WE ASSESS THAT DARKSIDE IS A CRIMINAL ACTOR, BUT THAT'S CERTAINLY SOMETHING THAT OUR INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY IS LOOKING INTO.

MS. PSAKI: Josh.

Q Can I ask a little bit more about DarkSide? What -- what do you know about them? Is there any retaliatory measures that have been taken or are being considered by the U.S. in response to this or any investigation? You mentioned it dates back to October.

MS. NEUBERGER: Absolutely. So I mentioned that DarkSide is a ransomware, is a service variant. It's a new and very troubling variant where it's essentially provided as a service and the proceeds are split. So, in that way, it's something that we're particularly troubled by.

And I mentioned as well that the FBI has recently worked with international partners to take down and disrupt ransomware infrastructure. We expect that that will be a continued focus area to make it far more difficult for these actors to prey on their victims.

Q And even though you're treating it as a criminal act, are you saying it's state sanctioned? Or is there suspicion that it's state sanctioned? Or do you just not -- don't know right now?

MS. NEUBERGER: As I mentioned a moment ago, currently we assess DarkSide as a criminal actor. But, of course, our intelligence community is looking for any ties to any nation-state actors. And if we find that further information, we'll look into it further.

Q But you're not blaming a particular country right now for (inaudible)?

MS. NEUBERGER: No, we are not.

MS. PSAKI: David.

Q Thanks very much, both of you, for doing this.

First, Anne, just to clarify what you said on ransomware: The FBI has, for years, advised people not to pay it. I didn't quite hear you say that, so I wondered whether or not you're reconsidering the advice the FBI has given across many administrations.

And both you and Liz both mentioned the concern that the ransomware may have revealed some kind of data that would then move over to the operational side or put malware in that could move to the operational side. We don't have a lot of understanding about what that concern is.

Did you no- -- did you see, in the early parts of the investigation, that there was malware in the IT side that could be moved to operational? Was it simply that they froze up their ability to bill and, you know, move the fuel, which has been one theory, or that they simply learned information that would allow the ransomware operators to later on be able to get access to the main operational site?

MS. NEUBERGER: Thank you, David. So I'll begin and then, of course, turn it over to Liz if she'd like to add anything.

So, first, thank you for highlighting the FBI has provided advice in the past that paying a ransom would encourage further ransomware activity and is so troubling. We recognize, though, that companies are often in a difficult position if their data is encrypted and they do not have backups and cannot recover the data.

And that is why -- given the rise in ransomware and given, frankly, the troubling trend we see of often targeting companies who have insurance and maybe richer targets -- that we need to look thoughtfully at this area, including with our

who have insurance and maybe other targets -- that we need to look thoughtfully at this area, including with our international partners, to determine what we do in addition to actively disrupting infrastructure and holding perpetrators accountable to ensure that we're not encouraging the rise of ransomware.

And to your second point regarding the concerns on the connection between the information technology and the operational technology side of a network: The operational technology side of the network is the part that actually drives control of a pipeline, for example, and, as such, it is the more sensitive part. The -- we are aware that it is the more significant part.

Colonial was very careful. And one of the reasons they proactively chose to shut down the pipeline was because of concerns to manage the incident and gate the ransomware as quickly as they could. So --

Q What I was asking was: Did you see evidence in the malware there was something that could move to the operational side?

MS. NEUBERGER: So the Colonial incident is the private-sector entity themselves.

That being said, speaking to the ransomware directly, the ransomware could, of course, infect technology -- whether it is on the IT side or, for example, when there's Windows-like technology on the OT side.

In this case, I won't speak to details here because it's subject to an investigation and those details are held within that investigation. But it certainly is a concern we have in the case of ransomware and why quickly and effectively gating the spread of the ransomware is always the first area of priority.

MS. PSAKI: We can do Kelly and Phil. They got to be quick though because we have -- short timeline. Go ahead.

Q Can you explain to us if you believe that this -- since it's criminal, in your judgment now, that there's a financial motive there -- but do you believe that there was a desire to try to penetrate a kind of system that has such huge implications for the U.S. economy and so forth? And how does that create concern for other kinds of systems: the electric grid, whatever it might be, other energy companies? Or was Colonial just a rich target because they could financially pay, potentially? Do you see this as being about the infrastructure more than just the financial incentive?

MS. NEUBERGER: We don't have further information about the intent of the perpetrators when conducting the ransomware hack against Colonial.

However, as you know, ransomware affects broad sectors. And clearly, criminals have learned that those sectors -- one of the key sectors we saw during the COVID pandemic was the hospital sector that was affected by ransomware. Clearly, we know -- we see that criminal actors have focused on the more vulnerable victims: state and local governments, schools, critical infrastructure.

And that is why coming up and addressing ransomware with great vigor is a key priority of the administration, because we're very concerned about the growth in ransomware and the impact it has both on small and medium businesses, as well as the state and local governments in the United States and around the world.

Q Thank you, and just two quick ones. Do you guys consider this attack ongoing or has the malicious actor been removed?

And then, Anne, just to follow up on something: You said that they have not -- Colonial has not yet asked for cyber support. Does that create a problem in terms of your ability to respond or the -- just federal government's ability writ large to get a grasp or handle on what's happened?

MS. NEUBERGER: The details regarding the actual incident are being currently investigated by the FBI. Colonial has noted in their public statement that they've worked to control the spread of the ransomware and are actively working to bring back up their network and they're at the remediation phase.

bring back up their network, and they're at the remediation phase.

So, we're happy to see the important progress that they made there. And, I'm sorry, what was your second question?

Q You said that the company has not yet asked for cyber support. Does that create a problem for your -- the U.S. government's ability to respond or get a handle on what's exactly happening when a private entity is not requesting support in that capacity?

MS. NEUBERGER: Our goal is ensuring that the support is available so that any private sector entity who is experiencing a cyber hack can turn to the government for remediation assistance and technical assistance. We judge that the company said that they have adequate support. And they noted, in their public remarks, that they're using a third-party service, that they feel they're making adequate progress with their own resources, and we know we're standing by.

But that -- that is -- we're happy that they are confident in their ability to remediate the incident and rapidly recover to meet the needs of their customers in this current environment.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you both so much. I'm sorry. They have to run to another meeting as they go run the world.

MS. NEUBERGER: Thank you.

DR. SHERWOOD-RANDALL: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you both for coming.

DR. SHERWOOD-RANDALL: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I know we also have a hard stop because of the President's remarks. Just keeping you busy on a Monday.

Just a couple of other small things at the top. Tomorrow, President Biden will meet with a bipartisan group of governors to discuss innovative -- innovative ways governors are working to get the people in their states vaccinated. The bipartisan group will share with the President some best practices on promoting access to vaccination, building confidence in vaccines, and ensuring that everyone is reached in the vaccination response.

He will also acknowledge the instrumental role Democrats, Republicans, and independents have played in the vaccination efforts thus far, including helping deliver 220 million shots in the first 100 days of his presidency. And he will also discuss how this continued partnership with governors is critical to meeting the goal of achieving 70 percent of our adult Americans having one shot and 160 million Americans fully vaccinated by July 4th.

The meeting will include Governor Charlie Baker of Massachusetts, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, New Mexico Governor Lujan Grisham, Maine Governor Janet Mills, and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.

Aamer.

Q Thanks. Is there any reaction to intensifying clashes in Israel? In the last couple hours, it's just gotten worse. I know Jake Sullivan was on the phone over the weekend with his top counterpart. But is the President, at this point, getting involved? Is -- what's the next steps forward? And then, if I could just -- I know we're tight on time.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Second question: Any readout on the President's remarks -- the Bucharest Nine meeting?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let me start with the first, and then I'll go to the second. We are continuing to closely monitor the

Bless you, Chris.

MS. PSAKI: Bless you. (Laughter.)

Q The Republicans have made clear the 2017 tax law is a nonstarter and are proposing user fees to pay for it. I don't understand what the deal space is here when their payfors are considered nonstarters by you guys, and your payfors are considered nonstarters by theirs.

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is a big week ahead, Phil. It's a big week for someone who covered Capitol Hill and is now covering the White House. Look, I think the President -- the President's red lines are inaction and are anything that would raise taxes on people making less than \$400,000 a year. Those are not areas where he is going to move.

He is quite open, as is evidenced by the fact that he invited Senator Capito and a group of members to meet with him in the White House later this week. He's very open to having a discussion about where we can find agreement, where we can move forward. And he has been encouraged by the spirit in which Senator Capito and other Republican colleagues are engaging with him. And he's hopeful that the meeting will be constructive.

Now, you're right, and what you touched on -- which is an interesting piece of this -- is that the disagreement is really about the payfors. There is agreement about the need to modernize our infrastructure, about the need to do more to create jobs in the economy. And he's looking forward to hearing what additional ideas they may have.

Q Can I just ask one more quick one? I understand where you guys and the Fed are -- that inflation right now -- transitory if it pops --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- to the degree that it does. The jobs report kind of was a reminder that we don't necessarily have a roadmap for coming out of a once-in-a-century pandemic economically. Are you guys concerned about what would happen if you were wrong and it's not transitory, and this ends up being an actual real problem in the weeks and months ahead, when it comes to inflation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that our economic team watches this incredibly closely -- including our Secretary of Treasury, who has an expansive background in watching inflation. And so, we have confidence in both their assessments to date and also the fact that they will watch this as we continue to assess the state of our economy.

I will say that -- and the President will talk about this shortly, I should say, later this afternoon -- that his view is that, you know, we need to -- we've always believed that this would be -- there would be ups and downs in our jobs reports. That is historically how it has gone -- that there are a number of factors that contribute to it being a challenge for people to hire and people to rejoin the workforce.

And there are steps we can take -- and this is what he will talk about in his remarks -- as a government. We've obviously taken a number of those steps, including passing the American Rescue Plan. But there are a number of barriers to work -- the biggest barriers we've seen: affordability of childcare, schools reopening, vaccinations is actually a huge factor.

So, when you dig into this data, which obviously we've done over the last couple of days, one interesting thing that struck the President as interesting is that the week of April 12th -- which is the week that the data was compiled for the April jobs report was collected -- at that point, only 18 percent of 18- to 64-year-olds were fully vaccinated. And as of May 9th, it's risen to 34 percent. And the seven-day moving average of positive COVID cases was 40 percent higher in mid-April than May 8th last week when the data was compiled for next month. So, all I'm conveying is there are a range of factors.

He'll talk about -- or -- announcements on state and local funding -- how that will be distributed, which will help keep

police, firefighters, and others on the job. He'll talk about delivering assistance to restaurants, which is some -- where we see major opportunity for employment or rehiring.

He'll talk about providing guidance to childcare centers, which will help ensure that that funding gets out the door to cover child costs. He'll talk about the emp- -- Employee Retention Tax -- Tax Credit, which will hopefully help small- and medium-sized businesses. But he also believes that there are steps businesses need to take, which he'll also talk about.

Employers can get people vaccinated. They can pay people a decent wage. These larger companies have received \$1.4 trillion in money. They can do a better job of paying a decent wage to bring people back into the workforce.

And so, you know, there's a lot of steps different entities can take. And that's where he think- -- where he'll discuss this afternoon and where he thinks the focus should be.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Two topics really quick. First, on ethics waivers: The White House apparently had ethics restrictions that were preventing officials who work here from communicating with the unions they worked at previously, and they waived them for somebody at OMB and somebody at the Made in America office, and I'm curious why that happened.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, since you gave me the opportunity, I will reiterate that this administration has -- the President signed an executive order requiring all appointees across the federal government to sign the most stringent ethics code ever adopted by any White House.

So, as you referred to, in the narrow circumstances when necessary and in the public's interest, the order authorizes agencies to grant limited waivers in consultation with White House Counsel's Office, including in the cases you're citing.

The President, of course, has stood strong for unions throughout his career, and he's proud to have leading labor voices in the White House. And there are circumstances -- very, very limited -- where it is in the interest of governing, in the interest of getting work done for the American people to issue these waivers.

Q And then, on the economy: So, employment only rose by about 266,000 jobs in April out of 7.4 million or so job openings. How does the White House know that people are just choosing not to apply for jobs because the extra unemployment benefits are so good?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that we have looked at the data -- and Secretary Yellen referred to this on Friday, or talked about this on Friday: We don't see much evidence that the extra unemployment insurance is a major driver in people not rejoining the workforce.

We actually see the data and our analysis shows that lack of vaccination, the lower rate -- which is why I referred to the data in the week that it was taken -- it has an impact. Childcare has an impact. Schools reopening has an impact.

But there is also the need to pay a livable working wage, and that's one of the reasons the President will talk about that this afternoon.

Q But, as Bank of America economists who were cited in a Bloomberg story say, anybody making less than \$32,000 a year is better off financially just taking the unemployment benefits. So is the White House creating an incentive just to stay home?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, the majority of economists, internally and externally of the White House, don't feel that unemployment insurance -- something that was done at a time where -- to help unemployed people get through a very difficult economic downturn during a pandemic -- is a dri- -- is the -- a major driver in our unemployment data; that there are other factors -- bigger factors -- that were contributing -- have been contributing to the numbers we saw on Friday.

That's what we're working to address, and that's where we think our solution should be focused.

Q And just last one, really quick. The Commerce Secretary says the main reason that people are staying home is fear. How does the White House know that people are scared? What is that based on?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what she was referring to is the fact that there were -- there was a much lower vaccination rate just a month ago. And that people are fearful about getting sick. They are fearful about whether they're going to have the conditions to be healthy -- whether they can send their kids to a childcare center, whether there is a childcare center. So those are all factors that are consistent with the examples and reasons I just provided.

Go ahead, Josh.

Q You mentioned that you're monitoring inflation and that, with the jobs report, you expected, sort of, you know, lumpy reports from month to month. Do you expect the same thing with the inflation report? Is the White House bracing for, kind of, an eye-popping topline number, given the base effects it will be going off of? Or are you not, sort of, cautioning that? Are you worried people will overreact to the one number that will come on Wednesday?

MS. PSAKI: Well, obviously, our analysis is going to be done by our economic experts. They continue to convey that they believe the impact will be temporary, transitory -- however you want to refer to it -- but they're looking at it closely. But I don't have any projections on that to make from here today.

Q Can I ask a little bit more about vaccinations?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q You -- the average has dropped from about 3.4 million, four weeks ago --

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q -- (inaudible) 2 million. It looks like it's, sort of, leveled off there -- declining steadily. Is that where you expect it to continue? Do you expect it to keep coming down? And what are the factors that you think are driving that? It's a pretty substantial drop over the past month or so.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, we always expected we'd be in a different phase. And we were at a phase, just several weeks ago -- and you cover this closely, so you know well -- where there was such a demand for the vaccine. People were eager to get their appointment. They were -- had vaccine T-shirts. They were doing selfies.

We are now at the point, which we always knew we would be at, where the supply has increased -- has exceeded the demand. And it means we have to work extra hard to get into communities; to have partnerships with local doctors, with primary care physicians; to expand access; expand mobile units that are going into communities to get the supply out to people.

We have reached -- hit a higher number than I think most people anticipated at this point since the President was inaugurated -- the number of people who have been vaccinated, who have received their first dose and are, hopefully, on their way to their second dose.

So we knew we would be in this phase. And we knew we'd be in a phase where it'd be more difficult because we need to increase access -- which we've been focused on doing from the beginning -- and continue to increase confidence. We have seen progress in both areas.

Q You mentioned, two weeks ago, the 10 million doses of AstraZeneca that were being reviewed by the FDA.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you have an update on that at all? Are they still reviewing it?

MS. PSAKI: They are still reviewing it. We don't have an update quite yet. And we're working to, hopefully, have more for you on what our -- how our approach and what our assessment will be of how those doses will be distributed.

Q (Inaudible) quick housekeeping. Tomorrow's meeting with governors -- is that virtual or are they all coming?

MS. PSAKI: Virtual.

Q It's a virtual meeting.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And can you give us, finally --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- a sense of whether you're considering easing travel restrictions, particularly to Europe or whatever for vaccinated people? Where is the U.S. thinking on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview on that at this point in time.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, David.

Q Back to this interesting question on the unemployment benefits. One suggestion the Republicans have been making is "End those benefits earlier than the current plan" -- which I think is the end of September -- "and use that money to go into infrastructure." Is that being taken up by your side?

MS. PSAKI: I'm certain they will bring many ideas to the meeting -- meetings later this week. That may be one of them.

But again, I think it's important to note that we don't see the unemployment benefits as a major driver in the jobs numbers. We see there being a number of other factors that have a larger impact, including the pace of vaccination just a month ago, the childcare impacts, the need to get more money out into state and local communities.

So that's where our focus is going to be. And, for us, it's important that we continue to remain solutions-oriented on areas where we feel can be most beneficial to the economy and not be moved by talking points.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah. Thanks, Jen. The White House sent out, earlier, that the President is meeting later today with Senator Carper and Senator Manchin. I was wondering if you could just give us a preview of what they plan to discuss and why those two senators, in particular, were invited -- or will it be virtual or not?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I would expect the President will have -- you already know -- he has a number of meetings scheduled this week: one with a bica- -- a bipartisan, bicameral leadership meeting on Wednesday. He also has the meeting with Senator Capito and a group of Republican senators on Thursday.

So these are just examples of two senators -- additional members he'll be meeting with to discuss the American Jobs Plan, discuss the path forward. And I'm not sure we'll have a big readout afterwards, but it's just a part of his ongoing outreach.

Q And given -- just the way you said, you know, what a big week it is; he has so many meetings with so many lawmakers -- is this, sort of, I guess, like a defining week, would you say, for how things are going to proceed on the Jobs Plan and the Families Plan?

Is the White House, sort of, you know, setting any kind of deadline? You've mentioned Memorial Day as a time we'd like to see progress. I'm curious, you know, where you, kind of, go after this week, given all of the meetings that are scheduled.

MS. PSAKI: The President would still like to see progress by Memorial Day and would like to sign the bills into law this summer. That hasn't changed. But we don't have a new deadline. But, of course, a number of meetings, and the Senate is back, and there'll be all sorts of conversations happening this week.

Kel -- sorry. Kelly, go ahead.

Q Do you get a sense that as the President is going to have his first meeting with Kevin McCarthy --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- here and that leadership meeting you talked about -- obviously, the House Republicans have some of their own internal matters going on.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Does the President think any discord they are having has an influence or comes into the meetings that he will have with leadership? Does that affect how he views sitting down with them at all?

MS. PSAKI: No. The President knows that there is some introspection going on in the Republican Party right now and a determination about who they're going to be, who they want to lead them, and what they want to represent moving forward. He's not going to focus on that.

He also believes that the American people did not elect him to accept improbability or impossibility of working in a bipartisan manner. So, the role he can play, as President of the United States, is to continue to seek ways to work together.

And the fact is we are continuing to work -- even with the family excitement that's happening on the other side of the aisle, we are continuing to work with Republicans on a range of issues. National security. We passed our -- we confirmed our Cabinet in a faster pace since -- than -- since Reagan. We're working to increase our competition. There are a lot of ways we're working with Republicans, even as they're determining who they are moving forward.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. Both the German Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron have expressed their concerns over U.S. policy towards vaccine. They've basically been underlining the need for more experts, be it for the vaccine itself or the components. Does the President understand their frustration? And more broadly, do you think he underestimated the -- the negative reactions around the world?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the President's commitment to a global COVID-19 response has been steadfast and consistent since day one, when we made the decision to rejoin the WHO. We understand that the border -- the virus knows no borders, that it is important for the United States to continue to play a central role in addressing the global pandemic.

We've invested more than any other country in COVAX, and we're pushing other countries to invest more in the program to get vaccines to developing countries. We're working to boost global production through partnerships like the Quad partnership. Moderna and Pfizer have announced plans and intentions to increase supply and get it out to the global community. And, of course, we've announced that we are going to share 60 million doses -- 10 million of which, as Josh referred to or alluded to earlier, will be hopefully approved by the FDA soon.

So, there's no question we're playing a role. We will continue to play an increased role in efforts to address the pandemic and get the pandemic under control.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. Speaking of NATO's Eastern flank, the important part of a security system in the Central and Eastern Europe was supposed to be U.S. missile defense site in Poland. The project stalled during the previous administration. It has been delayed twice. Is President Biden committed to completing the project?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview about a bilateral project or project in Poland at this point in time. The President addressed this group today. He provided remarks to, obviously, a group of nine countries. So it was not focused on one particular country, even though I know the President of Poland was a cohost of the event. I can certainly follow up with our national security team and see if there's more to report.

Go ahead.

Q We're seeing hesit- -- hesitancy in some areas to resume activities that even the CDC says they're safe -- you know, wearing a -- not wearing a mask outside if you're fully vaccinated or even, in particular, in-person schooling. Does the administration have a strategy on helping cure those anxieties around the country and make sure that the reopening can go as smoothly as possible?

MS. PSAKI: The reopening of schools? Well, we actually saw data that came out just last week that showed more than 50 percent of schools are open five days a week, and that data is from March. So we're actually seeing increasing numbers as schools receive the American Rescue Plan funding and as they apply the mitigation measures.

So, I'm not sure -- but was there specific data you were referring to, or --

Q It's not just the reopening schools, but getting families confident that sending their children to those schools is safe.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Sure. This is -- certainly, as we look to wait for and hope for, of course, approval of the -- of one of the vaccines to be safe for 12- to 15-year-olds. I know this is something that's on the minds of parents around the country. My kids are not quite that old, but I certainly relate to and understand that.

And we will continue to do what we have done with a range of communities across the country where there has been issues with confidence -- whether it's communities of color, where there has been a massive increase in confidence as more people get vaccinated; or more conservative communities, where we've also seen an increase in confidence as more people in communities are vaccinated.

So one of the reasons that we are partnering with primary care physicians and local doctors is because we know that is an effective way -- not just with adults, but with parents -- to help address questions they have, concerns they have about whether or not getting the vaccine, taking the vaccine for their kids is safe, is effective, and is necessary. And that is a program we were -- we will continue to increase our investment in. I think we'll have more to say about that in the coming days.

Sorry, I was trying to understand your question. Go ahead.

Q Thanks. To go back to the Colonial Pipeline, if the U.S. does begin to see a shortage of supply, would they consider -- would you consider waiving the Jones Act?

MS. PSAKI: So, as -- as Dr. Sherwood-Randall alluded to, we have an interagency process that was stood up this weekend and is meeting regularly -- many times a day -- about a range of options.

I'm not going to get ahead of those options. And at this point in time, I would just reiterate: We don't see a supply issue.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Hi, thanks for taking my question. The first is: Is there -- does the President have a sense of how many Democrats are fully on board with the 4 trillion dollars worth of plans right now, given that he's meeting with these two Democratic senators?

And is there any readjustment happening with job -- the Jobs Plan or the Families Plan dis- -- because of the disappointing jobs report last week?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that the President has been regularly discussing with not just Speaker Pelosi and Senator Schumer, but a range of members. I should say, also, senior members of the White House team have primarily been playing this role, have had dozens and dozens of meetings and engagements and discussions about these proposals and what's important to a variety of members.

As you know, Yamiche, you know, there are some members we've been talking about a lot who want to see a smaller package; some want to see a larger package. So there's a range of points of view that will certainly continue to be a part of the discussion.

This meeting with bipartisan leaders on Wednesday -- of course, the Jobs Plan will be a part of it. They'll also discuss a range of issues and a range of items on the agenda during that meeting. But I don't -- the discussions are ongoing, and there are a range of viewpoints that we're intaking on. We're answering questions. And that is not just -- certainly not just with Republicans; it's with a range of Democrats as well.

Q Just want to make sure -- the question was, basically, how many Democrats? And does the President have a sense that he could pass it at least with Democrat support right now? (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, Yamiche, I -- what I was conveying is that there are a range of Democrats and Republicans who have different ideas about what the priorities are, what they should be. Some may even want different components of the package to be bigger; some may want it to be smaller.

So all of that is being assessed as we have a discussion. There isn't a bill that's going to the floor next week. We're in the early sausage-making stage of the discussion with members of both parties.

Q And then two other quick questions. The first is just on policing. Does the President -- would the President sign a bill that didn't include an end to qualified immunity when it came to policing? Jim Clyburn is supporting that now. What's the President's stance on qualified immunity?

MS. PSAKI: The President is eager to see what the outcome of negotiations are, and he certainly trusts in the leadership of Congresswoman Bass, Senator Booker. But his focus is on his hope that he can sign the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act into law on May 25th -- if I'm getting the date correct. And he will not -- we're not going to get ahead of those negotiations.

Q So he doesn't have a stance right now that he would -- that he would say on qualified immunity?

MS. PSAKI: We re not going to -- we re not going to take a stance in the middle of the negotiations.

Q And then the last question I have is on schooling. I saw some numbers that said Black children are -- half of them have gone back to school; about two thirds of Asian American children have enrolled in remote school; compared to about 20 percent of white students. Essentially, the point is that Black, Latino, and Asian students aren t going back to school at the same rates as white students. There are a lot of people --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q -- who are worried about that equity gap. Does the administration have a goal, a number in mind for -- for how this should be playing out when it comes to students and whos going back to school? And what -- what are the aim -- what's the aim there?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Well, one of the challenges is that the data is from March, and so the data at this point is a month and a half old. It still shows encouraging signs, but, as you pointed out there, Yamiche, it's not nearly where we want it to be at the end -- you know, at the conclusion of this. And the focus of Secretary Cardona and on our Department of Education is ensuring we re getting these funds out to the communities that need it in order to reopen -- reopen as quickly as possible, five days a week.

There are also entities that I think one of your colleagues over here asked about, in terms of concerns about the vaccine and safety and efficacy that we need to continue to address at the same time as well. So we will continue to dig into the data.

One of the things Secretary Cardona has been focusting [sic] -- focused on is connecting schools and best practices so that they can learn: Is it a funding issue? Is it a, you know, addressing-other-challenges issue and -- that school districts and schools can learn from each other?

But our goal and objective is to have all schools open five days a week, and that s what we re working toward. And we re not going to be satisfied until we get there.

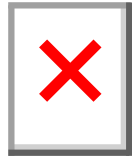
I know that -- I think you have to gather, or maybe we re even late for that, so I m going to wrap this up. But we ll see you again tomorrow. Thanks, everyone.

1:44 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of NSA Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 10, 2021 7:44 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi

Today, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met in Washington with Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi as part of close bilateral consultations between Jordan and the United States on a range of regional issues. The United States emphasized strong U.S. support for Jordan and the two sides discussed their commitment to strengthening and expanding bilateral cooperation on a range of issues. The United States also underscored the importance of spurring economic growth in Jordan.

The two shared concerns about recent violent confrontations in Jerusalem and discussed common efforts to de-escalate tensions. Mr. Sullivan recognized the special role Jordan plays in overseeing holy shrines in Jerusalem and thanked Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Safadi for the Kingdom's efforts with Palestinian and Israeli authorities to bring about calm in the final days of the Holy Month of Ramadan. Mr. Sullivan also expressed U.S. support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The U.S. and Jordanian officials discussed their serious concerns with the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria and pledged to work together closely to mitigate suffering.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with National Security Advisor Meir Ben Shabbat of Israel
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 11, 2021 6:18 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with National Security Advisor Meir Ben Shabbat of Israel

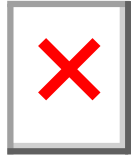
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben Shabbat. He condemned the ongoing rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups, including against Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. He conveyed the President's unwavering support for Israel's security and for its legitimate right to defend itself and its people, while protecting civilians. He also conveyed the United States' encouragement of steps toward restoring a sustainable calm. They agreed to continue to stay in close touch. Mr. Sullivan also spoke today with the Government of Egypt on the situation in Gaza and Jerusalem. They discussed steps to restore calm over the coming days and agreed to stay in close touch.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spox. Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Qatar Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Al-Thani
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 12, 2021 6:16 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Al-Thani

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. They discussed their shared concerns about the current situation in Gaza and Jerusalem. Mr. Sullivan made clear that the ongoing rocket attacks by Hamas into Israel are unacceptable and must end. They discussed their ongoing outreach to relevant parties in support of efforts to achieve calm, and agreed to remain in close touch in the period ahead.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Psaki, Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, and Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Michael Regan
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 12, 2021 7:20 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, and Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Michael Regan, May 12, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:12 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. We have two more special guests for all of you today.

Secretary Buttigieg has, of course, been here before, so we're not going to give him a lengthy introduction. But Administrator -- Administrator Regan previously served as the Secretary of North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. There, he spearheaded the development and implementation of North Carolina's seminal plan to address climate change and transition the state to a clean energy economy. And he secured the largest coal ash cleanup in United States history. Administrator Regan began his career at the Environmental Protection Agency, and is the first African American man and second person of color to lead it.

I will also just note, before we go to them, Secretary Granholm, Secretary Buttigieg, and Secretary Mayorkas will brief the full House and Senate this evening as well.

They'll take a few questions, but I will turn it over first to Secretary Buttigieg.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Thank you, Jen. Good afternoon. Let me start just by saying that we know that the cyberattack on the Colonial Pipeline is affecting fuel supply for some Americans. And throughout the administration, we have been working around the clock to help Colonial return its pipeline back to normal operations quickly, safely, and

securely.

The President has directed us to bring all government resources to bear to help Colonial to resolve this. And we're working to assess the impact of the temporary pipeline shutdown on our national fuel supply, while also working to help alleviate any potential shortages when and where they occur.

I can tell you that I've been on the phone multiple times a day with the White House, with fellow Cabinet Secretaries, and other leaders, including Administrator Regan. We'll be doing everything that we can to reduce the impact that some Americans could see at local gas stations in some areas until the pipeline is brought back online.

Colonial has announced that they're working toward full restoration by the end of this week, but we are not taking any chances. We are doing everything that we can, in the interim, to make it easier to move fuel to the places that need it.

Since Friday, our interagency response group has been examining [sic] all contingencies, coordinating with Colonial, and working closely across the interagency to help alleviate any potential supply disruptions.

For our part in Transportation, the Department has been working across our different modes of transportation to help make sure that fuel can get to the communities that need it as safely and as efficiently as possible. Our Maritime Administration -- or "MARAD" -- has completed a survey of the availability of vessels that are qualified to carry petroleum under the Jones Act in the Gulf and up the Eastern Seaboard.

The Department of Homeland Security is standing ready to review any requests for a temporary waiver of the Jones Act from companies that demonstrate that there's not sufficient capacity on Jones-Act-qualified vessels to carry specific shipments of fuel in and around the region.

Our Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration issued an hours-of-service waiver, which provides greater flexibility to drivers transporting gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, and other refined petroleum products to 18 states.

On Monday and Tuesday and into today, several states have issued emergency declarations that allow truckers to carry additional weight on state roads.

Now, the White House and DOT have determined that 10 states can use existing federal major disaster declarations that are currently in place to allow those states to issue permits that allow drivers to temporarily carry additional gasoline that would ordinarily exceed existing weight limits on federal highways in their state.

Each state has to follow its own procedures to issue these permits, but this decision -- determination provides them with the added flexibility to move fuel more efficiently if they need to.

PHMSA, our Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, is temporarily relaxing enforcement of certain pipeline operator qualification rules to make sure that emergency personnel can manually get -- help to get the pipeline back up and running as needed, and are in frequent touch, again, with the pipeline operators about safety.

In addition to these steps, we are continuing to monitor the situation as it develops so that we can help anywhere that we can.

For our Department, our mandate and our mission revolves around safety. And so we are working hard to maintain safety, while also providing much-needed temporary flexibility to minimize disruptions to the American people.

And DOT is in regular contact with state and local governments, and with members of Congress, as well as with retailers and other companies in the sectors that are impacted. And, of course, we're in constant contact with our partners across the federal government to coordinate the response.

So, together, we are working to assess the impact of the shutdown, offer emergency assistance, and, of course, help Colonial return to normal operations.

Our top priority right now is getting the fuel to communities that need it, and we will continue doing everything that we can to meet that goal in the coming days, and we'll continue to keep everyone apprised.

Importantly, this incident also reminds us that infrastructure is a national security issue. And the reality is that investing in world-class, modern, and resilient infrastructure has always been central to ensuring our country's economic security, our national security, and it was -- as we're seeing right now, that includes cybersecurity.

Thank you all. I'll turn it over to Administrator Regan.

ADMINISTRATOR REGAN: Thank you, Secretary Buttigieg. Jen, it's good to be here with you today.

You know, as Secretary Buttigieg mentioned, the President has directed a government-wide response to the Colonial Pipeline shutdown. And at EPA, we're doing our part to mitigate the impacts that people and communities might be experiencing.

The Clean Air Act allows EPA, in consultation with the Department of Energy, to waive certain fuel requirements to address shortages. After careful evaluation, EPA and DOE concluded that extreme and unusual fuel supply circumstances exist and that granting short-term waivers is consistent with the public interest.

EPA issued an initial waiver on Tuesday morning and later issued a second, more expansive waiver that covers 12 states and the District of Columbia. EPA waived certain gasoline requirements, specifically the requirement for low-volatility conventional gasoline, as well as reformulated gasoline.

While the waiver alone will not resolve the supply situation, it will help alleviate supply shortages. The waiver allows the use of any residential winter gasoline that may exist in the region. It will also allow butane to be blended into existing fuel stops, increasing the supply of gasoline by up to 5 percent.

EPA granted the waivers to help mitigate the supply shortages of gasoline in the affected areas until normal supply to the region can be restored. EPA followed an orderly process when assessing and issuing the fuel waiver. Any such waiver is limited in both geographic scope and in the duration to mitigate any potential impacts to air quality. At this time, we do not anticipate air quality problems from these limited waivers.

In assessing the situation and issuing the waivers, EPA has been in close coordination and communication with all of the impacted states. Our partnerships with the states is key to being able to effectively respond to the developing situation like this one.

Going forward, we will keep coordinating with our state colleagues to assess the situation on the ground and to determine whether we can provide any future flexibilities to alleviate impacts for people and communities in these affected areas.

We understand that there are shortages resulting from the Colonial Pipeline shutdown that cause stress and confusion in people's lives. Our response underscores the importance of President Biden's all-of-government directive, which asked federal agencies to harness our collective expertise and work in sync when urgent matters arise. This interagency effort is the linchpin to a swift and coordinated response.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. One question for Mr. Regan, one question for Mr. Buttigieg. Many of your fellow North Carolinians cannot find gasoline right now. What's your advice to them about what they should do and what they shouldn't do until this situation is resolved?

ADMINISTRATOR REGAN: Yes. We are in very close coordination with my home state, just like the other 12 states.

I think the folks should follow the advice of the governors and the attorney generals, which -- they're asking folks not to panic, not to hoard gasoline, and to watch for the updates that are coming from the federal government. We have some really good coordinated efforts at the federal, state, and local levels, and we're working very hard to alleviate these circumstances.

Q And then, Secretary Buttigieg, you mentioned that this situation shows the importance of world-class infrastructure. What could have been done or what should be done to prevent something like this from happening?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, this is part of what we have in mind when we talk about resilience. We need to make sure our infrastructure is resilient to climate security issues caused by the increased frequency and severity of weather events. But we also need to be sure that we are resilient in the face of cyber threats, and certainly in the kinds of things that the American Jobs Plan will be funding and supporting.

I think part of the expectation for local authorities or states or other bodies seeking to get funding is that there be robust cybersecurity resilience and planning written into that. This is not an extra. This is not a luxury. This is not an option. This has to be core to how we secure our critical infrastructure and that includes infrastructure that is not owned and operated by the federal government. We're being reminded that private companies, and often local authorities, own and operate so many of the critically important utilities and other infrastructure we count on.

MS. PSAKI: Peter.

Q Secretary Buttigieg, does the fact that this run -- one ransomware attack could take down roughly 45 percent of the East Coast's fuel supply mean that we should be building additional pipelines going forward?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, in this case, this was an issue about how a cyberattack impacted a pipeline that's there. I'm not sure it really speaks to the number or quantity of pipelines or their throughput.

I do think it reminds us that we need to make sure that we have the most resilient and flexible infrastructure for the future, especially when it comes to something like energy. We've now had, you could argue, two major wake-up call experiences -- one in Texas, and now one here -- each with a different cause, but both reminding us about the work that we have to do as a country.

MS. PSAKI: Jeff.

Q Mr. Secretary, Secretary Granholm, yesterday, said that she expected this issue to be resolved by the end of the week, more or less. Is that still your expectation? And --

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: So --

Q Go ahead.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: I'll defer to announcements from the company on their process. Again, PHMSA is in touch with them to review any plans that they have.

I would emphasize that there is a lot that is involved in getting a pipeline up and running again. And so there -- there's the announcement, then there's the actual process, and then some time for that to be fully up and running -- which is one of the reasons why we're not meeting any time and haven't been since -- even over the weekend -- in taking the steps that we

reasons why we're not wasting any time and haven't been since -- even over the weekend -- in taking the steps that we need to mitigate any shortages, even things that could happen while the pipeline is getting fully online, but before that's completely taking place.

Q And just to follow up for you -- perhaps the both of you: You described the permits and the waivers to allow other ways of getting fuel to these affected areas of the country. Is that working? Is that fuel arriving?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: We've gotten indications and feedback that the hours-of-service waiver has had an impact, and we expect that the wa- -- waivers will as well. But obviously, they're very new, and so I will be closely looking for feedback both from companies and from states on how that's going.

MS. PSAKI: (Inaudible) anything you want to add?

ADMINISTRATOR REGAN: Well, I will add that these waivers are working. We've seen, you know, an exceptional response from all of our states who are very appreciative of these waivers. It does expand the fuel supply. It allows for fuels to be moved around more freely in the region. And it does relieve some of that tension.

And so we'll continue to work closely with our states and our partners to ensure that we are taking all of the actions that we can to alleviate some of these situations.

MS. PSAKI: Mary.

Q Mr. Secretary, we now see gas above \$3 a gallon for the first time in seven years. Bottom line: What's your message to Americans who are worried about how this is going to impact their wallet? How long do you think this is going to last? And do you think prices are going to go up even further?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: Well, my message is that we understand these concerns; that we've seen that, in a lot of the impacted geographies, that this is a real issue. And that's one of the reasons why we've been working with every lever of government that's available -- and not the federal government as an island, but interacting with states and with companies to address this.

So, you know, I can't speak to long-term energy markets. Obviously this is a very specific and acute issue, but we recognize the concern that's out there, and that's why we haven't wasted any time to get into action, and it's why the President has directed us to be really thorough in examining all of our different authorities and all the different pieces of our respective agencies to be helpful.

MS. PSAKI: Jen.

Q The administration has been saying that you're willing to consider Jones Act waivers. Have any requests been filed? And since the Maritime Administration finished its survey, what did it determine about how many Jones-Act-compliant ships are truly available right now -- (inaudible) contract near the Gulf, et cetera -- that could help?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: So I can't speak to any specific waiver requests going on right now. But what I'll say is that, you know, that this -- MARAD has acted very quickly to provide what is essentially one of two parts for this determination to happen. One is the analysis that they do. And then, the other part is, of course, for Homeland Security to pick it up and run with it. And we'll continue making sure that they get any information they need to be able to turn it around quickly.

The level of analysis that's already been done -- my understanding is, previously, that's taken a couple of days, and MARAD was able to do it in a matter of hours. So they're moving quickly, and bottom line is: Stand at the ready to very expeditiously process what comes in.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Are you confident that another attack on the pipeline can't happen imminently? Has the company told you anything about that -- about steps they've taken in the short term on that?

MS. PSAKI: We can talk about this. I mean, they're speaking to their specific programs, but I will just say that we're probably not going to get into details about the company's own preparations. We've talked about the fact that this was a ransomware attack, but this is -- the -- these threats have been out there for some time, and it's certainly a reminder to this company and others to continue to harden their cybersecurity. But we'll let them speak to their other preparations.

Go ahead, Steven.

Q Thank you. Secretary Buttigieg, this is Wednesday today. We're talking about potentially a weekend restoration, but things are getting really crazy out there. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is warning people not to fill up plastic bags with gasoline. One in ten gas stations in D.C. is out of gas, and the figures are far higher in the South. Is the Biden administration having any preliminary discussions about potentially taking over the pipeline to restore -- restore the flow if the company is unable to do it themselves?

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: So, I've not heard anything along those lines. We are partnering with the company to make sure that -- on everything from the flexibilities we talked about to technical support and advice, that they're getting the help they need. And they have been able, through Line 4 and ancillary lines, to move some product. Although again, obviously waiting for determination on fully reopening.

I will say that this is a time to be sensible and to be safe. Of course, we understand the concern in the areas where people are encountering temporary supply disruptions, but hoarding does not make things better. And under no circumstances should gasoline ever be put into anything but a vehicle directly or an approved container. And that, of course, remains true no matter what else is going on.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, Secretary -- unless you want to -- we'll take one more.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, based on what you know right now, do you anticipate having to extend the duration or expand the scope of the fuel waivers further?

ADMINISTRATOR REGAN: Well, we're in very close coordination with each individual state. They all have different needs. We'll continue to assess that. And we do have the authority, if needed, to extend or issue a new waiver beyond the 20 days that we have already issued.

Q Are there any travel announcements for either of you? Or are either of you going to any particular region to address these in person that you're able to update us on, or none at this time?

ADMINISTRATOR REGAN: No. I don't have any travel announcements at this time.

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG: No news for you, no.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you both.

ADMINISTRATOR REGAN: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you so much for joining us. Appreciate it.

Okay. All right, I have another, kind of, hard out here at one o'clock. Sorry, lots going on, but we will get to as many questions as we can.

I do have a couple of additional details of outreach from the White House to governors I just wanted to convey to all of you. Our White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Julie Rodriguez, has been in contact with a range of state and local leaders to discuss the administration's response, obviously as have officials from a range of agencies.

In separate calls with chiefs of staff for Governor -- for Gov -- from Governor Hogan of Maryland; Governor Northam of Virginia; Governor Wolf of Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C., Mayor Bowser; and Nashville, Tennessee, Mayor Cooper, Julie had productive conversations outlining the actions we have taken to address the supply challenges, including, of course, EPA's waivers expanding gasoline supply. We -- in each of these conversations, she welcomed feedback, encouraged close coordination.

I would also convey to you that ~~Secretary Granholm~~ [Deputy Secretary of Energy David Turk], who was here just yesterday, also hosted a conference call yesterday with the governors of the 14 states impacted by the Colonial Pipeline as a part of our ongoing effort to remain closely engaged with state and local leaders.

I also wanted to provide an update on the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. As of today, SBA has received more than 147,000 applications from women, veterans, and socially and economically disadvantaged business owners, requesting a total of \$29 billion in funds. Businesses that qualify for grants should expect to receive the funds within two weeks. Already, \$2.7 billion of relief funds have been distributed to 21,000 restaurants across the country already.

And I would also note that to -- Congress has also set aside \$5 billion -- \$5 billion of these funds for applicants with annual pre-pandemic gross receipts of not more than \$500,000. On top of that, the Administrator -- Administrator Guzman from the SBA -- set aside \$500 million in funding for applicants with less than \$50,000 in receipts in 2019 to ensure those smaller -- smaller restaurants -- bars, food trucks, and other dining establishments -- have access to those funds.

Go ahead, Jonathan.

Q Thank you, Jen. First, just wondering -- I believe the meeting is still ongoing -- do you have any readouts at this point of the Big Four meeting with the President?

MS. PSAKI: I do not have a readout of the meeting that's ongoing.

Q That's just in case --

MS. PSAKI: But --

Q -- maybe they slipped you a note.

MS. PSAKI: I can -- can convey to you that, one, I would expect they will go to the stakeout. I would also expect that we'll have a written readout later this afternoon to provide to all of you.

Q Setting that aside, two other matters then. Could the -- does the White -- what is the President's response to Congresswoman Cheney's speech last night in which she denounced former President Trump's "big lie", and said the party -- the Republican Party needs to stand for our fair and free elections, and then her subsequent ouster this morning from her leadership position?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's start with the facts: More than 80 judges across the country threw out lawsuits attempting to overturn the outcome of the election.

And on January 6th -- you know, this moment in history we're looking at -- there are hearings on Capitol Hill about the

the extraordinary circumstances, the moment in history were looking at -- there are hearings on Capitol Hill about the events on January 6th. Our nation's Capitol was attacked, our democracy was attacked, and six people lost their lives. So it's disturbing to see any leader, regardless of party, being attacked for simply speaking the truth. And as the President said last week, it's hard to understand.

But our belief, his belief is that the American people will have to make their own decisions about whether the reaction by the people they elected to represent them should be embracing and elevating conspiracies and attacks on our democracy, or whether it should be standing up for ideals that have historically been owned by both Democrats and Republicans representing the country throughout history.

Q Okay. And one other matter: the escalating situation in Israel. Does the administration plan to drop their objections to a U.N. Security Council statement? Are there any plans to appoint an ambassador to Israel anytime soon or to reopen the consulate in Jerusalem that deals with these Palestinian issues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say -- let me give you a bit of an update on our outreach, and some of that we haven't read out to all of you because a lot of it has been happening privately. There's been a lot of activity and engagement around these developments over the last few days.

Just since this weekend, we've had more than 25 high-level calls and meetings by senior U.S. officials with senior officials from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, (inaudible) partners, and other stakeholders, including the Qataris, the Tunisians, the Jordanians, the Egyptians, who, as you all know, have an important role to play in the region as we work to move towards de-escalation -- de-escalation.

Just yesterday, we had more than 10 phone calls by senior Washington-based officials, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's call with his counterpart. I will also say that in the region, you know, we of course will nominate a qualified, experienced ambassador to Israel over the coming weeks. That's in process and, when it's ready, we'll announce that.

But in the meantime, we have great confidence in our team on the ground in Jerusalem led by a career diplomat, Jonathan Shrier, who enjoys open and regular access to a range of senior officials. And Jonathan and his team are fully latched up with both our team here, the State Department, officials on the ground.

So our engagement is -- a lot of it is happening privately through diplomatic channels. It's happening with officials in the region. We're in regular dialogue multiple times per day, as I noted, with Egyptian and Qatari officials which -- who have significant influence over -- for Hamas. And our objective here is de-escalation as we look to protecting the people in the region.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to confirm: The meeting is still going on?

MS. PSAKI: As -- when we came out here about 25 minutes ago, it was still going on. But I haven't seen any rustling of activity out there, so that's sometimes is an indication.

Q Okay. And without giving a readout on a meeting that may still be going or had started anyway, can you give us a sense of -- when the President says he's looking for consensus on a compromise, what points did he bring to the meeting on which he is willing to compromise?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I will say, Jeff, that the President believes that he was elected to find opportunities for common ground and to identify areas where we can work together. So, some examples where there's already some activity on Capitol Hill are: A destruc- -- a desc- -- a -- a conversation, I should say -- that was a hard word, for some reason -- about infrastructure investment, modernizing our nation's infrastructure.

As you well know, there's going to be a meeting tomorrow with Senator Capito and a number of Republican senators to

discuss exactly that: to discuss the counterproposal they put forward and where we can find some common ground.

But there is also an opportunity to work together on areas like increasing competitiveness among our workforce, to competing with China, to addressing the semiconductor chip shortage. There are a range of issues that there has historically been bipartisan cooperation on, including issues like immigration.

But we will see what comes up in this meeting when we -- when it concludes. Obviously, the President has his agenda to discuss what we can work together on moving forward to help the American people.

Each of those four leaders who are coming -- none of them are wallflowers. I'm sure they will have items they want to discuss as well, and I expect they'll share that with you when the meeting concludes.

Q Would corporate taxes be one area where he may have said, "I'm willing to go to 25 percent instead of 28 percent"?

MS. PSAKI: Well he's conveyed that, certainly, publicly, and I wouldn't see this as a negotiation to come to a conclusion about the American Jobs Plan and how it will be paid for. But he's expressed an openness to a range of proposals. And his bottom line is that inaction is unacceptable and that he is not going to raise taxes on the American people who are making less than \$400,000 a year, but he's open to a range of proposals.

Go ahead.

Q We heard Secretary Buttigieg just mention the desire to include more funding for cybersecurity --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- in the American Jobs Plan. Why wasn't that included in the President's initial plan? And is it a must-do for you now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what he's really talking -- what the Secretary was talking about is how the grant funding is determined and what will be required for that grant funding. And that's part of the process, as you know, as these negotiations and conversations are happening -- are happening with Capitol Hill.

So, you know, I think, at this point, it will include, as the discussions continue, tying specific grants to recipients' implementation of cybersecurity goals using tax credits to finance needed cybersecurity improvements.

But I think it's clear that cybersecurity -- ensuring private-sector companies are hardening their cy- -- their cybersecurity, ensuring it's an across-the-government effort -- is a priority to the President. And this will be linked now to our proposal for how specific grants should be distributed.

Q And we have seen a bit of a shift in tone out of the White House in the last 24 hours. Yesterday, we were told: There aren't supply shortages; it's a supply crunch that will be short-lived. Now you all are describing it as supply shortages. Is the impact of this hack more than you anticipated?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say: On Monday, we said -- on Monday afternoon, so 48 hours ago, we said, "At this moment, there is not a supply shortage." That was accurate at this moment. We also said that we are continuing to monitor very closely what the impact will be.

And one of the reasons that we acted as quickly as we did -- convening interagency calls through the weekend; determining what levers could be used very quickly and rapidly, according to historic standards, to help put in place contingency plans to ensure we reduce the impact on the American people -- is because we had to anticipate there could be a range of impacts.

We could not predict when the company would be able to come back online. They obviously need to make those determinations themselves. So, our role is not to determine that on their behalf; it's to make preparations to help reduce the impact on the American public.

Q And this obviously raises concerns not just about future attacks on pipelines, but other aspects of the electric grid, water systems, the like. Can Americans trust that the government can prevent future attacks going forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first note this is an attack on a private-sector company. And as I noted a little bit earlier when -- I'm not even sure you could hear me -- but, you know, this was an attack using ransomware. This ransomware has been out there for some time. Deputy -- Secretary Mayorkas, when he was Deputy Secretary, talked about, when he was here just two days ago, the fact that we were warning about the need to harden -- for companies to put in place cybersecurity protections back several years ago. And that's something we will redouble our efforts on.

At the same time, we have -- since this President took office, we have also redoubled our efforts on public-private-sector partnerships and efforts to work together on not just best practices, but ensuring we are protecting exactly the systems that the American people rely on. As you noted, some of those are federal entities, some of them are private-sector entities. But that has been our objective from the very beginning, and it -- this is a reminder of how important that is.

Q So what kind of steps can you do to try and encourage private companies, private entities? Are there tighter restrictions you can put on their cybersecurity to ensure that these kinds of attacks don't happen going forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there is an element of any company seeing what has just happened over the last several days being a reminder of how important those steps are, and that is out of our hands. That is probably -- thanks to the reporting of all of you.

But I would say that one of the reasons that we have stood up -- under Anne Neuberger, who was just here a couple of days ago -- and elevated a public-private coordinating apparatus or effort to work with the private sector is because we want to ensure that well-intentioned companies understand what they need to put in place and understand the risks that they're facing.

Because we know, as this is an example of, that it won't just impact that company, that it can impact -- depending on the entity -- the American public.

Go ahead.

Q How can the President work with Kevin McCarthy, who is poised to anoint to a position of leadership of the Republican Conference someone who does not believe in the legitimacy of the last election?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President is no stranger to working with people who he disagrees with or he has massive fundamental disagreements with. The facts are on our side, and more than 80 judges across the country threw out lawsuits attempting to overturn the outcome of the election. What the President believes his role is -- is to lead by example and to offer an alternative of leadership to the American people, which is reaching his hand across the aisle, offering to work with members of both parties on addressing issues the American people have concerns about.

Q We heard from -- I want to ask you about ransomware. We heard from Buttigieg and from the Administrator of the EPA just moments ago. If you can help, what -- you speak for the President. What is his message -- message to Americans right now who are worried about the supply of gas and rising prices?

MS. PSAKI: His message is: I understand, and I am doing everything I can, using every lever of government, to ensure we reduce the impact on the American people and their lives, whether it is because they want to do -- travel for the weekend; whether they are going to visit their grandchildren because they just got vaccinated -- just to incorporate another objective; or whatever it may be.

And his concern from -- his focus from the very beginning is: "Do not halt. Act. I need you to act. I need you to take action, to take -- put every -- every step in place that is possible."

Q Did Colonial -- I think I know your answers to these, but I want to ask them. Did Colonial pay the ransom already, or will they pay it?

MS. PSAKI: I would send you to Colonial to answer that question. Of course, the guidance from the FBI is not to do that.

Q Does the U.S. government know whether they paid or intend to pay?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have anything more for you on that.

Q Do you believe that the public and the government have a right to know when a major national security asset, like in this case, pays or would pay a ransom to the Russians?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, Peter, we have not made an official attribution, aside from the individual.

Q To whomever. To whomever.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, but that's an important point --

Q Good. I appreciate it.

MS. PSAKI: Just for clarification --

Q Fair enough.

MS. PSAKI: -- official attribution. I will say that there is advice and guidance we give from the federal government, because we know this incentivizes additional attacks. That is guidance that's given from the FBI.

But this is a private-sector company, and I would refer you to them for any questions about what they have or have not paid.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Going back to the topic that Peter first touched on --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- how does this President approach negotiating with someone who says that "100 percent of [his] focus is on stopping this... administration"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, this is a meeting where they could spend the entire time talking about areas where they disagree, including who won the election -- and the President has 80 judges and courts and tens of millions of Americans behind him on that piece -- but he doesn't find that particularly constructive.

Clearly, the Republican Party has to work out who they are and what they stand for, but this is not a meeting that's focused on that.

So the President has a long history of working with people where he has strong disagreements, and his objective and his focus and his time today -- nothing more valuable than the President's time -- is going to be finding common ground. And that's how he'll approach it.

Q More broadly, how would you say that this administration approaches the art of compromise differently than, say, the Obama administration did? What did you learn from those eight years?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that the Vice President -- the President was the Vice President at the time; he was not an outside actor. Right? And he worked in close partnership with then-President Obama to get a lot of work done for the American people -- from the Affordable Care Act, to the American ~~Reserve~~ [Recovery] Plan, to, you know, moving forward an agenda in what we felt was the right direction.

In terms of lessons learned from that period of time -- look, I think that anyone who spent eight years as Vice President would probably look back and think, you know, "What would I have done differently at the time?" I'll let him speak to that more specifically.

Go ahead.

Q And then --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go.

Q -- just looking ahead to tomorrow's meeting, what do you expect to gain out of that meeting? We talked to, I believe, all of the offices for the Republican senators who were --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- involved, and one of them said, "If the White House isn't prepared to come down on its overall number or change the funding structure, then this is all pointless." What's your response to that?

MS. PSAKI: The President has been clear -- as have I, speaking on his behalf -- that he's open to compromise, and his only line in the sand is around inaction. And, certainly, I don't think anyone anticipates, including the members attending, for this to be a definitive meeting with an outcome where everything's signed with a bow -- or tied with a bow at the end.

But we have been encouraged by the proposal. We expect this to be a good-faith discussion, and the President is certainly approaching it through that prism.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday we heard from Senate Republicans, including Susan Collins, who said that the public is no longer looking to the CDC for guidance because the CDC is moving too slowly. You saw Georgia move ahead on the vaccinations for as young as 12 years old without waiting for the CDC. Is the White House concerned that the public is tuning out the top health experts?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you referred to two people who are obviously in public life, but I'm not sure that's a reflection of the totality of the American public.

What we know is that -- or how we've approached things is that we believe that health and medical experts should be our North Star, and that leaning on them and their data analysis and their review of what they think the guidance should be to ensure that the American people can be confident in that should continue to be our North Star.

So here's what we also know: As more people get vaccinated, there will be less and less need for certain restrictions, and the

CDC has said they will continue to evaluate the science and update their guidelines.

But our objective is to ensure that the American people have confidence in the fact that we are leaning into -- we're not making political decisions; we are leaning into the advice and counsel of medical experts. Sometimes people may feel that's slow. We understand. It's frustrating. I'm tired of wearing a mask, too. We understand how the American people are feeling, but we feel it's important to still maintain that commitment.

Go ahead.

Q Has the White House conveyed the message to the CDC that it should be moving quicker to loosen restrictions? Has that come from the White House?

MS. PSAKI: No, we have conveyed that we will continue to abide by the health and medical advice of our health and medical experts, many of which -- many of whom are working at the CDC. And we look forward to, as more people are vaccinated, them continuing to update their guidelines for the public.

Q Can I do one more quick one on infrastructure?

MS. PSAKI: Of course.

Q You had said earlier that you wouldn't see this as a negotiation to come to a conclusion about the Jobs Plan and how it will be paid for.

Knowing you can't give a readout of the meeting that's perhaps still going, what did the President want to leave the room achieving today? Like what is the -- was there one thing, tangible, that he wanted to walk away from this conversation saying, "We hit this point; we moved this forward"?

MS. PSAKI: I think the President wanted to convey that we -- the world is not waiting for us to work together here, as Democrats and Republicans, to increase our own competitiveness, to invest in the American workforce. And they're not waiting for the resolution of a leadership fight.

They're waiting for us to -- they are -- they are waiting to see what we will do and what we will do in this moment. And the stakes are too high not to work together to pass an American Jobs Plan, to invest in infrastructure, and to make us more competitive.

And he wants to certainly convey -- and I think his actions convey this -- that he wants this to be a good-faith effort and negotiation, and that's why he invited him down here -- them -- all of them -- sorry.

Go ahead, Jen.

Q Two things. One, just very quickly. It seems like the leadership meeting has let out.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, yeah. Should we wrap?

Q I don't know if there's any -- I don't know if there's anything that you kind of had embargoed until that was over that you want to add about the meeting.

MS. PSAKI: I do want to give you an actual readout of the meeting. So, I have not -- I don't have any update on the meeting. And if anybody wants to go out there to a stakeout, I will not take it personally at all -- or no one who's watching.

Q Then I just wanted to ask you about the inflation report today --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and how the administration sees these numbers. Is there a concern that high inflation is going to continue for a long time and that the administration might need to rethink its spending plans? How high a monthly reading is the administration willing to see, kind of, quarter after quarter?

And then, you know, there's -- a phrase that's been used a bit by some administration officials -- including Cecilia Rouse, saying that -- that it's "transitory." What -- what does that mean? Is that thinking about the next couple of months or through the end of the year, just as we're seeing these bumps that, you know, might spike up some numbers or you might see low jobs numbers and all just, kind of, the economy getting back to, you know, normal?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, first let me say that obviously our CEA chair has said that, but it reflects the consensus view among economists that our country -- as our country is experiencing a massive transition from the slowdowns during the pandemic to flipping the switch back on as we are continuing the path to recovery -- that we would see a specific number of months or quarters where there is a transitory increase. And that's something that we have prepared for and that most economists say will be temporary.

I will say there's some interesting data. It will be interesting to us, I think; hopefully, to others. But, you know, for example, that -- as we looked at this data. So airfares increased by 10 percent, but are still almost 20 percent below pre-pandemic price levels. Hotels also see a price increase, but remain -- saw a price increase, but remain below pre-pandemic price levels.

So Americans are feeling more comfortable traveling again. That's a good sign. And a lot of these price increases are still below what they were prior to the pandemic.

We're also seeing in the data that some of the price increases impact the reflect -- are a reflection of the supply-chain pressure. So, if you look at used motor vehicle prices, that accounted for more than a third of the increase. And that was an impact, in large part, because there are fewer new cars and, as a result, there are more -- and this is the -- and that is an impact of the semiconductor chip shortage. Right?

So, there's a couple of datapoints that are specific to this moment. And we knew, just as the -- as the economy, sort of, shrunk and shut down, that, as it's turning back on, there would be some of these impacts.

But we are constantly tracking. We have shared our expectations on inflation. We -- as we experienced this -- this massive transition, we continue to chart our path to recovery, and we know that a number of the investments that we have proposed were long needed even before, you know, the last several months.

Q Just one (inaudible) question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You know, you have these surprising inflation numbers, the jobs number was much lower than expected, the situation in Israel, the pipeline. Does it suddenly feel like the external world is turning on you guys or -- or that you suddenly are juggling a lot more crises? Or any concern about that?

MS. PSAKI: That's what we're made for here. We certainly know that -- and the President knew from having served as Vice President for eight years -- that when you when you walk in and you're the leader of the free world and you're overseeing a country that is still working its way through a pandemic and an economic recovery, that you have to prepare -- be prepared to juggle multiple challenges, multiple crises at one time. And that's exactly what we're doing at this moment.

Go ahead, Courtney.

Q Thanks, Jen. I just wanted to follow up on what you said about the President nominating an ambassador to Israel in the coming weeks.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q I want to go back to Jonathan's question: Is the President considering reopening a consul- -- or consulate general in Jerusalem? And then, more broadly, when can we expect the President to announce his more high-profile ambassadorships? Will that come before he travels in June?

MS. PSAKI: It's not timed to a trip, I will say, but I would expect we'll have more in the coming weeks. They go through a process of consideration, and, obviously, final decision is by the President of the United States.

In terms of the question about reopening the consulate, I would certainly point you to the State Department. They may have already addressed that, but they'd be the appropriate entity for that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. And thanks for continuing to take questions despite this weird situation.

MS. PSAKI: I -- I know, but it's okay. I know people wanted to go out there, but yeah.

Q So, I've got two questions in two areas. I'd like to ask quickly about jobs and also about a couple of press freedom issues, which, of course, I imagine is important to everyone here.

The first one on jobs: The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce just polled 200 small businesses, and 64 percent are having trouble hiring people; 42 percent of them cited the higher COVID-19 unemployment benefits. University of Chicago, separately, estimated 32 percent of people are getting more money not to work than they would've in their previous jobs.

President Biden said on Monday, quote, that "No one should be allowed to game the system and we'll insist [that] the law is followed." Has the White House done anything to, you know, instruct states to more severely enforce those -- the rules on unemployment benefits?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly expect any state is enforcing the law. But I would say that what we've seen across most -- the majority of economic data and from the majority of economists is that the biggest impacts and factors are the pandemic and the fact that we're still recovering from a pandemic; and people having concerns or issues with childcare; or fears, if they're not yet vaccinated, about going back to a workplace.

And there are a number of steps we've put in place, including assistance to restaurants, as I noted earlier today; to small businesses to ensure they have that vital assistance at this point in time.

And obviously, for bigger companies, we've been encouraging them to use some of the \$1.4 trillion in assistance they've received to pay higher living wages.

But those are the range of factors that most economists believe are the issues at this point in time, even though we look at data over the course of several months. And over several months, we've been creating about 500,000 jobs a month.

Q So when President Biden says that, he's basically just putting it out there that states should enforce it and that people should comply with the rules in place, not necessarily that there's anything new the federal government is doing.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly expect states to abide by the laws, as I'm sure you do.

Did you have a second question?

Q Yes, I do. I'd like to ask about a couple of press freedom issues. On Friday, we learned that the Justice Department, last year, seized the phone records of several Washington Post journalists. The Biden Justice Department defended this, saying that it was the sources they were after, not the reporters.

But there are some press freedom advocates who are pretty concerned about that defense. Trevor Timm of the Freedom of the Press Foundation said that the Biden Justice Department gave a "disturbing defense" of the practice. Bruce Brown, the Executive Director of The Reporters for Freedom of the Press said that it "raises serious First Amendment concerns."

Do you, as the government's top press officer, have concerns about reporters' records being taken, including in this instance?

MS. PSAKI: Well, given this was an action taken by the last administration, and the Department of Justice who oversees, obviously, our legal actions has already spoken to it, I'm not going to have anything additional to add.

Q The second part on press freedom is -- this marked -- marks International Press Freedom Day, which was celebrated on Twitter by the Secretary of State and the Vice President --

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q -- who wrote the "free press is critical to democracy."

The whistleblower Edward Snowden responded by writing out, "This would be more persuasive if the White House [wasn't] aggressively seeking a 175-year sentence for [a] publisher of award-winning journalism..." He's referring to WikiLeaks publisher, Julian Assange.

The Obama-Biden administration was infamous for taking a heavy hand toward reporters and leaks, including taking the Associated Press's call records and calling a Fox reporter a "possible conspirator." But the Obama Justice Department decided not to prosecute Assange for fear of setting a precedent that could be used to prosecute journalists dealing with classified information.

In the name of press freedom, will President Biden be intervening in the Assange case to stop the prosecution? Or will he be allowing the Justice Department and the courts to sort this out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, in the name of independent Justice, we will allow the Justice Department -- encourage the Justice Department to continue to be an independent Justice Department -- which I know is different from what we saw over the last four years, so it feels funny to some people.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. The first question about the potential closing of the Line 5 pipeline in Michigan. Has the President been in touch -- in contact with Prime Minister Trudeau?

MS. PSAKI: That's in the courts. So, we're not going to have anything to add. It's in a courts process right now.

Q The amicus brief of the Canadian government in the U.S. federal court says that -- describes the potential closing as a "massive and potentially permanent" blow to Canadian economy and energy security. Is this a way to treat an ally like Canada?

MS. PSAKI: I think we've talked about, in here, how important of a partner Canada is and will continue to be on a range of issues -- from addressing the pandemic, to just being a regional partner on facing issues around the globe. But this, again, is a situation that's in the courts, so I'm not going to have more comment on it.

a -- is a situation that's in the court, so I'm not going to have more comment on it.

Q One separate issue --

MS. PSAKI: I got to go around to other people because I have three minutes left. I'm sorry, keep going.

Q I just have two quick ones. So, my first question, I wanted to ask about -- there's a recent New York Magazine article about how the White House polices language in Washington that I'm sure you read the other day.

And a particular graph points to an Associated Press memo that advises reporters against using the word "crisis," which the administration has -- has said that they're not going to use the word "crisis" for the border.

It cites a person close to the White House as saying that "one very real possibility is [that] this strategy works. They may get criticism in think pieces about it, but at his hundred-day mark, Biden is the most liberal President we've had -- and the public thinks he's a moderate. That's a winning strategy to me. They're [going] to accept that you're gonna to write this piece as long as they know that swing voters in Colorado aren't gonna to read it."

So does this reflect the White House's thinking, that the goal is for Americans to view the President as moderate as he pursues, according to the quote, "the most liberal agenda that we've seen"?

MS. PSAKI: There was a lot packed into that question. It must have taken some time to write. I will say that our goal is to implement solutions as it relates to the challenges at the border and not to be caught up in semantics of what we call it. Because, at the end of the day, what we've seen is a massive reduction in the number of children who are being detained in Border Patrol facilities thanks to the actions of this administration.

We've seen a massive reduction in the number of hours kids spend in Border Patrol facilities. And we're continuing to work to get kids into the arms of their family members or to sponsor homes. And that's what our objective is.

I can't speak to a blind, anonymous quote from somebody outside of the White House, which we'd all be for banning those if others would want to commit to that as well.

Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Sure, thank you. What contingency plans are in place if Congress can't come to a quick agreement on increasing the debt ceiling, since Secretary Yellen suggested that Treasury might exhaust the so-called "extraordinary measures" sooner than some analysts have estimated?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me just first say that we fully expect Congress to act in a timely manner to raise or suspend the debt ceiling, as they did three times on a broad bipartisan basis during the last administration.

And, as you know from covering it, raising or suspending the debt ceiling does not authorize new spending; it merely allows Treasury to meet obligations that Congresses have already approved. So, that's what our focus is on and we certainly expect them to follow suit of the last several administrations -- or last several times they raised it.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks for your patience.

Q No problem. Just a few quick ones.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

MS. PSAKI. Sure.

Q And I'll be quick. Does immigration continue to be a priority in these meetings that are so important and that could do a lot for the progress of an immigration bill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I can't -- it's hard for me -- they may have read some of it out -- to read out a meeting that was still going on when I came out here. But the President remains committed -- the -- immigration continues to be a top priority for the President. That's why he proposed a bill on day one. That's why he communicated in his joint session speech that we should look for ways to find common ground, find agreement on what pieces we can move forward.

And he certainly believes -- even as we've made progress at the border -- that in order to address this over the long term, we need to put in place long-term solutions. So he will continue to absolutely advocate for it, but I -- I don't know if it was a topic in the meeting yet.

Q The rancher who found -- the couple who found the five young girls that were rescued a few days ago said to the President in an interview that he did, "We want you to come to the border. This is not humane anymore." What do you have to say about that?

MS. PSAKI: I will say, first, that that was a heartbreaking situation, and we're thankful for the work of CBP to ensure those minors' safety. This is another example of why we continue to be very clear that individuals should not make the treacherous journey north and put their lives in the hands of smugglers or others for unsafe circumstances.

And again, just to reiterate: Our focus remains on solutions, on ensuring we're expediting processing, we're getting kids into safe and humane conditions, and that's -- if going to the border changed that or helped that, that would be one thing. But our focus is on implementing pieces that we can -- so we can make their lives better.

Q And if I may finish, on consumer prices -- picking back up on what was asked earlier on: Is this a concern going forward that the prices will continue to rise, that they will have an impact on the recovery that you want to have on the economy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think this is obviously something we -- we monitor quite closely. And we certainly monitor specifically from -- it's the job of the independent Federal Reserve to manage all aspects of inflationary pressure as they pursue their dual mandate of achieving full employment at stable prices -- at stable prices. So, it's the policy of us not to -- executive branch -- not to comment on that, really, in terms of the future of inflation.

But I will say that, you know, it's important to note what the very specific -- as I did in response to an earlier question -- factors are at play here, which include, as I noted, the airfare is increasing by 10 percent but -- but still being 20 percent below pre-pandemic levels; hotels seeing a price increase but remaining below pre-pandemic levels. So there are a range of factors here at play.

Obviously, adjusting the -- addressing the semiconductor chip shortage that we think -- we remain committed to and we will continue to work to address.

Okay, thanks. Okay.

Q Just moments ago, Leader McConnell said to those reporters -- some of whom are back --

MS. PSAKI: This is like real-life happening here.

Q Real news in real time. Leader McConnell said moments ago that they communicated to the President that they will not budge on the 2017 tax cuts, which means -- well, you know what that means. I guess, what does the White House -- what do you say to that? And then, how would you pay for this if you're not going to pay with -- via tax cuts?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that question is more --

MS. PSAKI: YES, I THINK THAT QUESTION IS MORE

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: That question is probably more on Republicans to address than it is on the President. He's proposed a way to pay for it. We'll see what other ideas they have.

Thanks, everyone.

1:04 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Adviser Sullivan Calls with Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia and President Aliyev of Azerbaijan
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 17, 2021 5:01 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan Calls with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke separately today with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan. Mr. Sullivan conveyed the commitment of the United States to peace, security, and prosperity in the South Caucasus. He expressed concern over recent tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and emphasized that military movements near un-demarcated borders are irresponsible and provocative. He welcomed the ongoing communication between the two sides and both leaders' commitment to resolving this issue peacefully. In addition, he underscored the need for the two countries to conduct formal discussions to demarcate their international border. Finally, he conveyed the commitment of the United States to achieving regional reconciliation through bilateral engagement and as a Minsk Group Co-Chair.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of Jake Sullivan's Bilateral Meeting with UK National Security Advisor Stephen Lovegrove
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 18, 2021 7:12 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2021

Readout of Jake Sullivan's Bilateral Meeting with UK National Security Advisor Stephen Lovegrove

Today, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met in Washington with Stephen Lovegrove, National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to exchange views on a range of shared global challenges as part of our ongoing bilateral consultations. Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Lovegrove agreed to continue coordinating on COVID-19, including global access to vaccines. They discussed Afghanistan, Russia, and Iran, as well as the situation in Gaza. In addition, they discussed President Biden's June trip to the United Kingdom to attend the G7 Summit and meet with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, which will provide an opportunity to reaffirm our strong alliance.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf of Pakistan
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 24, 2021 9:33 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf of Pakistan

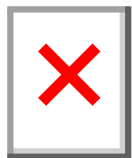
The National Security Advisors of the United States and Pakistan met in Geneva yesterday. Both sides discussed a range of bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest and discussed ways to advance practical cooperation. Both sides agreed to continue to the conversation.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Joint Statement on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 24, 2021 10:31 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2021

Joint Statement on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and the Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolay Patrushev held consultations on United States-Russia relations as part of regular Security Council contacts. The meeting was a logical continuation of the recent discussions held in Reykjavik between Secretary of State Blinken and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

The meeting was an important step in the preparation for a planned U.S.-Russia summit, the date and location of which will be announced later.

The discussions were held in a constructive manner and, despite outstanding differences, allowed for a better understanding of each other's positions.

A wide range of issues of mutual interest were discussed with a high priority given to the topic of strategic stability. The sides expressed confidence that mutually acceptable solutions could be found in a number of areas.

The sides agreed that a normalization of U.S.-Russian relations would be in the interest of both countries and contribute to global predictability and stability.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Foreign Minister Simon Coveney of Ireland
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 24, 2021 7:28 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Foreign Minister Simon Coveney of Ireland

Today, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Foreign Minister Simon Coveney of Ireland to discuss our strong bilateral relations and cooperation on a number of shared global challenges. Mr. Sullivan and Foreign Minister Coveney condemned the forced diversion of a flight between two EU member states and the subsequent removal and arrest of journalist Raman Pratasevich in Minsk by the Lukashenka regime, and they agreed to remain in close touch on an appropriate response. They also discussed Ireland's role in addressing challenges to peace and security as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Mr. Sullivan and Foreign Minister Coveney reaffirmed their commitment to protecting the gains of the Good Friday Agreement for all communities in Northern Ireland.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Democratic Opposition Leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 24, 2021 7:28 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Democratic Opposition Leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus

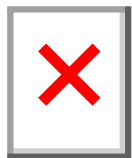
National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke today with democratic opposition leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus. Mr. Sullivan conveyed the United States' strong support for the demands of the Belarusian people for democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Mr. Sullivan praised the bravery and selfless sacrifice of democratic leaders like Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya, her husband, Syarhey, and the hundreds of other Belarusian democracy activists, independent journalists, and civil society leaders who languish in Belarusian jails as political prisoners of the Lukashenka regime. Mr. Sullivan strongly condemned the brazen and dangerous grounding of a Ryanair flight between two EU member states on May 23 and the subsequent removal and detention of journalist Raman Pratasevich. Mr. Sullivan cited the U.S. demand for the immediate release of Mr. Pratasevich and all political prisoners in Belarus, as well as the need for free and fair elections under OSCE observation to resolve the current crisis. Finally, Mr. Sullivan made clear that the United States, in coordination with the EU and other allies and partners, will hold the Lukashenka regime to account.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, May 24, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 25, 2021 8:35 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, May 24, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:05 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Welcome to a more full briefing room. “Double the fun” is what I’ve been -- (laughter) -- saying this morning. Good, you laughed. Thank you.

Okay, I have a couple of items for all of you at the top. I will say I have a hard out at one o’clock, but I’m going to try to get to as many people in here as humanly possible.

Today, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that they have awarded \$200 million from the American Rescue Plan to support services for survivors of domestic violence. As we all know, the pandemic and its economic impact significantly increased the risks of abuse for victims of domestic violence and made it much harder for them to seek safety and support.

This money will provide critical support through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act program. It will provide 296 supplemental grant awards that will be used to fund domestic violence services in every state and territory, as well as supplementary funding for Tribes, state domestic violence coalitions, national resource centers, Specialized Services for Abused Parents and Children grantees, and national domestic violence hotlines.

Also, on COVID, to start off today, I wanted to -- well, to second, I guess, today -- I wanted to give you a brief update on our whole-of-government wartime COVID-19 response. We have gone from 6 percent of U.S. adults with one shot on the day the President took office to more than 60 percent in just four months.

We're averaging about 24,000 cases per day, down from nearly 184,000 cases per day when we took office. And daily death rates have dropped nearly 85 percent since January 20th. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. We're still at war with the virus.

A couple of things that we've been able to implement: Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, we've been able to accelerate and improve our COVID-19 response. School districts across the country have been able to leverage the resources needed to safely reopen. Small- and medium-sized businesses are able to pay their employees for the time needed to take off work to get the shot and recover from it.

And billions of dollars have gone to states and local -- and local organizations doing the boots-on-the-ground outreach around vaccine confidence, which is, of course, a big focus for us at this point.

HHS is leading regular engagement with the local -- with the COVID Community Corps leaders to discuss best practices. And just a few minutes ago, we announced the President hosted a YouTube townhall with a range of influencers -- influencers with millions of followers, primarily young people who need to understand the benefits of getting vaccinated. So just another example of the ways we're trying to use all of our resources here.

Last things I would just note on this: We've also worked with a range of companies to -- and a range of companies have stepped up to ensure getting the vaccine is accessible to everyone. Big businesses from Target -- from Target to Tractor Supply have stepped up to ensure their employees have access for paid time off.

Companies are also leveraging creative -- creative ways to boost vaccination rates. United Airlines is offering rewards like free first-class flights and other sweepstakes to vaccinated travelers. And starting today, Uber and Lyft will be offering free rides to all Americans to vaccination sites until July 4th.

The last thing I just wanted to note is that, today, the President will be joined by Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young as he signs H.R. 1318, the Alaska Tourism Restoration Act. This law will allow large cruise ships to visit Alaska this year, a critical step toward returning to normal in a state where 1 in 10 jobs is in the tourism industry.

This bill is an example of critical -- the critical bipartisan work that can be done in Congress. And the President is grateful to Senator Murkowski and Congressman Young for their leadership in this area.

And for anyone who was here the first day we took a question from somebody remotely, this was exactly the question that he asked. So, here we are just a few weeks later.

With that, Darlene, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thank you. You didn't say when that bill signing is taking place. Is that today?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, this afternoon.

Q This afternoon. Okay. And then on infrastructure: Can you say what the White House is expecting next from Republicans after the White House dropped the price tag last week and following that very sharp statement from Senator Capito's office? What -- what are you expecting from Republicans on that front?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the ball is in the Republicans' court. We put forward a proposal on Friday that I detailed extensively here, and you all saw the details of that proposal in the written summary that we provided transparently to all of you. And our reasonable counterproposal cut \$550 billion from the President's original proposal, including to some areas that were core priorities -- continue to be core priorities to the President -- investing in infrastructure.

The last counteroffer that came from the Republicans came up -- just came up \$50 billion, so our concessions went 10

times as far as theirs.

So the ball is in their court; we are waiting their counterproposal. We would welcome that. We're eager to engage and even have them down here to the White House once we see that counterproposal.

Q Are you expecting the two sides to have more discussions this week, either here or up on the Hill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'll say we have remained closely in touch at a staff level and senior staff level here with members and with their teams over the course of the last several days. That will continue. And again, we look forward to seeing their proposal.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I want to -- big picture, as the country gets ready to mark the anniversary of George Floyd's death, if you will. After that -- that happened, the President called this a "wake-up call to the nation." Given where things are here in Washington with police reform, has anything actually changed since Mr. Floyd was killed as it relates to policing and Black and brown people in this country?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the President is still very much hopeful that he will be able to sign the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act into law. And we are, of course, very closely engaged with a range of -- with the negotiators while also leaving them room to work.

And just on Friday, the President spoke with Senator Booker. We've also seen that Senator Scott has publicly said that "The key for us is to keep making progress." And we're going to continue -- keep supporting those efforts.

You know, I would say it's hard for me to assess from here, community to community, where we have seen progress made. Certainly, the death of George Floyd -- the tragic death of George Floyd has unfortunately elevated into the public eye -- thanks to the reporting for many of you -- the need to put reforms into place, the need to rebuild trust and communities. And we're certainly hopeful that that activism, that engagement will help move this legislation across the finish line.

Q And then, a look back over the weekend and over the last year: This past weekend, there were more than a dozen mass shootings across this country, four thousand more people shot and killed by guns in 2020 compared to the year before. Is there a crime problem in this country?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say certainly there is a guns problem, and that's something the President would say. And there are communities where local violence and community violence is an issue, and that's one of the reasons that we have proposed and have -- now are implementing funding for community violence prevention programs across the country.

I will say that we don't often highlight -- and you just gave me the opportunity to -- the fact that between mass shootings -- mass shootings that get a lot of attention, that we lower the flags -- there are hundreds, thousands of people who lose their lives.

And that's one of the reasons the President will continue to advocate for the Senate passing back -- universal background checks, but also advocate for actions in states where we have seen the greatest level of activism over the past several years.

Q Does COVID have anything to do with the increase in numbers that we've seen in the last year?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of local community violence? It's -- it's an interesting question. I'd have to ask our team to check on that. I know, as I started off this briefing giving an update on -- that we've seen statistics on domestic violence.

And obviously we know that there are -- the loss of life at the hands of gun violence is often -- too often. Suicide can be

domestic violence, and we've seen statistics as it -- as it relates to the impact on mental health. But I'd have to check with experts on the assessment of that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Are U.S.-based airlines safe to fly over Belarus right now?

MS. PSAKI: Are U.S. airlines safe to fly over? There's not been an update, I don't believe, by our airline industry -- or by our -- those who monitor the airline industry in the government in terms of giving new assessments or new recommendations on that, and I'd certainly defer to them.

Q And then kind of following up on that: In terms of actions, is the U.S. working with NATO? What's the President's approach right now --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- in response to what occurred over the weekend?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, first, let me say the President was briefed. You know, he's been kept abreast, of course, but he was briefed this morning during his PDB by his national security team.

Our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, also raised our strong concerns on this issue -- the actions of the government of Belarus -- with the Secretary -- with his counterpart -- his Russian counterpart during their ~~phone call~~ [meeting] this morning, which we provided a readout of, and it was largely, of course, focused on moving the ball forward on getting to a meeting, but he also raised this issue.

We certainly -- since you gave me the opportunity to do this -- condemn the Lukashenko's regime's ongoing harassment and arbitrary detention of journalists simply for doing their job.

This was a shocking act: diverting a flight between two EU member states for the apparent purpose of arresting a journalist. It constitutes a brazen affront to international peace and security by the regime.

We demand an immediate, international, transparent, and credible -- credible investigation of this incident.

We are in touch with a range of partners bilaterally and through multilateral channels from NATO, the OSCE, U.N., EU, and others. And we have nothing to read out at this point, but we will continue to coordinate closely with them.

Q And just one more quick one since we're in kind of a critical week on infrastructure.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Does the President have a trigger -- has he identified like, "All right, this is -- if I see this, we're walking" or "If I see this, we're going to keep this going past Memorial Day"? Is that -- do you have that laid out, kind of, in black and white inside the White House right now?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we're eager to see their proposal and see what they have to offer. And I think it doesn't take anything more than simple math to know that if we came down by \$550 billion and they came up by \$50 billion, they have a ways more to go.

Go ahead.

Q President Putin and President Lukashenko are very close friends and allies. Does the events with the Ryanair and the

arrest of the journalist -- is that going to have an impact on the meeting? And are you prepared to announce a summit between the President and President Putin today? Or when do you expect to be able to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I will say that, as we provided in the ~~call~~ [meeting] readout, our National Security Advisor did ~~have a call~~ [meet] with his counterpart, and it was an important step in -- that ~~call~~ [meeting] was an important step in the preparation for a planned U.S.-Russia summit -- the date and location of which we re not ready to announce at this point yet, and we re still working on the details.

I will say that while our focus and the purpose of a meeting like this will be to move to a more stable and predictable relationship with Russia after several years where it has not been exactly that -- and we believe we can do that in a constructive manner -- it does not mean that we will hold back on areas where we have concern -- as you ve seen over the past several weeks, where we have simultaneously issued an invitation to have a meeting while also putting forward sanctions for actions that we find unacceptable.

And so, certainly, the fact that the national s- -- our National Security Advisor raised this issue is evidence of that, while also having a conversation about how we can move forward our planning on the summit.

Q On another subject, can you give us a sense of what the meeting with the George Floyd family will look like tomorrow --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- how many members and family will participate?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you expect that to open for coverage? What should we expect?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly can. So, tomorrow, the President is hosting members of the Floyd family here at the White House to mark the anniversary of his tragic killing. This is going to be a private meeting. And we certainly will also put out a statement from the President marking the anniversary -- a day that certainly impacted him personally and impacted millions of Americans.

But he wanted this meeting to be private in order to have a real conversation and preserve that with the family. He has a genuine relationship with them. And the courage and grace of this family -- and especially his daughter, Gianna -- has really stuck with the President, as you have seen him talk about, Kelly and others, many times over the past several months. So, he s eager to listen to their perspectives and hear what they have to say during this meeting.

In terms of the people who are attending, it is -- let s see: Gianna -- his daughter, of course -- will attend; Roxie Washington, ~~his~~ [Gianna's] mother; Bridgett Floyd, his sister; Philonise Floyd, his brother; his -- his brother s wife, Keeta Floyd; Rodney Floyd his other -- another brother; Terrence Floyd, another brother; and Brandon Williams, who is George Floyd s nephew. So, it will be a full family attending this meeting with the President tomorrow.

Q Obviously, there s a deadline associated that the President asked Congress that will not be met.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There s also been deadlines related to infrastructure with Memorial Day, wanting to see real progress. Is the President concerned that setting deadlines on some of these key priorities has not been enough of a catalyst to get action? Is that a sign of how he s approaching this not working or a sign of something else? I mean, these are key deadlines that you ve set, and some of them are not being met.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first I would say, on the American Jobs Plan, our timeline is really our own timeline, and that -- is that

we will be able to assess -- we will assess internally, as we go into Memorial Day weekend, where things stand, what the next steps are, and where we go from here. That can take a range of formats.

As it relates to the George Floyd Act, the President used the opportunity of his joint session address to elevate a piece of legislation. That is working its way through with bipartisan negotiations because he felt it was important to elevate it and important to put out a bold and ambitious agenda.

Now, it's clear -- by the negotiators and by the fact that tomorrow is the anniversary -- that's not the timeline that the passing of the bill will be on. But he is encouraged that there's ongoing progress and that there is a sense from the negotiators that there's a path forward. And he believes he can continue to press on that.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. On the origins of COVID: There's a new Wall Street Journal story that three researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology were hospitalized with symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 and common seasonal illness in November of 2019. That's something that is apparently known to U.S. intel officials. So why isn't President Biden pushing for more access, more information to get to the bottom of exactly what happened?

MS. PSAKI: We are, and we have repeatedly called for the WHO to -- to support an expert-driven evaluation of the pandemic's origins that is free from interference or politicization.

Now, there were phase one results that came through. We were not -- during that first phase of the investigation, there was not access to data, there was not information provided. And now we're hopeful that WHO can move into a more transparent, independent phase two investigation.

Q But with 589,920 dead Americans, at what point does President Biden say, "We don't want to wait for the WHO. We don't know what they're doing. This needs to be an American-led effort to get to the bottom of what happened"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, we need access to the underlying data and information in order to have that investigation, and --

Q Then why not -- but he talks all the time about how he's known President Xi for a long time, so why can't he just call --

MS. PSAKI: And -- and we need them --

Q -- and ask him for that information?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're misunderstanding how this process actually works. An international investigation led by the World Health Organization is something that we've actually been pressing for for several months. In coordination with a range of partners around the world, we need that data, we need that information from the Chinese government.

What we can't do, and what I would caution anyone doing, is leaping ahead of an actual international process. We don't have enough data and information to jump to a conclusion at this point in time.

Q But -- so is there any amount of casualties from COVID in this country that would make you want to not wait for an international effort and just do it as a U.S.-led --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I have to say, I think the family members of the loved ones whose lives have been lost and -- deserve accurate information -- data -- not the jumping to a conclusion without having the information necessary to conclude what the origins are. What we do share -- everyone in this country -- is a desire to know how this started, where it started, and prevent it from ever happening again. That's something we all share.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I want to ask you first about the negotiations that are going to be getting back underway in Vienna tomorrow over the Iran nuclear agreement. How would the White House assess the status of those talks? Doesn't seem like there's too much momentum toward an agreement. Would you agree that things are kind of grinding to something of a halt here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not going to predict an outcome before the fifth round -- I think, if I'm remembering the numbers specifically -- have even begun.

Look, the fact that they are starting a fifth round of negotiations, even as they are direct -- indirect, is a sign that we're continuing to plug along on the path to diplomacy. We continue to believe that's absolutely the right approach and the right steps as it relates to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

We know, because we have been through this journey before, that this is going to take some time, that there will be moments where it is challenging and hard and there are difficult conversations. And that is certainly playing out.

But the alternative would be not pursuing diplomatic negotiations and accepting that we won't have visibility or access to an understanding of Iran's capabilities like we have -- which is -- would be similar to the situation we've had over the last couple of years.

So we're going to keep -- we have the best diplomats on the ground. We're going to keep plugging away, working with our European partners, and seeing what we can achieve here.

Q And then just one more on infrastructure. In addition to the obstacles with Republicans, there is some resistance among Democrats too -- for example, raising the corporate tax rate to 28 percent. Some Democrats are really agitating to repeal those SALT exemptions on taxes.

So, can you lay out some steps the White House is going to take this week, perhaps, to get back in touch with those Democratic lawmakers to address their concerns? Because it seems now a deal might be made among Democrats and not necessarily with Republicans.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that we've had 500 -- about 500 engagements, if not more, at this point with members, their staffs, their teams over the past several months with -- on a range of issues, including the American Jobs Plan -- including Democrats.

So, I know we talk a lot in here about negotiations with Capito, but I don't want that to confuse the notion that we are talking with Democrats -- with Leader Schumer, with Speaker Pelosi, with committee chairs -- all the time about what their priorities are, what they'd like to see in a final package. And that's vitally important to these negotiations moving forward.

I will say that the President has been clear: He is quite open to a range of mechanisms for paying for these proposals, including lower -- raising the corporate tax rate to a lesser -- lesser percentage. It's all about how you pay for it -- right? -- so it's a numbers -- a matter of numbers.

We've just put up -- forward a proposal that lowers the cost of the overarching package by \$550 billion. That requires less money -- not a mathematician, but that is true. So there's opportunity there. What we have not seen from the Republicans is any proposal on how to pay for it that doesn't raise taxes on Americans making less than \$400,000 a year.

And as it relates to the SALT deduction: We've heard from members. We're open to having those conversations. That is not a revenue-raiser, as we know; that costs more money. So, that would require more ways to pay for it.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to ask you first about the negotiations that are going to be getting back underway in Vienna tomorrow over the Iran nuclear agreement. How would the White House assess the status of those talks? Doesn't seem like there's too much momentum toward an agreement. Would you agree that things are kind of grinding to something of a halt here?

Q But is there any specific engagements with those Democrats to read out that might be happening this week?

MS. PSAKI: I'm -- I'm happy to see if there's more that we can provide from our team. I will say that we're in constant touch with a range of Democrats, from the Problem Solvers Caucus to -- which I know are quite focused on the SALT deduction, or a number of their members are -- to leadership, to ~~ranking members~~ [chairs]. But we can see if we can get a summary for all of you. Sure.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Jen, just a couple follow-up questions. First, on Russia: Is it the White House's belief or assessment that Russia was involved in the Belarus decision on that plane?

MS. PSAKI: I wasn't trying to jump to that conclusion, only to convey that, as Kelly noted, there has been a close relationship. And so, as we're discussing ways we can engage to convey our point of view on the actions by the government of Belarus, that we're going to do that through many channels. Our ambassador in Belarus has also conveyed that directly.

Q Okay. A follow-up on the China/Wuhan question: Can you just give us a sense of the White House's view of that report that the Wall Street Journal cited? Is it accurate? And is -- do you have any concerns that it may have been politicized?

MS. PSAKI: I would say, in terms of the report, which was specifically about individuals being hospitalized, we have no means of confirming that or denying that. I mean, it's not a report from the United States.

What I was conveying in response to Peter's question is that it doesn't mean we can draw a conclusion. We don't have enough information to draw a conclusion about the origins. There is a need to look into a range of options. We need data, we need an independent investigation, and that's exactly what we've been calling for.

Q I think the journal cited a U.S. intelligence report, so that would have been a U.S. report.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any -- I don't have anything more on a U.S. intelligence report from here.

Q Okay. And just lastly then on the issue of infrastructure: You've cited the fact that you've brought -- you've cut the proposal by \$550 [billion].

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But a lot of that is going into other bills. So, is it really a cut if you're planning on putting that money elsewhere in other legislation?

MS. PSAKI: Some of it is; not all of it is. And we've certainly come down from our proposals, and there's also bipartisan support for a number of those proposals to move them forward.

So, at the end of the day though, we have put forward a proposal. We've put forward a way to pay for it. We have come down from our original proposal a great deal. And we look forward to Republicans putting forward their own counterproposal so we can continue to negotiate.

Go ahead, Weijia.

Q Thanks, Jen. So on the COVID report: Are you saying that the administration did not learn about these three researchers seeking hospital care until the Wall Street Journal reported it?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more on that for you.

Q Okay. On the Belarus plane: Does the President consider the forced diversion a hijacking or not?

Q Okay. On the Belarus plane: Does the President consider the forced diversion a hijacking or not?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a new definition of what happened here, other than to convey that it was -- obviously, we're outraged, as the international community has expressed and we have expressed as well. And we think this was a brazen affront to international peace and security by the regime.

At this point, we're not legally ready to change any of the existing language regarding the terms "hijacking" and "sanctions." Obviously, there are processes to consider that.

Q Thank you. And does the President plan to speak with President Lukashenko about this or has he already?

MS. PSAKI: He has not spoken with him to date. I don't have any calls to preview. Our ambassador has spoken with him directly -- or spoken with the leader -- the government directly, I should say, for clarification.

Q Got it. And just one more question: On Friday, President Biden said he would not allow the Justice Department to seize the records of reporters. Has he communicated that to Attorney General Garland? And if so, how did he communicate that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any private conversations to read out for you between the President and his attorney general.

What I can convey is that the President spoke clearly that he won't allow the abuse of power to intimidate journalists and he is alarmed by the reports of numerous abuses of power regarding the previous -- how the previous administration used the powers of the Department of Justice, and thought it was right to speak out.

I don't have further specifics beyond that.

Q But without revealing any private conversations, is the Justice Department aware that they are not to seize the records of reporters?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think the President was -- always believes that we should always be refining and improving our approaches. The President made those comments quite publicly, so everyone, I think, is aware.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Go ahead, Mike.

Q Okay. (Coughs.) Excuse me. Thank you, Jen. Two quick foreign policy questions.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q One on Israel.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q Obviously, the ceasefire seems to be, you know, holding for now, but there's challenges ahead, obviously, for the President, who is under pressure -- I think renewed pressure, even today, from the left -- to do more for Palestinians and to do more to protect and enhance the quality of life for them.

On the other hand, you've got his pledge to -- to essentially rebuild Gaza, which -- you know, which is a difficult proposition at best when Hamas is in control of Gaza.

at best when Hamas is in control of Gaza.

So how does he see walking that line going forward -- you know, and maybe in the context of sending Blinken to the region as well?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, as we announced this morning, the President asked Secretary Blinken to travel to the region to meet with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, also with leaders -- additional leaders in the region to accomplish a couple things or to discuss a couple of things.

One is creating sustainable conditions for a ceasefire. Yes, it is holding. We're continuing to watch it. But there's a recognition we need to continue to discuss and have conversations with our key partners in the region, who played an instrumental role in getting to the point we reached last Thursday, and also to discuss the path forward on rebuilding Gaza.

And as you noted, Mike, we know that won't be easy, in part because we want to prevent funding from going to Hamas. We obviously don't communicate directly with Hamas, given they're a terrorist organization; a number of countries in the region do.

And so the Secretary's trip over the next couple of days will be focused on those objectives. And I'm certain he'll have the opportunity to provide a readout to the President when he returns.

Q Thanks.

And then, on Russia: There was a part of the statement this morning which mentioned "strategic stability" in the interests of -- that the United States has in working with Russia towards "strategic stability," which usually seems -- usually refers to, sort of, nuclear cooperation and -- and the limiting of potential problems that could emerge from the spread of nuclear technology.

So is the -- is that -- should we see that as a signal of something that the President particularly wants to talk to President Putin about? And, you know, is that also a signal that maybe you're pretty optimistic that this summit is actually going to happen in a matter of weeks because you're already at that stage where you're talking about that kind of -- that level of agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we -- we specifically put in the readout that the -- the discussion "was an important step in the preparation for a planned U.S.-Russia summit," because we feel we are continuing to make progress toward that, even if we're not at the point where it's final and prepared to announce.

In terms of cooperation on nuclear capabilities and threats, I will note that this is one of the areas -- even with the heightened level of tension with Russia over the past several years -- where, when the President came into office, one of the first items on our agenda was extending the START treaty for five years. And obviously, now we have five years from now for that, but also they're an important partner as it relates to the Iran nuclear negotiations -- that were asked about earlier -- because they are a member of the P5+1.

So while we're not quite at the point of conveying what the breakdown would be of a potential summit that's not yet confirmed, I would say that -- that discussion and continued cooperation on nuclear stability would, I suspect, be a part of the agenda.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Staying on foreign policy, a couple questions on Venezuela.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Would the administration be willing to ease sanctions on Nicolás Maduro as a gesture of its willingness to engage and

Q Would the administration be willing to ease sanctions on Nicolas Maduro as a gesture of its willingness to engage and to facilitate talks with Juan Guaidó?

MS. PSAKI: I've not been given any indication that's in the works. But obviously, we continue to consider a range of steps with, you know, our global relationships around the world, including Venezuela.

Q Do you have -- does the administration have any reason to believe that Maduro was serious about negotiating his own exit?

MS. PSAKI: I really don't have an assessment of that. I'm happy to talk to our team that oversees -- that handles Venezuela and see if there's anything more we can convey.

Q And is the President personally involved in this policy portfolio? What is his involvement? And does he see a window of opportunity in negotiations?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President is briefed regularly on a range of our global engagements. And obviously, we have a talented team that manages relationships in the Western Hemisphere both here and at the State Department.

I don't have an assessment from the President at this point in time. He takes recommendations and considers them from his national security team.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. What's the President's view on the January 6th commission standoff? Does he share the thinking of some who say -- comparing the day to 9/11 and that it should be treated as such, with that kind of seriousness?

And if he does, would he -- would he -- would he take some steps himself, like address the nation or really get involved himself, if the Republicans don't go along with it and there is no bipartisan commission?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not quite there yet. There are ongoing discussions and negotiations. The President believes the attack on the Capitol on January 6th was an unprecedented assault on our democracy. He's repeatedly conveyed that to the American public and spoken -- and said that in public addresses.

He doesn't feel this is a political issue. This is really a question of how we secure our democracy and the rule of law.

We saw 35 Republicans support -- join Democrats in supporting a commission moving forward; we're talking about action in the Senate. And, certainly, we are going to continue to encourage Republican members to do the right thing, but ultimately, it's up to them.

Q But would he get involved if they -- if they dropped the ball, in his view?

MS. PSAKI: We're not there yet. We're here every day. So we'll have a discussion if that's the point we're at.

Go ahead.

Q On -- if the infrastructure bill doesn't get any bipartisan support, is the White House concerned at all about it impacting other areas you're seeking compromise -- police reform being one of those areas?

And I ask because Mitch McConnell said a couple of weeks ago, "100 percent of our focus is on stopping [the] new administration." So it doesn't seem like they're going to be coming to the table in any real way on a lot of these issues at this point.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, on police reform: There are ongoing negotiations that both Senator Booker, Senator

... from, they've made it, on those occasions where the ongoing negotiations that both Senator Scott, Senator Scott, and Congresswoman Bass have all conveyed are making progress, and they're encouraged by the tone and tenor of those conversations. That's a good sign.

I talked earlier about how the President is going to be signing a bipartisan piece of legislation into law later this afternoon; Senator Murkowski and Senator Young will be here.

There are a range of opportunities to work together in a bipartisan way, including on the Frontiers Act that has since been renamed, but you know the one I'm talking about.

So, look, I would say that our view is that investing in our nation's infrastructure, preparing our workforce to be more competitive in the global community to compete with China is something where there should be bipartisan support. We've put forward a good-faith proposal. It's -- now the ball is in their court.

But as it relates to your question about Senator McConnell and what impact his agenda will have, you know, our view is that it's really a test for Republican senators. Do they want to find common ground? Do they want to engage with the President about moving an agenda forward for the American people? Or are they going to take all of their direction from leadership?

And we see there's opportunity to move forward in a bipartisan manner, even with those comments made by Senator McConnell.

Q And just quickly, back to gun control: Where are the talks on gun control? And, more importantly, has the President talked to Senator Toomey or any of those other Republicans that have talked about background checks legislation, for example?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has had a range of conversations with members over the past several months and, obviously, putting in place commonsense gun safety measures is something that has been a priority for him throughout his career. He helped pass the Brady Bill, he helped get background checks in place, he helped get the Assault Weapons Ban passed, and he will continue to encourage and push that with members while he is President. Top of his agenda.

In terms of the status of the legislation, I would point you to leadership in the Hou- -- in the Senate to have a discussion about that.

Go ahead.

Q Most of California is already in a drought emergency. There's fears that wildfire season will be earlier and longer and worse than ever this year. You're -- obviously, we're about to head to FEMA for a --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- hurricane outlook briefing. You've announced some money, but what is the administration doing right now that could have an impact in this current drought and looking ahead to this year's wildfires?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's a -- it's a great question, and I'd love to get you a more detailed answer than I'm going to have in front of me in this moment.

I will say that there have been internal briefings -- through the interagency, through Cabinet-level inter- -- interagency meetings and discussions about how to address not just hurricane season, but also the approaching season -- wildfire season.

In terms of exact funding and money, I would have to check with them.

Let me just note, if I may, that in advance of the President's visit to FEMA, we are announcing, as you may have seen, 1 billion -- we will direct \$1 billion for communities, states, and Tribal governments into pre-disaster mitigation resources to prepare for extreme weather events and other disasters.

And we certainly know that part of this effort is preparing communities for hurricanes, but also for pending fire -- forest fires that we know have impacted many parts of California. We know where they may impact. And our effort now, internally, is to get ahead of that and work -- use every lever we have in government, in coordination with local and state authorities, to make sure we're as prepared as we possibly can be.

But we will -- we will see if there's more specifics we can get you as well.

Go ahead.

Q Yes. On the Alaska Tourism Restoration Act, one of the things that environmental groups, like Friends of the Earth, have said is that the coronavirus-induced pause in big-ship cruising has given the government an opportunity to kind of reconsider the environmental impact of cruises and modify the regulations. Is that something that the administration is considering?

MS. PSAKI: I would say the Department of Transportation would oversee any new regulations or recommendations for that as it relates to the cruise industry. So the legislation, as you know, is a positive in our view because it helps reinvigorate an industry that accounts for a great number of jobs in Alaska and jobs that have been on hold for the past year, plus.

Q Well, maybe more broadly then: Is the human impact of the environment something that has been revealed by this pandemic something that the administration takes into account when it's focusing on the "Better" part of "Building Back Better"?

MS. PSAKI: The human impact in general? In the --

Q On the environment, yes.

MS. PSAKI: Of the cruise industry?

Q No, no, just in general across the board. I think we've seen evidence that the environment has flourished at times because of the decrease in industries. That's something that, when you're thinking about "Building Back Better," is worth taking into account.

MS. PSAKI: Sure, I mean, I think if you look at the American Jobs Plan and proposals the President has put forward, including his ambitious goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, our view is that clean energy jobs -- investing in clean energy jobs, which can help the environment, help ensure that we are protecting our Earth for our kids and our -- and our grandchildren can be done simultaneously while creating jobs.

So I think that initiative or that viewpoint is central to how the President sees his agenda. And certainly, we've seen interesting data -- I think that you're alluding to -- over the past year, as we've seen a slowdown in some industries, but our objective is ensuring that we are investing in a sustainable way to ensure that we can create a system that's creating millions of jobs while also, you know, protecting our environment over the long term.

Q And one other thing on cruises. One of the reasons why they've been able to restart cruises from Washington to Alaska is because these cruise lines are testing people -- asking for the vaccination proof from the guests on these cruises. That's something that state law in Alaska and Washington allow them to do, to abide by the CDC guidelines.

Florida isn't doing that. Florida has passed a law that prohibits vaccine passports. Does the administration have a view on

these kinds of laws and the impact that they might be having on the cruise -- the cruise industry in Florida?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- we don't. I will say that we are not instituting vaccine passports from a federal level. We certainly understand that industries will make their own decisions about how to continue their -- the work they need to do.

Go ahead.

Q Just a point of clarification, I guess, on the infrastructure. So if Memorial Day comes and goes --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and the White House is not any more satisfied than you are right now with the Republican offer, is that the point in which the President asks Senate leadership -- Democratic leadership to begin reconciliation?

MS. PSAKI: We're not quite there. We talk -- we're obviously in touch and working with Senator Capito and a range -- a number of Senate leaders, committee chair -- committee ranking members who she brought to the table. We're looking forward to hearing a counterproposal from them.

We also, as any White House does, continue to talk -- well, maybe I shouldn't say "any White House" -- our White House does -- continue to talk with a range of members. The senator -- the President is looking forward to seeing Senator Murkowski later this afternoon and Congressman Young. And we'll continue to look for ways to move forward in a bipartisan manner. We're not quite there. We'll do this every day, see where we go this week.

Q And one -- one more point of clarification, if I may, on the Belarus -- the Ryanair plane: Is part of this trying to get a sense of sort of how you classify what Belarus did to -- before you, sort of, figure out what sort of approach, what sort of consequence may follow?

MS. PSAKI: There certainly is a process I mentioned in response to Weijia's question about classifying -- right? -- what it looks like from our standpoint. I'll also say that an important part of our effort is to coordinate closely with our partners around the world. And so we've been in touch with them over the last period of time, and will continue to be as we assess next steps.

Go ahead.

Q On the mitigation funds for FEMA for wildfires --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- of about \$1.7 billion. On those monies, do they come from any -- does that take away from any of the things that have been done with vaccination efforts -- using FEMA money?

MS. PSAKI: I do not believe so. Let's see. I can -- I can get back to you, though, on more specifics about where the funding comes from. But there are -- you know, obviously, we, like any administration, prepare for managing and planning ahead for hurricane season. So it's a reflection of that.

Q And one final thing on gun control?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q They've had a hard time in the Senate moving through with the bi- -- the background bills. With the legislative calendar so packed, do you expect anything before the August recess? Or is there -- if it goes into next year, with an election year, it's pretty dim. So what kind of push is the White House planning to make on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I will say that the President believes that we need to continue to press for progress on gun safety measures. And the fact is the two pieces of legislation that are moving -- have moved through the House -- are for universal background checks. That's something that's supported by more than 80 percent of the country. And so, it shouldn't be a political issue. I know it is; we recognize it is.

But the President will continue to press for those legislation -- pieces of legislation moving forward.

He also believes that there's an opportunity for activism and progress in states, as we've seen on a number of initiatives, whether it's red flag laws -- and he took some steps to provide guidance, through DOJ, for states to put in place red flag laws -- or additional background check legislation in states. So there's a number of levers that can be pushed.

You know, he -- his position on gun safety measures is clear. There has -- there's decades of evidence for it. And he will continue to press Congress to move forward.

Go ahead.

Q Yet another infrastructure negotiations question for you.

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q You and other members of the administration have focused a lot on the \$550 billion you've taken off your offer, but a lot of the Senate Republicans over the past weekend said the bigger problem is not necessarily the dollar figure, but more -- yet again, the broad definition of infrastructure and just massive disagreement there. Do you agree with that characterization of where talks are right now?

MS. PSAKI: I think that's a little perplexing. I mean we're calling it the "American Jobs Plan." Right? It creates millions of jobs. And I'm not sure why it wouldn't be infrastructure to rebuild and replace lead pipes around the country, which also has the benefit of ensuring kids have access to clean drinking water.

There are a lot of areas of this bill that are maybe not in the traditional sense, but guess what? It's 2021, and we need to modernize what we think about infrastructure, what we mean by it. And at the end of the day, what we're just trying to do is create millions of jobs. And we're hopeful the Republicans will put forward a proposal -- come -- come meet us somewhere in the middle -- a counterproposal that can help accomplish the same thing.

Q But that hope aside, have you seen any movement in getting to the same page of how one defines "infrastructure," over the past few weeks?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we kind of refute that as the basis of discussion here. At the end of the day, we -- what we proposed is the American Jobs Plan that would invest in, yes, our nation's infrastructure -- modernize it, create millions of jobs, make us more competitive, put people back to work -- and that's what we're having a discussion about.

And we welcome a counteroffer from the Republicans; the ball is in their court.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thanks Jen. I have a couple questions on TPS. It was just granted to 100,000 Haitians --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and just announced for Burma. There's hundreds of thousands of Hondurans who were affected by Hurricanes Eta and Iota, and they're also waiting for TPS.

And then also along that line, on October 4 -- 4th, hundreds of thousands Central Americans are losing that protection. Is the President aware of that deadline? And is he willing to guarantee to all these hundreds of thousands of people that have made their lives here in the U.S. that they will be protected if Congress doesn't do what -- or pass the protection for them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me note that, over the weekend, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Mayorkas, announced a new 18-month designation of Haiti for temporary protection -- protected status. And as you noted, there are about 100,000 Haitians who could be eligible for that.

In terms of assessing or making recommendations on TPS status, that would really be something that would be done by the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department. Certainly, the President is aware -- and certainly aware of the plight of many people across the -- across the world, Hondurans and others, who have been impacted by hurricanes, other natural disasters, and other reasons why they certainly would be requesting this status. But I don't have anything to predict for you or preview for you about additional countries being granted status.

Q And on the ones that are losing it on October 4th -- the people that already have the TPS, it's expiring October 4th -- hundreds of thousands. There were families -- 30 people that were just marching in front of the White House.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. And we're certainly aware of that. And October 4th is several months away from now, but it would be, again, a recommendation -- a decision made by the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department.

Q And the last thing that I have is -- there was a meeting here at the White House with members of the Hispanic Caucus. And when they came out, they said that the President guaranteed that he would be able to pass immigration protections for farmworkers, TPS holders, and DREAMers through reconciliation if nothing happens before that. When is -- when -- is there a deadline on that? Is there a time where patience just -- patience runs out, as we were talking about with infrastructure and Jobs Plan, and the White House just decides to go alone?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know that meeting was a couple of weeks ago, I guess -- several weeks ago, and we've spoken to it since then. That -- that sounds like it was a bit of a garble of what the President actually conveyed, because the President doesn't feel that reconciliation is the preferred path forward for moving these -- these areas -- priority areas of immigration forward.

He did talk about, in his joint address, the fact that -- where there is agreement, which there is great agreement on DREAMers and even agreement on farmworkers -- on moving this forward. We should move things forward in a bipartisan manner, and we'll continue to press for that.

Q And last question: Is the Vice President planning on going to the border? I know she's handling this. Why hasn't she been there? Is she planning, in the future, to go and see what's going on firsthand?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Vice President is overseeing exactly the same portfolio that the President did when he was Vice President, which is North -- the Northern Triangle, and engagement with countries in the region about how we can work together to reduce the rate of migration and work together to address corruption, address the root causes of why so many people are traveling to our border.

I expect she will make a trip to the Northern Triangle at some point soon. So that would be where she would travel, given her purview.

Go ahead.

Q On infrastructure, is the budget proposal that's coming Friday going to incorporate the original infrastructure plan into it or this revised smaller one? Or can you tell us anything about how you work infrastructure into the budget on Friday?

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, the American Jobs Plan will be a part of the budget proposal that we put forward on Friday, but we'll -- I'm not going to get further ahead of what that will look like. You'll have to tune in on Friday. Come back.

Q Can you tell us if this Washington Post story on Friday that said this budget is not going to include the public option or a plan to reduce prescription drug prices -- is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the budget will -- the budget language and the budget documents will certainly talk about the President's priorities, which include lowering the cost of prescription drugs and putting forward -- moving forward on a public option.

But this budget proposal is about -- a proposal for the next -- which will encompass a number of his proposals he has already put to date. But, certainly, in the -- in the budget documents we put forward, it will highlight and emphasize his priorities as President.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. The SALT deduction mostly benefits wealthy people; studies have shown that. Given the concerns about income inequality in this country, concerns about deficit spending, does President Biden support doing away with the SALT deduction as opposed to just lifting the cap, which some Democrats want to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think, Peter, as you know, it requires money, and the President did not put it in his original proposal because he felt there were other areas that warranted his support and would help benefit a larger swath of the American public.

But we also know that there are a number of Democrats who -- and others; Republicans too, of course -- who support different iterations of this, I think it's fair to say, and he's open to hearing from them and to discussing with them.

But as we're in the midst of negotiations, it would require paying for -- for these proposals and -- and that -- that is not a revenue-raiser.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. The White House hosted President Moon of South Korea last Friday. It was one of the first indoor large gatherings involving foreign visitors. So he already got vaccinated -- fully vaccinated with two doses of AstraZeneca vaccine. Is there a list of vaccines that the White House accepts as proof of vaccination? Because AstraZeneca is not approved by the FDA yet.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have anything to read out for you in terms of specific requirements of attendees. That's not something we're requiring here, as I think I read out on Friday, for attendees for events. We had an event last week where we signed into law the COVID Hate Crimes legislation.

Obviously, people who are attending events at the White House would be tested -- that's part of the requirement -- but I don't think I have anything more for you on that.

Q And the CDC already have guidelines for -- people who are in the United States who are fully vaccinated can travel pretty freely. What about international travelers? Will there be any, like, same rule applied to international travelers?

MS. PSAKI: We continue to review -- our health and medical experts continue to review the data, and we would certainly refer to them on when they feel safe to ease those restrictions. And we certainly understand the desire of many people around the world to come here and many people here to go travel around the world.

Go ahead.

Q If I can just go back to Belarus -- what does the President view as the most concerning action taken by President Lukashenko? Is it arresting Mr. Protasevich on trumped-up charges, or is it diverting the plane to land it and then to arrest him?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, I think they're both outrageous and concerning.

Q So if the U.S. believed the charges against Protasevich were legitimate -- as it did with Edward Snowden in 2013 when the Bolivian President's plane was forced to make an emergency landing in Vienna because we thought Snowden might be aboard -- would the U.S. still object to the method used?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think I've given an extensive comment on this specifically. We're working with our partners around the world. I don't think I have anything more for you.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have a couple of questions, one on the southern border and another one on Colombia.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Are this administration using Title 42 to expel asylum seekers based on public health concerns? The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has called this government to swiftly end Title 42. Is that the intention? And is there a timeframe that you're working on, specifically now that the country is rapidly opening up?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are still at war with the virus. Yes, there has been progress made, but we are still in the midst of a public health crisis. So, at this point, we are still implementing Title 42 and we have not changed our policy on that.

Q There's no timeframe?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any timeframe for you.

Q And, if I may --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- is President Biden concerned that the U.S. might be violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by not accepting new asylum requests?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of from where?

Q Since the Declaration of --

MS. PSAKI: Because of Title 42?

Q No, because the U.S. is not accepting asylum requests at the moment.

MS. PSAKI: Well, our objective is absolutely to get our asylum reprocessing -- processing system back up and running. It was broken. It was not working for several years. And it's going to take some time, but we -- that is our objective and something that is a priority for the President.

Go --

Q And, if I may, on Colombia.

MS. PSAKI: Go --

Q One last question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Thank you, Jen. Dozens of people have lost their lives in the ongoing protests and social unrest that has started in Colombia a month ago. Ten days ago, actually, 55 members of Congress, led by Representative Jim McGovern, signed a letter to Secretary Blinken urging the U.S. government to, quote, "clearly and unambiguously" denounce police brutality in Colombia. Is the White House -- that means you, I guess -- ready to do so from this lectern?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I will say we welcome announcements by the Colombian government to investigate allegations of excessive use of force by police. The Colombian government, as you know, has activated a special urgent search unit to investigate reports of missing persons, with 35 search teams deployed nationwide to follow reports received through their 24-hour hotlines.

We encourage the authorities to continue to work to locate all missing persons as quickly as possible, and we certainly encourage those actions.

Go ahead.

Q Back to Gaza, Secretary Blinken has made clear now is not the time to be bringing up the two-state solution. While the U.S. has the ear of both sides at the moment, the world has watched 11 days of fighting and awful death toll. When is the right time to bring up a two-state solution?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I'll say that the President, the Secretary of State all believe that the only way to bring a lasting end to the violence in the region is for there to be a two-state solution between the parties. It is going to require these parties coming together and agreeing that this is a path they want to pursue -- negotiations they want to pursue and an outcome that they're open to discussing.

What the Secretary is there primarily on this trip is to focus on immediate issues right now at hand, which is ensuring that we are creating conditions with our partners in the region for a sustained ceasefire and also discussing the path forward on rebuilding Gaza -- something that there's a great deal of interest and support in the international community on and there are great needs on the ground.

So that's the focus at this point in time, but we continue to support, of course, a two-state solution -- or any negotiations for a two-state solution. It's something we've raised already, even prior to the conflict of the last two weeks, with the Israelis and other partners on the ground.

Q And, if I may, what more can you tell us about the President's health regime? We hear he's lifting weights. What sort of weights is he lifting? Does he have a personal trainer? And what happened to his Peloton bike? (Laughter.) Did he bring it to the White House?

MS. PSAKI: I didn't know where this was going, but I'm intrigued by it. I -- I will say I have nothing to read out on the President's private exercise regime. But I can tell you, having traveled with him a fair amount, sometimes he's hard to keep up with.

Q Do you have a schedule on his physical exam?

MS. PSAKI: I know you've asked about this before. And it is something we will be doing, of course, this year and providing

transparent information to all of you on. I will see if there's anything more specific I can get to all of you.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q And was he briefed on the specifics of the COVID vaccine and the incidence of myocard- -- myocarditis in some young people? Has that been a part of his portfolio?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he is aware of that. And obviously, as you know, Kelly, our health and medical experts still continue to convey that it is the right step for 12- to 15-year-olds to get vaccinated, that these are limited cases, and that obviously the risks of -- of contracting COVID are certainly significant, even for people of that age.

Thanks, everyone, so much.

Q What about the cat, Jen? (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: We're -- we're waiting for a really tough news day for the cat. So I've now let you in on my secret. (Laughter.)

1:00 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 26, 2021 12:55 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 26, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib. Mr. Sullivan emphasized that the United States will remain deeply engaged with the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people, as U.S. troops depart the country. He and Dr. Mohib reaffirmed the enduring strength of the bilateral partnership and committed to continue to consult closely. Mr. Sullivan outlined U.S. plans to continue security assistance to Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, as well as civilian assistance to help the Afghan people. The National Security Advisors agreed on the importance of the two governments continuing to work closely together in support of common objectives, including a negotiated political settlement that ends the war in Afghanistan. Mr. Sullivan underscored that the United States will stand firmly with the Afghan people as they seek to achieve a durable and inclusive peace.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Sayyid Munthir of the Omani Royal Office
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 26, 2021 10:04 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 26, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Sayyid Munthir of the Omani Royal Office

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Sayyid Munthir of the Omani Royal Office to discuss Oman's unceasing diplomatic efforts to advance a ceasefire in Yemen. They also discussed regional security developments and the longstanding friendship between Oman and the United States. The United States applauds Oman's critical peacebuilding role in Yemen under Sulthan Haytham's leadership.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki Aboard Air Force One En Route Cleveland, OH
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 27, 2021 4:48 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2021

Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Cleveland, OH

12:39 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Sorry. Thanks for your patience -- a little business happening on the early part of the flight.

Okay, welcome to our trip to Cleveland. Today, the President will deliver a speech on the economy where he will make a clear case that his economic plan is working. And he'll discuss the economic inflection point we stand at and the opportunity before us.

His remarks will be, as you all know, at Cuyahogic [sic] Community -- Cuyahoga Community College -- or "Tri-C," as it is called locally -- the site of the last rally he was scheduled to hold as a candidate in March of 2020 before the pandemic shut down our country. There, he'll note the remarkable progress we've made in defeating COVID-19.

During his speech, he will make the case that his economic -- I already conveyed that.

Today's positive GDP report is the latest proof that his policies are healing the economy and getting Americans back to work. We're creating an average of 500,000 jobs a month, eight times more than before President Biden took office. And unemployment -- and unemployment insurance claims -- out this morning -- hit their lowest level since March of 2020.

The four-week moving average of unemployment insurance claims has dropped by nearly 50 percent since the President took office. And these weekly numbers can be volatile -- as we know, and we all discuss -- but we're encouraged by the fact

that the four-week average continues to trend down.

In his remarks, he will also make a forceful case that higher wages are good for American workers and good for our economy. He'll argue that we need to make our tax code work -- work -- ensure our tax code favors work not wealth so big corporations are incentivized to invest in America, not on stock buybacks or CEO pay.

And he'll talk about the need to make generational investments in our economy -- through the Jobs Plan and the Families Plan -- and advanced manufacturing; two years of community college; roads, bridges, broadband, and a host of other areas that will create good-paying jobs and help us outcompete the world.

With that, kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. The President spoke briefly on the tarmac about the Republican counteroffer on infrastructure. I was hoping you could give a little bit more on that. And to confirm that he's going to be with Senator Capito next week, if you could confirm that. And then, also, will he be meeting with the other group -- this bipartisan group -- that includes Senator Romney?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Did a -- did the statement that was out in my name come out before you took off?

Q Yes. Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I just wanted to absolutely make sure of that.

So, as the President conveyed, and as it was conveyed in my statement earlier today, we are certainly encouraged to see Senator Capito's group come forward with the kind of funding level -- nearly \$1 trillion -- that they discussed with the President.

This is a negotiation, so the discussions will be ongoing. And, as he noted on the tarmac, and as you've seen in many -- some of your reporting, there are a number of Republicans who've come forward with ideas who we are open to discussing and continuing to engage with.

In terms of the schedule for next week, it's not quite set yet. We're working around, of course, the President is going to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and other components of his week. But he will be closely engaged with Senator Capito's group and with other groups as they have ideas come forward.

Q And obviously, Memorial Day is Monday, so that deadline is going to come and go. How much longer is the White House willing to go for these talks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I'll say that the Memorial Day timeline was always an opportunity for us to make an assessment of what the path forward looked like. And now, we're looking -- we're heading into Memorial Day weekend. We have a counteroffer on the table where the number came up significantly from the prior offer, where there was an increase in proposed funding in roads, rails, and bridges.

There are some areas that we would like to see more funding in that we think are essential to the American workforce. So this is a discussion and negotiation.

As we look ahead, we think -- we look at next week, we know it's Memorial Day week; it's going to be a work week for us. It's going to be a week where we continue to be engaged with a range of members of Congress. And we look forward to making progress before Congress resumes on June 7th.

Q Last one. COVID relief -- the COVID relief funds, is that a nonstarter using those? Is that a nonstarter?

MS. PSAKI: The -- well, here's the -- here is the reason why that would be difficult to be a key funding mechanism: 95 percent of it is already allocated. Five percent of it would go towards some key areas, including boosting up small businesses, restaurants; rebuilding veterans' hospitals -- something that is of personal importance to the President. We think there are better ways to pay for it, and we think people should have a full understanding of what that is proposing.

Q You are saying 95 percent of the Rescue Plan is allocated already?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Right. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: The COVID funds, which, I think, is the same synonym.

Q Right. Right. And can I --

Q Is there a red line about the care economy? You've made a big deal about including funding for human infrastructure; the Republicans don't include that at all in their proposal. So is that a red line for the President? Does that have to be in there, or is there some other way to get that funding through?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not -- I'm not here to set new red lines. What I will -- his only red line is inaction, but he -- that has been included in our counterproposal back, even as we came down \$550 billion last week. That shows how much of a priority it is to the President.

This is an ongoing negotiation. We'll continue to have discussions about how to move it forward. There are a range of mechanisms to move ideas forward in Congress, and we're open to that as well.

Q Do you have a particular day where you want to make a call about, you know, giving up on the hope of a bipartisan deal or, you know, wanting to get to one by a particular day? Is there a go/no-go date on the calendar?

MS. PSAKI: Why would we do that now? We have a counterproposal and a range of others who want to have a discussion.

Q I'm not saying now. But, like, is it two weeks from now? Is it six weeks from now?

MS. PSAKI: I think we -- our focus is on continuing to work on having these discussions and negotiations through the course of next week. Again, it will be active; it will be engaged. We will be working hard. We'll be in touch with Republicans and Democrats through the course of the recess week. And we'll look forward to, when they resume, seeing what our path forward looks like.

Q But at least Senator Toomey had asked also for an accounting of how the funds -- the American Rescue Plan funds -- have been spent already. Is that something you can or will provide to Capitol Hill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has been clear to his team that we should be engaged and be responsive to any follow-up questions members and their teams have. And I'm certain that will be applicable here.

Q To the timing -- can we go back to the timing, just to clarify one thing? So, next week is the recess week; the meetings will go on. You mentioned, I think, in your statement June 7th week, which is the following week, as, sort of, a week that the Congress is back to do some work.

So, is that -- should we look for some kind of ending point at that point -- that week, at the end of that week? Is there a point that you all are talking about?

MS. PSAKI: It's ended when the President signs the legislation into law.

Q Well, today, he said to us on the tarmac "very soon" -- I think was his phrase. So I was trying to figure out what that meant -- that he was wanting to get something done very soon.

MS. PSAKI: He said "the summer." That's very soon.

Q Can I ask a foreign policy question? So Secretary Blinken just wrapped up a trip to Egypt where he met with President Sisi -- talking about Israel and Palestinian conflict, but also the Nile Dam. Was the Nile Dam a negotiation tactic or a bargaining chip to secure Egypt's support for the Gaza truce?

MS. PSAKI: It sounds like a question for the State Department given it was the Secretary's trip. I would point you to the State Department.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, is the expectation that the White House will offer another counterproposal as these talks continue next week?

MS. PSAKI: I think we have to see how the discussions go. As was conveyed in my statement, there were areas where they came up; that's encouraging. There are areas where we'd still like to see increased funding because we think it's important to small businesses, to workers, to our clean energy economy. So that gives you a sense of what we're looking to see more of.

Q And can I ask something on gun safety quickly after the San Jose shooting? The administration had mentioned, last month, there were still some executive actions the President was considering on this. Where does that stand? And has anything changed as a result of the mass shooting yesterday in California?

MS. PSAKI: Well, clearly, every time there's a mass shooting -- and certainly the one we saw last night -- it's heartbreaking and devastating. And this is an issue that impacts the President personally, and he certainly noted that to all of us yesterday.

We are continuing to review what additional actions we can take, even while we're pressing Congress to move forward with universal background check legislation. There's a legal and policy review process for that, so it's not that it can be expedited; it's ongoing.

But it's a reminder to everyone -- people who work in government, people in the public -- about the need for additional gun safety measures.

Q On G7, Jen, can you have -- give us an idea of how the strategy from the Biden administration to shore up other G7 leaders, in terms of creating a global strategy against a pandemic and vaccine sharing -- how is that shaping up now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: As you all know, we have announced that we will be donating 80 million doses to the global community. What is happening now behind the scenes is that -- is there is an internal policy process to determine how we can do that in an equitable and transparent way.

I know you are all eager to know where they are going and what our process will be. We certainly understand that. We hope to have more soon. That will certainly be a point of discussion, we expect.

And certainly, any questions that come up from our partner countries in the G7 or conversations in NATO about how we can work together to get the pandemic under control, we expect it to be a large topic of conversation at the meetings.

Q Is the expectation that the G7 countries will come up with some sort of agreement that, "This is how we're going to help the world in terms of overcoming the pandemic and vaccine sharing"?

MS. PSAKI: We're a couple of weeks away from the G7 meeting even starting, so I'm not going to get ahead of any discussions.

Q Will the President be meeting with the Queen while he's in the United Kingdom?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to announce at this point in time. Who among us wouldn't want to meet with the Queen? But we'll let them announce any invitation.

Q Can I ask you, on the G7 summit -- one of the issues is also sort of the shortage of semiconductors.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is that -- do you see, like, some movement going forward -- both at the G7 level, but then, you know, in a sort of broader, multilateral group, perhaps?

And then, also, you are completing the supply-chain review; I think that's supposed to be complete next week. Can you say a word or two about that and what your plans are for releasing that? And there's four industrial sectors that are being looked at there.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So, certainly, the semiconductor shortage is something that we do raise with partners and allies around the world. In terms of how it will fall on the agenda, I don't have anything to preview on that front.

But as the President has conveyed, as Jake Sullivan has conveyed, as Brian Deese has conveyed, this is a priority. It's going to help our manufacturing workforce, jobs in the United States, and something that we're looking to partners to help address, as, you know, we've seen over the past several weeks.

I don't think I have anything to preview for you in terms of the supply chain review, in terms of what we would put out publicly on that.

Q But you are -- you are expecting to complete that next week and you will release it?

MS. PSAKI: I think that's the intention, but I don't know what format or anything at this point.

Q Jen, can I ask you a question about the -- there is some reporting that the administration plans to lift the restriction on the border with Canada on June 22nd. Can you confirm that?

And a follow-up to that is: Will the United States look at re- -- lifting those together -- so both southern and northern, at the same time? Or is that something that can be done separately?

MS. PSAKI: You mean Title 42 on the border? One, that -- that would be --

Q There's Canadian reporting that says it's being lifted.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it was --

Q The northern border.

MS. PSAKI: It was just extended for about a month, I think, so that's around that timeline. I don't think a decision has been made, that I'm aware of, about what would happen after that point.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: And in terms of the southern border and Title 42, that's really ro- -- we rely on the CDC and their guidelines about what we need to do to continue to address the global pandemic.

Q But would one happen over the other? Or would they be simultaneous -- northern and southern?

MS. PSAKI: I -- I don't -- I think they assess them differently --

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- but I -- I certainly would point you to the CDC and DHS about how make those --

Q Let me ask you this question a different way, Jen. I mean the Nile Dam was an issue that President Trump put in --

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you on this.

Go ahead.

Q Is the President holding out hope for a bipartisan commission on January 6th, given what we're seeing today on Capitol Hill? And are there any Republicans he's reached out to personally to try to encourage them to vote for it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I just talked to the President about a range of things. And certainly, he believes they should continue to move this forward, and he wants to see the commission -- the bipartisan commission -- passed. And he wants to make sure that's law because that was a dark day in our history. And he thinks we should not only take a moment to recognize that, but also prevent it from happening ever in the future.

Certainly, he'll continue to convey that publicly. You know, I also think he recognizes that, you know, some of the people who oppose it aren't necessarily looking for his point of view, which is very public and well known.

Q Jen, can you elaborate what changed -- what changed in terms of the President asking the intelligence agencies to find out the -- just investigate the origins of the coronavirus?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let me just take you through, quickly, the timeline here. So, back in March, the President asked his intelligence community to do an assessment -- an internal assessment, which you all know happens all the time and he is presented often -- often in PDBs what those assessments look like. That's what they did. It was presented to him a couple of weeks ago.

In that PD- -- or, following that PDB, he made clear -- he asked them to see if we could declassify that information, make it available to the public. They came back just this week with what they would propose to be a public statement.

Happening in the backdrop of that, as you all well know, was the World Health Assembly, where the Chinese made clear they were not going to engage constructively in the second stage of this -- this investigation. And he felt that it was important, given a lot of confusion out there, to make public not only what the IC had done, but also to expand the investigation for 90 days, add more components of the federal government, including our national labs and our health and medical expertise. So that's exactly what we did.

So I would say it was just an -- a process of declassifying and then a decision made to extend the -- extend the investigation.

Q Is there anything you can say on the budget? Is there anything you can say on the budget -- in particular, the topline reported -- there was a \$6 trillion topline, I believe. Is that an accurate report?

--

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me --

AIDE: We're about to land.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, let me first say that, one, we're going to roll it out tomorrow, so stay tuned.

But, two, it's important to remember the President inherited \$3 trillion of spending that had already been done to help get the pandemic under control.

What the p- -- budget will reflect is that he is going to continue to deliver on his priorities of getting -- doing more work to get the pandemic under control, putting people back to work. And those proposals -- the American Jobs plan, the American Rescue Plan, the American Families Plan -- will put us on better financial footing over time.

So as you look at all the budget details tomorrow, I think you'll have a better assessment.

Q Jen, will China face consequences if they don't cooperate with the COVID origins report?

MS. PSAKI: We have 89 days left before we -- this review is completed, and I don't think we're going to make any assessments before that time.

Q What's the President's plan for Memorial Day weekend?

MS. PSAKI: We'll have -- we'll have more for you on that soon.

12:53 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 27, 2021 5:53 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India

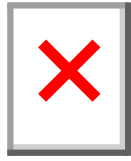
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India to review the strong partnership between the world's largest democracies. They welcomed cooperation in recent weeks that resulted in deliveries of over \$500 million in COVID-19 relief supplies from the U.S. federal and state governments, U.S. companies, and from private citizens across America for the people of India. They discussed a range of regional and global issues, and agreed the United States and India should continue working closely together to address common challenges throughout the Indo-Pacific region. They agreed that people-to-people ties and shared values are the foundation of the U.S.-India strategic partnership that is helping to end the pandemic, supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, and providing global leadership on climate change.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, June 2, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 2, 2021 5:02 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, June 2, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:27 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Wednesday. Don't be distracted by Andrew's fabulous seersucker suit over here. (Laughter.)

Okay, a couple of items for all of you at the top. The President is running a little bit late too, so we'll have a hard out at about five or ten after, but we'll keep you honest, for those of you who are joining his event.

Today, the Biden-Harris administration launched the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, a first-of-its-kind water assistance program that will expand access to more affordable water, and help low-income households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic pay their water and wastewater bills, avoid shutoffs, and support household water system reconnections related to non-payment. \$166.6 million, or 15 percent of allocated program funding, is being made immediately available to grantees, which will then, of course, be distributed in communities.

In total, \$1.1 billion will be available through grants, including \$500 million in American Rescue Plan funding.

The President believes that having access to affordable, clean, and safe drinking water is essential to everybody's health and wellbeing.

A little preview of the President's remarks for later this afternoon: We have now vaccinated 63 percent of ~~the country~~ [adults], and over 72 percent of those 40 and older are vaccinated thanks to aggressive action by this administration.

COVID-19 cases and deaths have plummeted as a result. Cases are down over 90 percent. Deaths are down over 85 percent since January 20th. The fact remains: If you are not vaccinated, you are at risk of getting the virus or spreading it to someone else.

So, today, the President will announce the launch of a month of action to mobilize an all-of-America sprint to get more people vaccinated by July 4th. Community leaders, faith partners, businesses, celebrities, athletes, colleges, and thousands of volunteers will participate in this nationwide campaign.

And as part of the month of action, we're making it even easier to get vaccinated, which, as we've seen, is the key to increasing numbers and getting more shots in arms.

So the nation's largest childcare providers will be watching -- will be watching kids for free while parents get the shot. Vaccines will happen at barber shops, baseball games, and NASCAR races. Pharmacies will be open 24 hours on Fridays.

And throughout our time in office, we've seen -- we've led a whole-of-government effort to get the vaccine out. So this next month, we're continuing to build on that by leading canvassing, phone banking, texting into areas with low vaccination rates; coordinating vaccine events. More than 100 organizations have committed to hosting over a thousand events the first weekend alone. And we're also launching a National Vaccination Tour. The Vice President will lead a tour to key communities across the South and Midwest. That will be coming up.

And we're launching a Mayors Challenge -- and you've seen a little bit of activity about this already -- where cities compete to boost vaccination rates through canvassing, local partnerships, and incentives for people.

And through the COVID-19 College Challenge, more than 230 colleges and universities are taking pledge -- taking pledge and commit -- taking a pledge and committing to taking action to get their students and communities vaccinated.

And finally, businesses like Anheuser-Busch, Kroger, and DoorDash are stepping up to offer all adults free beer on July 4th, the chance to win a million dollars, and free meals for people who get vaccinated at community health centers.

We've seen Krispy Kreme has done this. I would not recommend a Krispy Kreme with a beer, but I'll leave that to other people to decide.

Finally, the President wants to convey his heartfelt congratulations to Congresswoman-elect Melanie Stansbury on her decisive victory last night, marking the first time in over 100 years that a special election has been won by a larger margin than their party received in the previous general election. He looks forward to working with her in Congress.

Alex, why don't you kick us off.

Q Sure. I have a couple of questions. First, on JBS, can you confirm that a ransom demand came from REvil? I know it's a criminal organization likely based in Russia. And was the ransom paid?

And then, can you speak a little bit about -- have you seen any progress on this call from the government for business and private sector to work with the federal government in updating their cybersecurity measures?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. On the last part, I'm not in a place to confirm the specifics of the ransom request or the origin. Obviously, our team is continuing to evaluate. And I would send you to the company for any specific questions about the ransom request.

I will say that this attack is a reminder about the importance to private sector entities of hardening their cybersecurity and ensuring that they take the necessary steps to prepare for this threat, which we've seen rising even over the last few weeks.

As it relates to actions we're taking in the federal government, the President has launched a rapid strategic review to address the increased threat of ransomware, to include four major lines of effort:

Disruption of ransomware infrastructure and actors. Working closely with the private sector -- we will work in partnership with them. That is something that this administration has done a bit differently than in the past in working to find best practices, ensuring that private sector entities have a seat at the table, and we can work in close coordination.

Building an international coalition to hold countries who harbor ransom actors accountable. I mean, this attack is an example of how this is not just a problem in the United States. These are actors that are working to get into systems around the world. This was a company obviously based in Brazil, but Australia was a major -- was impacted also by this.

Expanding cryptocurrency analysis -- obviously, this has been an increasing question out there -- to find and pursue criminal transactions.

And reviewing our own ransomware policies.

So this is an internal policy process -- essentially, one that's looking at all of these entities within our national security/economic team.

Q And then, on the President's comments yesterday, he seemed to call out Manchin and Sinema for -- he said, voting "more with...Republicans" than Democrats. But ProPublica actually found that they've so far voted with Biden 100 percent of time on major votes. And so can you explain where those comments came from and why he felt the need to call out members of his own party?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that if Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema were standing with me here today -- they're always welcome -- they would call out their own independent streaks, and that's something that I think they're both proud of. They both vote for and represent the people in the states that -- and all the people who elected them to represent them in the Senate.

If you look at what the Senate -- the President said -- the big tell here is, "I hear all the folks on TV saying." Now, as a former TV pundit myself, I can tell you that sometimes these conversations can be oversimplified. TV isn't always made for complex conversations about policymaking. We all know that. Right?

And what the President was simply conveying is that he -- his threshold, his litmus test is not to see eye to eye on every single detail of every issue -- and he doesn't with Senator Sinema and Senator Manchin, and he doesn't with Senator Capito, who's coming here later this afternoon. He believes there's an opportunity to work together, to make progress, to find areas of common ground even if you have areas of disagreement.

And he also believes that sometimes, because there are three entities -- three branches of government -- something he knows well, having served 36 years in the Senate -- that sometimes it's not a straight line to victory or success; that sometimes, you know, it takes more time and, you know, he is open to many paths forward.

So I don't think he was intending to convey other -- anything other than a little bit of commentary on TV punditry.

Q Well, he did seem to suggest that he is in favor of filibuster reform and wants to see that move. So why hasn't he been more prominent in calling for that? And is he pressuring Manchin and Sinema to move on that issue privately?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say that his comments yesterday were conveying a new position on his view on the filibuster. His full comment was --

Q But what did he mean by saying that Manchin and Sinema are standing in the way of his agenda, essentially? What was he referencing?

MS. PSAKI: That's not exactly what he said. I think it's important to quote him directly. What he said was: I hear all the folks on TV saying, "Why doesn't Biden get this done?" Well, because Biden only has a majority of, effectively, four votes in the House and a tie in the Senate, with two members of the Senate who vote more with my Republican friends.

He's not -- he was not giving a specific commentary on a policy. He was conveying, again, that sometimes that's the summary -- shorthand version that he sees on cable news at times. Again, it's not always the forum that's easy to provide guidance on how a bill becomes a law.

His view on the filibuster continues to be that there should be a path forward for Democrats and Republicans to make voting easier, to move forward on progress for the American people. That position hasn't changed. And he was not intending to convey something different.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Back on the ransomware attack, is the U.S. going to retaliate? And, realistically, what options are on the table? Is a counterattack an option?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, one, let me say -- not to get ahead of your line of questioning, but I assume this will be a question. So we do expect this to be one of the issues that the President will discuss with President Putin at the summit. That will be two weeks from today, if my -- if my calendar is correct in my mind.

And in terms of considerations of -- you know, we're not taking any options off the table, in terms of how we may respond. But, of course, there's an internal policy review process to consider that. We're in direct touch with the Russians, as well, to convey our concerns about these reports.

Q You mentioned the meeting. When it comes to this issue, what does success look like at that discussion? I mean, what are you looking to accomplish when the President walks away from that table, when it comes to cybersecurity?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that, you know, this is an issue that we have discussed with the Russian government -- this specific issue -- and we've discussed it in the past, and delivered the message that responsible states do not harbor ransomware criminals.

As we've also noted from here, and I noted in the beginning: Obviously, ransomware attacks -- we've seen them increase over a period of time. It's an increasing threat to the private sector and to our critical infrastructure. And there are other countries, many of whom we will see when the President is in Europe, who have similar concerns. So we expect this to be an issue of discussion throughout the President's trip, I will say.

In terms of what success looks like coming out of the summit, I can't predict that at this point in time. But I can convey to you that this will certainly be a topic of discussion -- that harboring criminal entities that are intending to do harm, that are doing harm to the critical infrastructure in the United States is not acceptable. We're not going to stand by that; we will raise that, and we are not going to take options off the table.

Q And in those conversations with the Russian government so far, do you get a sense that they are taking this seriously? Are they going to be taking steps to try and stop these bad actors?

MS. PSAKI: I am -- as I've said before, I'm blissfully not a spokesperson for the Kremlin, so I will let them speak for themselves. But I can assure you that we are raising this through the highest levels of the U.S. government. It will be a topic of discussion in direct, one-on-one discussions -- or direct discussions with President Putin and President Biden happening in just a couple of weeks.

And certainly, protecting our own infrastructure in the United States is of the utmost national security importance.

Q And just one more on this topic, because the Russians are outlining some of the things they would also like to discuss during the summit. The foreign minister, Lavrov, indicated that Russia wants to be discussing the human rights violations in the U.S., saying they're following with interest the persecution of those persons who are accused of the riots on January 6 this year. I'm wondering what you make of that. Where do you think this is coming from?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't use the Russian government as our guide to human rights models in the world. But I will say that the President has not held back in his view that the attacks on January 6th were a mark on democracy, were a dark day in our own democracy. And certainly, I'm sure he'd be happy to repeat that.

But the President's view is that there are a range of topics that we should be discussing in this meeting. We'll have more to preview for it, probably in the days in advance of this summit, including on -- his agenda is, of course, these cyberattacks and the use of ransomware, harboring criminal entities in your own country; also is their aggressive actions in Ukraine; and also is -- are areas where there can be an opportunity to work together, including nuclear capabilities and security. So, lots to discuss.

Go ahead.

Q Just to put a fine point on this very quickly: Is it President Biden's view that President Putin can stop these attacks, these hacks, from occurring if he wanted to?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say the President -- President Biden certainly thinks that President Putin and the Russian government has a role to play in stopping and preventing these attacks; hence, it's a -- it will be a topic of discussion when they meet in two weeks.

Q Does the President believe that Vladimir Putin is testing him right now, ahead of the summit?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give any further analysis on that other than to tell you that our view is that when there are criminal entities within a country, they certainly have a responsibility, and it is a role that the government can play. And, again, that will be a discussion at the summit.

Q Of all the threats that the White House has to juggle right now -- and, of course, there are a lot -- how high does ransomware fall on that list right now? Has it gone dramatically higher in the course of this administration? Does it need to be higher than it is right now? Where is it?

MS. PSAKI: You know how I love rank ordering our focuses and our threats. (Laughs.)

Q How -- but it's been growing dramatically, obviously. Right?

MS. PSAKI: That is true. And I --

Q This is now a bigger issue.

MS. PSAKI: And, Peter, I just said that. I think that this is -- this attack that we've seen over the last couple of days, and certainly following the attack that we saw several weeks ago, is also a reminder to the private sector about the need and the importance of hardening their own cybersecurity protections, of investing in and putting in place protections in their own systems.

We have given guidance for some time, from the federal government, and it is up to a number of these private sector entities to protect themselves as well.

Q The Steamship Authority in Massachusetts reports that they were just the victims of a hack. Has that been

communicated to the White House? Are you involved? Do you have any comment or message, or anybody to attribute that to?

MS. PSAKI: I have seen those reports. They -- they just came out.

Q They just reported it. Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, exactly. I just don't have anything more for you on it, but we can see if there's more later this afternoon.

Q All good. Last one, if I can, then. In March, we heard from the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan. He came in here and told us that the U.S., "in the near future" -- to his words -- would name who's responsible for the hack on the Microsoft Exchange.

So can you tell us who that is -- multiple -- several months have passed -- and what the holdup might be?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check with our national security team and see if they have an update. As you know, they are quite careful and thorough -- I should say, "thorough" is probably the right word -- in how they review and assess and provide public guidance. But we can see if there's anything more they can report out.

Q Is the prevailing theory still that it's China? Or are you -- can you not go any further than he did then?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I have an update on it from what we've provided in the past.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Why does the White House think there's a shortage of workers right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've talked about this a bit in the past, but I'm happy to go through it.

So, one, our view is that it's going to take time for workers to regain confidence in the safety of the workplace; reestablish childcare, school, and commuting arrangements; and finish getting vaccinated. And even when individuals get their first dose -- we've seen a huge increase in that, as I started the briefing talking about -- it's about a five- to six-week cycle. So we have expected that to have an impact.

At the same time, as we look at all of the data, we know that our economy is growing faster than at any time -- than any time in the last 40 years. We're creating an average of 500,000 jobs a month, up from 60,000 a month before the President took office. And we're continuing to put in place policies and measures to ensure that we're helping people make ends meet and we're helping the economy continue to grow.

Q And you mentioned thoughts about safety. You're celebrating the number of vaccinations today. You say the vaccines work. COVID cases are way down.

MS. PSAKI: You're right.

Q Is there any thought here that some of the worker shortage could be driven by the extra \$300 in weekly unemployment benefits through September?

MS. PSAKI: I will say, Peter, that our economists and our assessment and the assessment of many economists out there is that the impact -- the largest impact are on issues related to the pandemic.

And, yes, you're right that the increased numbers -- that's a good sign; it's a positive sign. But it's a five- to six-week cycle. So the data that was taken for the May jobs number -- the jobs numbers that came out for April and early May was from early April. That's almost two months ago, right? We'll see. We'll have jobs numbers come out on Friday.

People -- the vaccination rates are continuing to go up. But in terms of people being fully safe, fully vaccinated, it's going to take some time. We always expected that to be a couple of months, and we expect to see continuing improvement in the numbers.

Q On the JBS hack, these hackers based in Russia have disrupted American gas supplies and American meat supplies. Why do you think that these ransomware attacks have been rising since President Biden took office?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say these are private sector entities who have a responsibility to put in place measures to protect their own cybersecurity.

As it relates to why criminal actors are taking actions against private sector entities, I don't think I'm the right one to speak to that.

Q So, a total coincidence?

MS. PSAKI: I think you could certainly go track down those cyber criminals in Russia and have a good chat with them.

Q Okay. If you have any leads, we'll take that.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q And then, on immigration, has the President or the Vice President seen the video from last Friday of a five-year-old boy dropped off along the border, yelling to the adults who abandoned him, "No, no, don't go -- no"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I've seen the video. It is heartbreaking and the reason we continue to be very clear: Irregularly migrating to the United States puts ourselves and others at risk. That's why we're relaunching certain efforts to build a more fair and orderly immigration system, including programs like the Central American Minors Program that allows kids who are eligible to apply from within country.

But I don't think anyone, whether a parent or not, would have watched that video and not feel heartbroken by a five-year-old, I think, screaming at the border.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A couple of questions about the COVID numbers. You talked about the latest vaccination rates. Does the Biden administration still consider herd immunity to be realistic and achievable?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that Dr. Fauci has spoken to this in the kind of terminology of herd immunity and, kind of, refuted that as the right definition of how we should look to how we're going to make progress. And that's why we have set out a goal of getting 70 percent of the American population vaccinated by July 4th. There's still a lot of work to do. About a dozen states have met that requirement. That's why we're launching this big initiative over the past -- over the next month.

But what Dr. Fauci and other medical experts have conveyed is that it's really going to be up to local communities and states to see what their vaccination rate is and make determinations about what's going to work locally. It's -- that is how the assessments will need to be made.

Q And you talked about the 90 percent drop in cases. Does the White House worry that as the number of cases drops, that these holdouts will actually be more reluctant to get vaccinated because they won't be as worried that they themselves will get sick?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, that's one of the reasons why continuing to reiterate that if you're not vaccinated, you are not safe. You're not safe against others who are not vaccinated who may carry the virus. The individuals who can benefit from all of the new guidance the CDC has put out, who can go to concerts and go to baseball games -- I was going to say football; not quite there yet -- go to their kids' soccer games and not wear a mask, those are vaccinated individuals.

There's huge incentives to getting vaccinated, but it doesn't mean that individuals who are not vaccinated are safe from getting the virus.

And while, yes, we've made a lot of progress, there are still communities where the percentage is higher than it should be, where there are still larger numbers of young adults who are not vaccinated; those are many of the communities that we're focused on in our month-long effort.

Q In the President's speech yesterday, when he laid out his new economic equity measures, one of the things he didn't talk about was student loan forgiveness, and that's something he talked about a lot on the campaign trail.

We know that student debt is a big driver in racial -- in economic inequality. So why didn't he include that? And where -- where does the White House want to go on that issue?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that one of the ways anyone can know out there about how much the President cares about student debt and student loans is by simply looking at his budget and the budget he proposed and rolled out last Friday. He makes two years of community college free, along with a major increase in Pell grants that will drastically reduce the cost of an education beyond high school.

The American Families Plan, which he proposed, we still need to get it, of course, signed into law -- or passed and signed into law, which is included also in the President's budget. It includes a historic \$47 billion of investments in HBCUs, Tribal colleges and universities, and minority-serving institutions. And these institutions are critical to helping underrepresented students move to the top of the income ladder.

And so President Biden is calling for a historic investment in these areas, and those are things that are laid out specifically in his budget and shows his desire and commitment to level the playing field and provide necessary assistance.

Q But why doesn't the budget include \$10,000 in student loan debt forgiveness, for example? That's something that he called on Congress to do when he was a candidate.

MS. PSAKI: And he'd be happy to sign a bill into law if they passed that bill, and he'd look forward to having it on his desk.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just a couple of follow-ups on JBS. Obviously, the White House is engaging directly with Russia on this, and we were wondering if Russia has offered any cooperation or help in tracking down these hackers.

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to be reading out Russia's view or their role here. You can certainly ask them those questions.

Q And considering -- this is obviously the third Russia-linked attack this year, and we understand that the President will bring this up in his meeting with President Putin -- but is the administration really considering any actions in addition to that, just to make sure that this doesn't happen? Sanctions or any other actions that are perhaps on the table?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I mean, as I said, I think, in response to an earlier question: We're not taking options off of the table.

But it's just an opportunity -- there will be an opportunity for the President to discuss this directly with President Putin, to reiterate the fact that we believe that responsible states do not harbor ransomware criminals and that -- and as he said, as we said, around Colonial and the Colonial hack -- or the Colonial ransomware attack -- we will continue to be in direct touch with Moscow. We will continue to make the case that responsible countries need to take decisive action against ransomware networks.

At the same time, as I noted a little bit earlier too, we're doing our own review of a range of options as well from here.

Q And I have one on the surplus vaccines.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Has there been any decision made on those 80 million vaccines? And will the President offer any updates on that today?

MS. PSAKI: He won't offer any updates on that today. Hopefully, we'll have more for you on that soon. I know there's a lot of interest. And as I've noted earlier -- or previously -- what we want to do is not just convey, hopefully, some of -- where some of the vaccine may be going, but also what our approach will be to ensure that it is distributed in an equitable manner around the world. So all of that would be a part of any announcement at the appropriate time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. During the campaign, Biden promised to host a summit for democracy during the first year of his presidency. Can you give us an update on if that's taking place, when it might take place?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any date or schedule for you. We have some time left in the year, fortunately, but I don't have any update for you on the timing.

Q Is he still planning to do it in his first year?

MS. PSAKI: That -- that still remains the plan.

Q Okay. And then can you say anything more about the specific mandate that the President gave to the Vice President on voting --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- that he mentioned yesterday? I mean, is there -- how is he going to measure success on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that the President sees the Vice President as an important partner and somebody who can work to take on challenging and hard initiatives. That's the role of the modern-day Vice President. And she actually asked to run point and lead on voting rights. It's an issue that she is personally committed to and passionate about.

As she conveyed in her statement yesterday, she expects in the week -- weeks ahead to engage not just with the American people, but with voting rights organizations, community organizations, the private sector to help strengthen and uplift -- uplift efforts on voting rights nationwide. That includes working with members of Congress, certainly, to move legislation forward -- something the President strongly supports. It also includes working with local organizations, working with states to see how to make voting more accessible to people across the country.

So I think the President is looking to work with the Vice President as a partner and -- and looking forward to her taking

SO, I THINK THE PRESIDENT IS LOOKING TO WORK WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT AS A PARTNER AND COLLEAGUE AND LOOKING FORWARD TO HER TAKING on this important initiative, something that's a priority to him as well. And I'm sure he'll be regularly updated on her progress.

Q Does he expect the Vice President to travel to these states that have imposed voting restrictions in their state laws?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Vice President will have more to say about what -- how she will approach this effort. As you know, she's traveling to the Northern Triangle over the next couple of days on one of the other initiatives she's leading, but I expect she'll have more to say in the coming weeks.

Q And just briefly, how does he expect the Vice President to prioritize these multiple things that she has in her -- in her agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, just as the President has to balance a number of different priorities -- whether it's the American Jobs Plan or working to protect us from ransomware attacks or preparing for an international summit and all of the other entities that are on the President's plate -- a modern-day Vice President does the same thing.

So he's confident in her ability to take on a robust agenda, which she certainly has on her plate.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks, Jen. I'm curious if you can kind of describe --

MS. PSAKI: I'll come to you next.

Sorry, go ahead.

Q I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: It's okay. Go ahead.

Q No, go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, so chivalrous there. Go ahead. Okay.

Q Okay.

Q I'm just curious -- (laughter). See how I did that?

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, we'll come back to you.

Q If you can describe for us: How thin is the President's patience when it comes to negotiating some of these bipartisan agreements he wants to see -- not just with infrastructure today, but, for example, whether it's police reform or the Jobs Plan -- at some point, does he say to his fellow Democrats, "We just have to go at it alone"? And then does that mean we're going to see more executive orders as a result?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that the President has a bit of experience legislating, and his approach is to look for means, ways we can find common ground. That's exactly what he's going to do when he meets with Senator Capito this afternoon.

"Negotiations" mean both sides continue to make moves toward each other, both sides continue to look for areas where they agree. And that's what he's prepared to do, and he's hopeful this meeting is an opportunity to do.

At the same time, we're working on a number of different paths. There's discussions between bipartisan members in the Senate about how they might come to agreement on a path forward on a historic investment in infrastructure, on a version of the American Jobs Plan. He's eager to see what they have to offer.

We also know, next week, Congressman DeFazio is going to be marking up the American Jobs Plan in the House -- something a lot of members and Democrats in the House are quite excited about.

So, I would say that we're working on many channels. He's going to have discussions with all of these entities and parties. And he knows that sometimes in this journey and this path, you have to keep a range of options on the table.

Q And his level of patience?

MS. PSAKI: I would say he wouldn't have been in the Senate for 36 years if he wasn't quite patient. So -- but, you know, him -- patience is not unending, and he wants to make progress. His only line in the sand is inaction. He wants to sign a bill into law this summer.

But I would also remind you that the American Rescue Plan passed in a very quick timeline for how legislation moves forward -- very fast.

And there's historic legislation -- the Affordable Care Act, for example, the Vi- -- the President worked closely on -- that took a year. We're not advising that's the timeline, but just to suggest that sometimes these efforts can take a little bit of time.

He's working to move things forward. And there are certainly items on -- you know, the clock is certainly ticking because there are items like the markup next week that will drive discussion by members of Congress.

Go ahead.

Q So the President has talked a lot about seeing democracy as under attack. And his speech Monday, I think --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- was pretty blunt about that.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q He talked a lot about voting rights in that speech. Can you just clarify how he sees the stakes of these bills, like in Texas? Does he truly see them as an existential threat to democracy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that, first, he believes that the Texas legislation is a part of a concerted attack on our democracy being advanced, as we see -- have seen, not just in Texas, as you well know, but in states across the country, on the basis of the same repeatedly disproven lies that led to the assault on our nation's Capitol on January 6th.

So, that is, of course, of great concern to the President. He thinks that must stop. It must be easier, not harder, for all eligible voters to vote -- to register and cast their ballots. We need to move forward and not backward.

And the fact of the matter is that the Texas legislation would make it harder to vote in a state where it is already too hard for many people to vote, but it's not the only state where we're seeing this troubling trend.

But this is one of the reasons why he asked his Vice -- or he -- she asked for it, but he certainly was thrilled to have her leading the effort on voting rights moving forward, given this is a huge priority to him and a huge priority to her as well.

Q A question on a much different scope. I have a follow-up on the free beer announcement.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.)

Q Can you just clarify, because Anheuser-Busch says this is in partnership with the White House.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Can you clarify what that means? Is like the federal government subsidizing this at all? And also, are there any concerns that this is kind of -- the way that they're going about this -- with like, "Upload a picture of yourself" -- that there's any sort of data-harvesting aspect of this promotion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think all that "in partnership" means is that we've been encouraging private sector entities to take actions to incentivize people to get vaccinated, given we know that will ensure that more Americans have shots in their arms, are safe, are healthy, and communities can return back to normal.

You know, obviously, as it relates, we take data security and people's privacy incredibly seriously. And, certainly, if there was an area of concern, we would speak out against that. But we have seen a number of these actions by private sector companies be quite effective, and more shots in arms is a good thing.

Go ahead, Kaitlan.

Q The meeting with Senator Capito today, should we expect President Biden to give her any kind of deadline for a major breakthrough on these talks to happen?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't expect this meeting to be an exchange of paper. It would be more of a discussion. And certainly, we'll see what comes out of the meeting and what the appropriate next step is. But I don't know -- I'm not going to predetermine that before the meeting even begins.

Q And should we expect it to be one-on-one, or will White House staff be in the room, just to clarify?

MS. PSAKI: I would expect at least a portion of it to be one-on-one, if not -- if not the whole meeting, but I can check on that for you too.

Q Okay. And just to follow up on your comments on what President Biden said about Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema: Are you saying that that was not a criticism of the two of them?

MS. PSAKI: It was not. No. He considers them both friends. He considers them both good working partners. And he also believes that, in democracy, we don't have to see eye to eye on every detail of every single issue in order to work together, and he certainly thinks that reflects their relationship.

Q But even saying "two Democrats vote with Republicans more than they do with their own party" --

MS. PSAKI: "With my Republican friends." I would say that the fact that the President is having Senator Capito here today and has been having ongoing discussions with Republicans in the Senate and that he's eager to find a path forward on bipartisan work certainly tells you, I think, what you need to know about what he thinks about working with people even when there's disagreement.

Go ahead.

Q Just a few quick ones. The NAACP criticized Biden's plan, as was mentioned earlier, about not including the cancellation of student debt.

In April, Ron Klain said that the President had asked the Education Department to prepare a memo on wiping out debt for executive action. And he said, "Hopefully, we'll see that in the next few weeks." Is there any update on that memo about, kind of, what the President might do on that front?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update. It was Department of Education, but also a legal review as well.

Q Okay. And then one question on Israel: Does Biden have a view on Naftali Bennett's past statements about annexing the West Bank and negating a two-state solution? How will Biden approach clear differences there on that issue? And does he still think he has a partner for peace in an Israeli government led by Bennett?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not going to weigh in on an ongoing political process in a foreign country -- in Israel or anywhere in the world. I think you're probably -- know well what the President's view is on a two-state solution and how he believes it's the only path forward for lasting peace in the region.

Q And then just a quick follow-up. Do you know if Bennett and Biden have met before, they've -- or any interaction in person?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question. I don't know if they have met in the past or have a prior relationship.

Go ahead.

Q President Biden campaigned on ending the federal death penalty. When is he going to take steps to do that?

MS. PSAKI: He has -- he did campaign on that and has talked about his views on the death penalty. I don't have any update on any forward action.

Q But isn't his delay there a sign that perhaps he doesn't feel as strongly about this as maybe he sounded when he was campaigning? The --

MS. PSAKI: I don't think it's a sign of that. There's a legal process and a Department of Justice process that would be -- would be standard in any scenario here.

Q When did he change his mind on the death penalty? Because during the '94 --

MS. PSAKI: I did not convey he changed his mind.

Q The '94 Crime Bill expanded the amount of crimes that receive --

MS. PSAKI: He spoke to this pretty extensively on the campaign, and that's his position. I think we're going to have to move on.

Go ahead.

Q I wanted to just -- given what you said that his position hasn't changed on the filibuster, I just want to go back to the vote last week in the Senate on the January 6th commission --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- the fact that there were 54 "yes" votes, 35 "no" votes. The bill failed. This is an insurrection that the President has called an "unprecedented assault."

I'm just curious if that math makes sense to this President and if that outcome would be acceptable should it repeat later this month when the Senate takes up voting rights.

MS. PSAKI: When you say the "math makes sense," what do you mean by that exactly?

Q I mean the fact that 54 lawmakers in the Senate voted "yes," 35 voted "no," and the bill did not pass.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that the President doesn't see a reason for anyone to have voted against that bill, so he doesn't understand that version of the math as a starting point.

He continues to believe that, given that was a dark day in our democracy -- a day that, I think, we will all remember; he will remember, certainly, as President, as a day that does not stand out as a model of what is possible in this country.

In terms of his view of the filibuster, you know, again, his position has not changed on that. He does want to see accountability as it relates to -- and he does want to see an assessment of what happened to prevent it from ever happening again. And he is happy to talk with members of Congress about how to approach that moving forward.

As you all know, no President can wave a wand and pass a piece of legislation with 50 votes, when it requires 60. That requires Congress to move forward with that action.

Q But it seems like it requires only one more Democratic vote than currently exists for that, and that vote happens to be a person who the President did seem to single out yesterday.

So you're saying that he didn't change his position on the filibuster, and yet, you know, he's saying things -- I mean, his passion for voting rights was evident yesterday when he spoke.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q He's saying, "We must find the courage..." -- I'm quoting him -- "...to change the things we know we can change."

So, I just want to be very sure that you're saying that: Should that outcome repeat itself later this month -- if the Senate takes up voting rights, more than 50 lawmakers vote for a bill, but if the bill does not advance to his desk -- is that something he's going to be okay living with?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I don't think the President is okay with a January 6th commission not being in place. He's not okay with voting rights not passing. And he will continue to advocate for both moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q Yes. As the President prepares for the summit with leaders of the NATO, some reports surfaced regarding spying on -- on Germany. How would that affect the summit and the -- like, the reestablishment of the U.S.-NATO relations?

MS. PSAKI: I think you're referring to the reports from 2014 -- correct? -- that dated back to, I will say, my last time in government.

I don't -- I wouldn't say that -- you know, in 2014, let me say, we issued a full -- the United States issued a full review of our approach to overseas surveillance. President Obama, at that time, issued a presidential directive that changed our approach in significant ways.

So that is a lot that has happened since -- between the la- -- over the last seven years. And we will continue to work with our European allies and partners to address any questions through the appropriate national security channels.

But I can tell you that President Biden will be able to reassure President Merkel and President Macron about current U.S. posture. And, you know, certainly we look forward to working together on a range of --

Q And Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that, you know, he would stand against any agreement between -- you know, with Iran, even if that would, you know, cause trouble with the Israeli-American relations. Is there any reaction from the White House regarding that?

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, the first part of your question was what? It was about --

Q You know, Netanyahu said that, like, he would stand against any agreement on --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, on Iran.

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q And, you know, even if that would, you know, result in, like, tension with, you know, American-Israeli relations.

MS. PSAKI: That's consistently been the Prime Minister's position. And what our responsibility is and the responsibility of President Biden is to act in the interests of the United States. And our view is that putting in place a diplomatic agreement -- an agreement where we can prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, where we have returned to the visibility we had before the former President pulled out of that deal -- is in our interest.

So we will continue to work and brief the leaders in Israel, as we have over the last several years, but our position hasn't changed.

Q Okay. Last question, if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You know, the Israelis requested a billion dollar, you know, in military aid after what had just happened. You know, is the United States willing to and prepared to provide that aid?

MS. PSAKI: The President conveyed that -- at his press conference he did with the leader of South Korea just a few weeks ago -- that nothing has changed about our intention to provide assistance to the Israeli government and also our desire and interest in providing humanitarian and security assistance to the Palestinians as well.

So I expect those will continue. I don't have any assessment of any new request.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. On the vaccination efforts: As of May 7th, only less than 7 percent of the ICE detainee population -- about 22,000 detainees -- have been vaccinated. Where is that process going? The ACLU has demanded this White House, via a letter, to speed up that process. So do you have an update?

And also, how do you plan to vaccinate eligible unaccompanied minors who are in detention?

MS. PSAKI: Well, on the first question, Immigration and Customs Enforcement -- ICE -- is firmly committed to the health and wellbeing and welfare of all those in custody. COVID-19 vaccines for ICE detainees are being allocated by local and state health departments -- that's how they are distributed -- based on availability and the state's vaccine implementation plans. So that's where they directly come, not from -- not directly from the federal government.

Additionally, DHS's chief medical officer is rapidly working on scaling our own internal capability to vaccinate detainees in our care across the country. So that would be an additional step in addition to the state and local allocations, but it is a focus and a priority.

In terms of unaccompanied minors, some eligible unaccompanied children have already received a COVID-19 vaccine. We're working with our state partners to implement broader vaccine distribution. In keeping with CDC guidance, it hasn't been an extensive period of time where children under the age of 18 have been eligible.

Obviously, these allocations are distributed across states, but, of course, they've been broadly available for some time in the country, so this should provide greater access to the vaccine to unaccompanied children.

Q And is the President aware of the current situation in Nicaragua, where the government is harassing journalists, activists, even a presidential candidate, and is claiming -- is investigating them for money laundering in that country with really no legal basis? Is he aware? Is the State Department working on this?

MS. PSAKI: I know the State Department is, and I'd certainly send you to them. On any specific comment from here, obviously, we would speak out against any harassment of journalists, individuals, leaders, the -- you know, crushing of freedom of speech, expression that it sounds like is occurring in this case.

Q I think we have an out.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. All right, thank you, everyone. I'll look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

1:09 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Sullivan's and Deputy National Security Advisor Singh's Meetings with German Counterparts
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 2, 2021 6:39 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's and Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh's Meetings with German Counterparts

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Dr. Jan Hecker, Foreign and Security Advisor to the German Chancellor, to discuss our close cooperation on a range of regional and global issues. They talked about the upcoming G7 leaders meeting and NATO summit, the importance of securing Europe's energy future, collective efforts to share COVID-19 vaccines, coordination on cybersecurity and response to ransomware attacks, and foreign policy priorities including Russia, Ukraine, Iran, the Sahel, and the Western Balkans. Experts from both governments discussed the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, including U.S. concerns about the risks it poses to Ukraine and European energy security.

Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh also met today with Professor Lars-Hendrik Röller, German Chancellery Chief of Division for Economic, Financial, and Labor Policy, to discuss a range of economic issues, including objectives for the upcoming G7 Leaders meetings, vaccine dose sharing, forced labor, post-COVID economic recovery, and 5G security.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Advisory: White House COVID-19 Press Briefing
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 3, 2021 9:45 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2021

Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials

Today at 11:00 AM ET, the White House COVID-19 Response Team and federal public health officials will hold a press briefing to provide updates on the COVID-19 response effort.

Participants will include:

- Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Chief Medical Advisor to the President
- Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
- Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Jeff Zients, White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator

To join the briefing today at 11:00 AM ET, please register [HERE](#).

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Israeli Minister of Defense Benjamin Gantz
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 3, 2021 12:52 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Israeli Minister of Defense Benjamin Gantz

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today in Washington with Israeli Minister of Defense Benjamin "Benny" Gantz to discuss recent developments in the region and continue the consultations between the United States and Israel on regional security issues. Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed President Biden's unwavering support for Israel's right to defend itself and commitment to strengthening all aspects of the U.S.-Israel security partnership, including support for the Iron Dome System. They exchanged views on the current situation in Gaza and Mr. Sullivan highlighted the importance of ensuring that immediate humanitarian aid is able to reach the people of Gaza. They also discussed their common interest in steps to enhance stability, peace, and security not just for Israelis and Palestinians, but across the entire region. They shared their concerns about the threat posed by Iran's aggressive behavior in the Middle East and expressed their determination to counter these threats. They agreed that the United States and Israel would remain closely engaged in the weeks ahead to advance their strategic priorities in the region.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 3, 2021 3:12 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2021

Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and Public Health Officials
Via Teleconference

11:10 A.M. EDT

MR. ZIENTS: Good morning and thank you for joining us. Today I will begin with an update both on our domestic and global efforts to defeat COVID-19. We have here with us National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who will join me in speaking about our next steps in our global COVID-19 response. Then, Dr. Walensky will give an update on the state of the pandemic, and Dr. Fauci will discuss the latest science. We'll leave some time for Q&A at the end.

On his first full day in office, President Biden released a comprehensive strategy to marshal a whole-of-government wartime effort to defeat the pandemic. We have spent each and every day of the last four and a half months executing against that strategy. And today I want to provide an update on the progress we are making: first, on our efforts to get Americans vaccinated as quickly, efficiently, and equitably as possible; and second, on our efforts to help combat the pandemic globally.

Here at home, we have built a best-in-class vaccination program. Already 63 percent of adult Americans have received at least one shot, and 52 percent of adult Americans are fully vaccinated. Already 12 states have 70 percent of adults with at least one shot. That's an important milestone. And 28 states and the District of Columbia have fully vaccinated 50 percent or more of their adult population. As a result, in communities and states across the country, the pandemic is in retreat.

Since the President took office on January 20th, cases are down over 90 percent and deaths are down over 85 percent. Our successful vaccination program isn't just saving tens of thousands of lives. It's letting tens of millions of Americans get back to living their lives.

It's fair to say that we're far ahead of where anyone thought we would be in our fight against the virus. And, importantly, we have secured enough vaccine supply for all Americans. This is a direct result to the President taking aggressive action, including through the use of the Defense Production Act, the DPA, to mobilize the full force of U.S. vaccine manufacturing and production.

Because of those actions and the success of U.S. vaccine manufacturers, we are confident in our supply of our authorized vaccines. As a result, we're removing the DPA priority ratings for AstraZeneca, Novavax, and Sanofi. While the manufacturers will continue to make these three vaccines, this action will allow U.S.-based companies that supply these vaccine manufacturers to make their own decisions on which orders to fulfill first.

For all the progress we've made as a country, as the President reiterated yesterday afternoon, we have millions of Americans still in need of protection and communities at risk because of low vaccination rates.

Here's the bottom line: The bottom line is that if you are unvaccinated, you are still at risk of getting seriously ill or spreading the disease to others.

To help get as many people vaccinated as we can by July 4th, we're kicking off a month of action, mobilizing an all-of-America effort, including new commitments from childcare providers across the country to provide free drop-in childcare to allow parents to get vaccinated; extended hours of local pharmacies for vaccinations, including many pharmacies that will be open 24 hours every Friday starting next week; commitments from states in the private sector to incentivize vaccinations and celebrate our progress, including free beer for everyone over the age of 21, on July 4th, courtesy of Anheuser-Busch.

And the Vice President is leading a "We Can Do This" national vaccination tour. This national vaccination tour to key communities across the country will help reach millions of Americans who still need protection against the virus, highlight the ease of getting vaccinated, encourage vaccination, and energize and mobilize grassroots vaccine education and outreach efforts.

As the days get brighter and brighter at home, we're focused on driving progress to help the pandemic -- help end the pandemic around the globe. It's both the right thing to do and an important step in protecting Americans by helping to stamp out the virus.

The President has committed that the U.S. will be an arsenal for vaccines, and our work on vaccine supply is guided by a three-part approach:

First, having successfully secured enough supply of vaccine for Americans, we are donating surplus U.S. vaccine supply and encouraging other countries with surplus supplies to do the same. In March, the U.S. shared over 4 million doses of our AstraZeneca vaccine supply with Canada and Mexico. And the President has announced a U.S. commitment to sharing a total of 80 million doses by the end of June. This is five times the number of doses any other country has committed to sharing. And these 80 million doses represent 13 percent of the total vaccines produced by the United States by the end of this month.

We will continue to donate additional doses across the summer months as supply becomes available. But at the same time, we know that won't be sufficient. So the second part of our approach is working with U.S. vaccine manufacturers to vastly increase vaccine supply for the rest of the world in a way that also creates jobs here at home. Driven by the aggressive actions that have been taken to accelerate manufacturing and production lines in the U.S., Pfizer and Moderna have already increased their capacity to produce vaccines for the world.

The third part of our approach will have us work with our partner nations and pharmaceutical companies and other manufacturers to facilitate the kind of global vaccine manufacturing and production capacity and capabilities that can not only help the world beat this pandemic, but also prepares the world to respond to potential future threats.

Today we're outlining our framework for sharing with the world the first 25 million doses. To be clear, our approach is to

ensure vaccines are delivered in a way that is equitable and follows the latest science and public health data.

Across the coming weeks, the administration will move as expeditiously as possible and work through regulatory requirements and logistical details to ensure safe and secure delivery of doses.

This is certainly a complex operational challenge but one that we take on and will get done. In fact, less than two weeks ago, the President committed to providing one million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to the Republic of Korea.

After making a 2,000-mile journey to California, these one million doses are being loaded into a plane that will take off to the Republic of Korea this evening, carrying hope and bringing life-saving protection to the one million South Koreans who have already signed up to get a shot.

This is just the beginning. We expect a regular cadence of shipments around the world across the next several weeks. And in the weeks ahead, working with the world's democracies, we will coordinate a multilateral effort, including through the G7, to combat and end the pandemic.

Now, let me turn it over to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks, Jeff. As Jeff said, today we are announcing our plan for sharing the first 25 million U.S. vaccines with the world. I'm going to briefly outline why we are sharing them, how we plan to share them, and where we will share them.

First, our goal in sharing our vaccines is in service of ending the pandemic globally. Our overarching aim is to get as many safe and effective vaccines to as many people as fast as possible. It's as simple as that. We want to save lives and thwart variants that place all of us at risk. But perhaps most important: This is just the right thing to do.

Thanks to the ingenuity of American scientists and the resilience and commitment of the American people, we're in a position to help others, so we will help others. And as the President has said, the United States will not use its vaccines to secure favors from other countries.

Next, I want to say a little bit about how we are sharing. We've received requests from all over the world, and a number of important factors went into our decision about how to allocate these first 25 million vaccines. These factors included achieving global coverage, responding to surges and other specific urgent situations and public health needs, and helping as many countries as possible who requested vaccines.

We've also decided to prioritize helping our neighbors. We made the decision to share at least 75 percent of these vaccines through COVAX. This will maximize the number of vaccines available equitably for all countries and will facilitate sharing with those most at risk. And we decided to share up to 25 percent of these vaccines for immediate needs and to help with surges around the world. We can share these 25 percent in a flexible way.

Finally, I want to talk a little bit about where we are sharing these first 25 million doses. We're sharing them in a wide range of countries within Latin America and the Caribbean; South and Southeast Asia; and across Africa, in coordination with the African Union.

This includes prioritizing our neighbors here in our hemisphere, including countries like Guatemala and Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, and many others. It respects existing regional networks for vaccine sharing, like the platform of the African Union and African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and the regional public health agency in the Caribbean -- CARPHA.

These networks will help decide where to allocate needed doses in regions with low vaccination rates and to those most at

risk, including healthcare workers who haven't yet gotten their shots.

Our approach also prioritizes South and Southeast Asia, including countries like India, Nepal, the Philippines, and others that are undergoing surges right now. It recognizes our closest neighbors, Canada and Mexico, which received our first shared vaccines; and friends like the Republic of Korea, where our military shares a command. And it prioritizes other partners around the world, including countries with low vaccination rates or dealing with urgent present crises, like the West Bank and Gaza, Ukraine, Kosovo, Iraq, Haiti, and others.

In the days ahead, we will coordinate closely with COVAX and with countries that will receive our vaccines. And as Jeff has said, this is only the beginning.

The President has committed to sharing doses on an ongoing basis, starting with 80 million by the end of June. We will continue to donate from our excess supply as that supply is delivered to us. We will work with our international partners to get ahead of the virus, to follow the science, and to help countries in crisis.

We also know that this won't be enough to end or reduce the lifespan of the pandemic, and that's why we're working with allies and partners to expand the production of vaccines and raw materials, including here at home, as Jeff described, and by building capacity around the world.

We're also working with our G7 partners on a larger effort to help end the pandemic so that the world's democracies deliver for people everywhere. And we will have more to say about this next week when the G7 leaders meet in the UK.

We will continue to build on our existing health and health security efforts focused on stopping the spread of COVID-19: increasing vaccination, detecting outbreaks and variants, responding rapidly to flares, and critically recovering economically here at home and around the world. And we will do so in a way that strengthens our global public health institutions and our ability to come together as an international community to defeat not just this pandemic, but the next one and the one after that.

As President Biden said in May, this is a unique moment in history, and it requires American leadership, American science and ingenuity, American perseverance, and the world's democracies to step up to the plate. Today, I'm proud to say that that effort is underway. Thanks.

MR. ZIENTS: Okay. Now over to Dr. Walensky. Dr. Walensky?

DR. WALENSKY: Good morning. It's great to be back with you today. As always, let's begin with an overview of the data.

Yesterday, CDC reported a little over 9,300 new cases of COVID-19. Our seven-day average is about 15,600 cases per day. This represents a decrease of more than 30 percent from our prior seven-day average. And, more importantly, it is a 94 percent decrease from the peak of COVID-19 cases we reported in January of this year.

This is the type of news I like to deliver and, certainly, these data are encouraging and uplifting as we battle this pandemic.

In other good news, the seven-day average of new hospital admissions is about 2,750. That is a decrease of 83 percent in hospitalizations since January 9th of this year when we peaked at a seven-day average of almost 16,500 daily hospital admissions.

We can all agree these trends are going in the right direction.

And, finally, the seven-day average of daily deaths has also declined to a new low of 363 per day -- a decrease of more than 16 percent from the last week.

As the administration kicks off its national month of action in the critical month of June, I want to highlight a specific

population that we were hoping will join the tens of millions who have already been vaccinated, and that is adolescents.

In the month leading up to the recommendations of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for teens and adolescents 12 and older, CDC observed troubling data regarding the hospitalizations of adolescents with COVID-19. More concerning were the number of adolescents admitted to the hospital who required treatment in the intensive care unit with mechanical ventilation.

Tomorrow, we will publish a report on this topic with more details in CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. And it is these findings within this publication -- one that demonstrates the level of severe disease, even among youth, that are preventable, that force us to redouble our motivation to get our adolescents and young adults vaccinated.

Last month, FDA authorized and CDC recommended a safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19 that can be used in adolescents to prevent disease and hospitalization. I strongly encourage parents to get their teens vaccinated, as I did mine.

If parents have questions or concerns, please talk with your child's healthcare provider, your local department of public health, or your local pharmacist. And, of course, until teens are fully vaccinated, they should continue to wear masks and take precautions when around others who are not vaccinated, to protect themselves, their friends, family, and community.

With that, thank you, and I'll turn things over to Dr. Fauci.

DR. FAUCI: Thank you very much, Dr. Walensky. I'd like to spend just a minute or so just updating you in the arena of selected COVID-19 therapeutics. I don't know if you can see the slide, but the first slide that said "Selected Therapeutics" is broken up into three major components -- just to remind you that the work that has been done over the last many months to a year has been three separate approaches: one, to target the virus itself -- and, as you could see, the number of interventions listed there. The other is to moderate an aberrant inflammatory response, moderating the host. And the other adjunctive therapies, such as anticoagulants.

If we can move to the next slide, which has the red circle around the third bullet, that's what I want to bring to the attention of the audience, and that is monoclonal antibodies, two of which -- the Regeneron combination and Eli Lilly combination -- have already been approved for EUA.

I've highlighted in blue another additional antibody made by GSK and Vir. And if you go to the next slide, six days ago, in a preprint server, some very interesting and exciting data has been published. And that is: A randomized placebo-controlled phase three trial of non-hospitalized patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk for the progression of their disease -- close to 600 people -- a single 500 milligram dose of the monoclonal antibody, sotrovimab -- again, by GSK and Vir -- reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 85 percent, compared with the placebo.

It is well-tolerated and there are no safety signals identified. And, importantly, in the test tube, this antibody retains activity against multiple variants. So, what we really have now are three options within the arena of monoclonal antibodies -- something that's important for physicians to know that there is an important option for treating people early to prevent them from going to the hospital.

This has been granted an EUA, so it's available for use, and we encourage physicians to at least consider this possibility as part of your therapeutic armamentarium. I'll stop there, and back to you, Jeff.

MR. ZIENTS: Wonderful. Thank you, Dr. Fauci. Why don't we now open it up for a few questions?

MODERATOR: Thanks, everybody. And we're running very short on time, so we'll just take a couple of questions. Please keep to one question and on topic.

First, Josh Wingrove of Bloomberg.

Q Hi there. Thank you for doing this. Can you say --

MR. ZIENTS: (Inaudible) take questions.

Q Can you hear me?

MODERATOR: I can hear you, Josh.

Q Great. Jeff, can you speak a little bit to which specific vaccines will be sent in the 25 million? I assume it's safe to say that the AstraZeneca doses remain under review.

MR. ZIENTS: Okay, I think we're working on some technical issues, and hopefully we are able to open it up for questions soon.

Q Jeff, let me know if you can hear me, please.

MR. ZIENTS: Yes.

Q Great. Great. I was just wondering if you can say which vaccines in particular will be sent among the 25 million? I assume that the AstraZeneca doses remain under review and are not available. Have you decided, or sorted, which will be the 25 million?

MR. ZIENTS: Good question, and thank you for the question. That is correct. The AstraZeneca doses -- the 60 million AstraZeneca doses -- are awaiting FDA concurrence. So, the 25 million will be comprised of the three approved -- EUA-approved authorized vaccines -- some combination of Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, and Moderna.

MODERATOR: Kaitlan Collins, CNN.

Q Thanks so much, Jeff. (Inaudible) as part of this partnership with COVAX, my question is: Does the U.S. still have a final say where the doses (inaudible) COVAX go? Or is it COVAX making that decision?

And then, just to follow: When will these 25 million be distributed? And are you still confident the remaining 55 will be out by the end of June?

MR. ZIENTS: Okay. So, Jake, why don't I hand it to you on the first COVAX question?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, whether the U.S. still has final say on where the vaccines go, Jeff? Is that -- was that the question?

MR. ZIENTS: Yes. The question on COVAX -- do you want to handle that? And then, I'll handle the second piece.

MR. SULLIVAN: We may be having some audio issues here. But as I understand it, the question was whether the United States still has the final say as to where the doses go that are being shared through COVAX. And the answer is that the U.S., working with COVAX, has taken --

MR. ZIENTS: I'm not hearing Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN -- COVAX has a list of countries -- the doses that are allocated to each of those countries, and we, the United States, have made selections against that list in coordination with them so that we will retain the say in terms of where they go.

Now, in the case of the African Union -- we are sharing with the African Union, who will ultimately make -- be making the

determinations about how to allocate within Africa. And in the case of the Caribbean, we'll be working closely with CARPHA, the public health authority in the Caribbean, who will be making some of the key determinations for where the doses are allocated.

But ultimately, the United States will have the authority to say, "The doses are going here, as opposed to there." But that will be done in very close consultation and partnership with COVAX and, crucially, according to COVAX's formula, and then using the COVAX logistics capacity and delivery capacity to ensure that these doses actually translate into shots in arms that helps save people's lives.

MR. ZIENTS: So, on the second part of the question. We are already sharing (inaudible) -- (audio technical difficulties) -- with Korea. As I mentioned earlier, those doses are in flight now. We've announced plans to share about 13 percent of the vaccines produced for the U.S. by the end of June. That's the most of any nation, and that's the 80 million. So, over the coming weeks, we'll work to get those doses to countries and get shots in arms as soon as possible.

As we do so, we'll work through logistics, like medical agencies, coordinating to ensure safety and regulatory information to share supply teams to ensure that we have the necessary needles, syringes, and alcohol pads; transportation teams to ensure proper temperature storage, prevent breakage, and ensure the vaccine immediately clears customs. So the process to export the first 25 million is underway in coordination with foreign governments.

And the President has committed, as we talked about earlier, to sharing 80 million doses by the end of June, and we will deliver on the President's commitment of 80 million doses by the end of June.

MODERATOR: All right. Last question. And sorry for the technical challenges. Sheryl at New York Times.

Q Hi. Thanks for taking my call. I wonder if you could be a little bit more specific about the 25 percent of the doses that you are reserving for, you know, immediate use -- the flexible doses. Where are those doses going?

MR. ZIENTS: Over to Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Technical difficulties persist. But the answer to the question of where the 25 percent of doses are going is: We will lay out, more specifically, the precise destination of those. The judgment we make about where those go is a combination of where there are specific urgent situations where partner countries are facing crises. And so, some examples of that include -- a portion of those doses will go to India, which has, obviously, dealt with a surge, and we've seen the gripping images coming from that country. Some of them will go to the West Bank and Gaza, which has just, obviously, endured its own form of crisis over the course of the past month. And then there will be other destinations for the remaining doses, and we will lay that all out as those doses are prepared and then shipped.

MR. ZIENTS: Next question.

MODERATOR: We'll do one more question. To Zeke, at AP.

Q Thank you all for (inaudible). Can you say where the doses are coming from? Are they coming from states' inventory or the pool of federal supply right now (inaudible) manufacturers?

And then, for Jake: Can you explain how this is consistent with the President's guidance that there would be "no strings attached" to these vaccines, that the U.S. is still maintaining ultimate say-so about where these doses go and reserving all of these (inaudible) bilateral, such as giving to allied troops rather than (inaudible). Why not just give it all to COVAX to be shared where it's needed immediately?

MR. ZIENTS: So, on the first question, the doses -- the 25 million doses -- are coming from the federal pool of supply. The doses that are at the states' level, those states have ordered those doses and we're working with those states to administer shots in arms so that the millions of Americans who are not getting vaccinated can get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Jake, over to you.

MR. SULLIVAN: Sure. So, first and critically, the United States is not asking anything of any country to whom we're giving doses. We're not seeking to extract concessions. We're not extorting. We're not imposing conditions, the way that other countries who are providing doses are doing. We are doing none of those things. These are doses that are being given -- donated free and clear -- to these countries for the sole purpose of improving the public health situation and helping end the pandemic.

The Korea situation is unique. As the President said when President Moon visited, the animating purpose behind that is actually about the protection of American forces and the forces who serve alongside American forces: the Korean troops who are standing shoulder to shoulder with us in that country.

So it is a unique case and the kind of unique case for which we want to retain some flexibility, which is why we're giving the majority -- the 75 percent or more -- of our doses through COVAX, but maintaining the capacity to allocate doses outside the COVAX formula as necessary. Korea is one case of that.

The West Bank and Gaza, as I mentioned, is another case where we're not asking anything of the people of Gaza or the West Bank, but we feel that given what they are dealing with and the situation on the ground there, it is only right and proper and good for the United States to actually allocate some doses to that country. The same is true with some of the other allocations that we will make.

The President made a commitment to ensure that India received doses and giving them, not just an allocation under the regional portion of this, through COVAX, but an additional allocation from our discretionary portion was something that he wanted to do.

Again, the basic bottom line on this is that the United States is not doing this as some kind of back-and-forth deal, where we're getting something for what we're giving. We are giving these for a single purpose; it is the purpose of ending this pandemic. And we are doing so in a way consistent -- we believe very strongly -- with the public health requirements that will help hasten the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MR. ZIENTS: Why don't we have time for one more question.

MODERATOR: All right, we'll keep going. Let's just go to Weijia from CBS.

Q Thank you so much. My question is actually for Dr. Walensky. As you watch this big push for vaccinations ahead of July 4th -- and this morning on CBS you listed several reasons for why people may not be getting vaccinated yet -- I'm wondering if you are making educated guesses or if you have any data and figures to show why some people are still holding out, especially in the South, where rates are relatively low.

DR. FAUCI: Jeff, I think that Rochelle got kicked out by her computer. (Laughter.)

MR. ZIENTS: Well, you know, I think the important thing is that all Americans have the opportunity to get vaccinated, and that means we need to make it even easier to get vaccinated; that we do answer people's questions -- people who have questions about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine. And as we know, the vaccines -- all three -- are very effective and very safe, but we need to answer those questions.

The good news is confidence in the vaccines has grown across time, as people have neighbors and friends and faith leaders and doctors who have been vaccinated and advise them on their own decision. And the important thing here is that the most trusted messengers are local messengers, including doctors and faith leaders.

So we need to bring the vaccines to where people are and answer the questions that people have. And we are confident

that more and more people will get vaccinated, leading up to the Fourth of July.

Should we try to do one more question, Kevin?

MODERATOR: I think we got to wrap up. But thank you, Jeff.

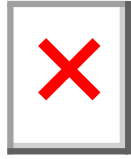
11:43 A.M. EDT

To view the COVID Press Briefing slides, visit https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/COVID-Press-Briefing_3June2021_for-transcript.pdf

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spox. Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Bilateral Meeting with French National Security Advisor Emmanuel Bonne
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 3, 2021 5:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Bilateral Meeting with French National Security Advisor Emmanuel Bonne

Today, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met in Washington with Emmanuel Bonne, National Security Advisor to the President of France, to exchange views on a range of shared global policy issues. They talked about the upcoming G7 leaders meeting and NATO Summit. Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Bonne agreed to continue coordinating on global access to COVID-19 vaccines and supporting negotiations to address the tax challenges arising from globalization. They discussed our work to strengthen and modernize NATO, as well as counter challenges associated with malicious cyber activity such as ransomware, and terrorism. In addition, they discussed Russia, China, Iran, and the Sahel.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, June 3, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 3, 2021 7:18 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, June 3, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:56 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: All right. I have a couple of items for all of you at the top, and some charts. We love charts in here.

In today's encouraging report, initial claims for unemployment insurance fell to their lowest level and below 400,000 for the first time since the pandemic hit. This is just the latest evidence that President Biden's economic strategy and vaccination plans are working. While weekly data can be volatile, since taking office, average claims have fallen by about 50 percent, which you can see in this chart, over the course of time, and by more than 100,000 in last -- in the last month alone.

And earlier this week, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development -- the OECD, as it's commonly known -- one of the leading bodies in analyzing economic growth around the world, increased their projection for U.S. economic growth this year to 6.9 percent due to the strength of the American Rescue Plan and our pandemic response to get Americans vaccinated and lift our economy out of the crises that we inherited.

In fact, the United States is the only major industrialized nation to have its growth projection through 2025 revised upward.

We also learned earlier this week that manufacturing activity in May was near its highest level in more than 15 years.

Okay. I also wanted to note, which many of you saw this morning, that our Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber,

Anne Neuberger, who's been here a couple of times, released an open memo to corporate executives and business leaders urging them to take immediate steps to address the threat of ransomware. Obviously, this is in light of the attack this week -- the ransomware attack this week, and the one from just a few weeks ago.

The federal government, under the leadership of President Biden, has been stepping up to strengthen the nation's defenses against cyberattacks, but we can't do it alone. Business leaders have a responsibility to strengthen their cyber defenses to protect the American public and our economy.

The most important takeaway from the recent spate of ransomware attacks on the United States, Ireland, and Germany, and organizations -- other organizations around the world, is that companies that view ransomware as a threat to their core business operations, rather than a simple risk of data theft, will react and recover more effectively.

So, our Deputy National Security Advisor laid out a small number of highly impactful steps that private-sector companies can take to harden their cybersecurity. We've outlined them here. And again, it was in the memo that she put out just this morning, and that's something we will encourage -- continue to encourage companies to do.

Finally -- lots of news out there this morning -- as you all know -- and many of you were probably on this call -- Jeff Zients and Jake Sullivan announced the President's strategy for global vaccine sharing and their allocation plan for the first 25 million doses to be shared globally.

So, just a couple of highlights from that:

First, having successfully secured enough vaccine supply for Americans, we're donating excess -- donating surplus U.S. vaccine supply and encouraging other countries with surplus supplies to do the same.

He's announced -- the President has announced a U.S. commitment to sharing a total of 80 million doses by the end of June. So that's 25 million doses that will go out as soon as possible, very quickly. A number of those are going to even go out as soon as today. And that is five times the number of doses any other country has committed to sharing and 13 percent of the total vaccines produced by the United States by the end of this month.

Second, we're working with vaccine manufacturers to vastly increase vaccine supply for the rest of the world in a way that can also create jobs here at home. So that -- so we have all these manufacturers who have facilities that will enable us to continue to produce additional supply, even beyond, so that we can provide that to the rest of the world.

We will also work with our partner nations and pharmaceutical companies and other manufacturers to create the kind of global vaccine production and manufacturing capacity and capabilities that can not only help the world beat this pandemic, but also helps prepare the world to respond to future threats.

A couple of additional highlights: One, our approach today was rooted in a couple of considerations. One, ensuring vaccines are delivered in a way that is efficient and equitable and follows the latest science and public health data. Two, providing vaccines for populations across different regions and those most at risk, as well as the nations experiencing surges, high burdens of disease, or low vaccination rates.

And finally, the President -- as the President said, we will not use our vaccine supply and the doses we're sharing with the world to secure favors from other countries, and that's a value from the United States.

So, today, we announced that we're sharing at least 75 percent of these vaccines, which is approximately 19 million, through COVAX, which will -- of the 25 million, I should say, that are going out -- through COVAX, which will facilitate equitable distribution to reach those most at risk. So, approximately 6 million for Latin America and the Caribbean; 7 million for South and Southeast Asia; 5 million with the African Union and Africa CDC. And we're sharing 25 percent of these vaccines with countries with immediate needs and to help surges around the world.

As final determinations are made about additional supply and where it's going, we will provide that to all of you, but wanted to convey how we'd be approaching this and where the initial set of supply is going.

Okay. I hope everyone had a snack.

Alex, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. With the news that the Trump Justice Department sought the records of more journalists, this time from the New York Times, can you talk a bit about Biden's pledge that the practice won't continue under his Justice Department? Can you speak to, in particular, how can the President keep that promise while also making good on his pledge to uphold the independence of the Justice Department?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me -- for those of you who didn't follow as closely what Alex referenced, although I bet many of you did, this is the third announcement by the Department of Justice of attaining records of journalists during the last year of the Trump administration -- so, something they're projecting publicly that happened during the last year of the Trump administration. They've also indicated that this is the last.

As you noted, Alex, the President has made clear that, on his watch, freedom of press will be protected. He laid out core principles several weeks ago, because this is something that he is personally passionate about, and he has a long record with respect to protecting the rights of journalists.

And as he's always been emphatic about -- he was always alarmed by the way the former administration, the Trump administration, abused their power in some cases. And the career, nonpartisan, civil servants often were doing their work with great professionalism and honor and were put in a difficult position.

So, I will say that he's always felt that it's important, as is evident by his words he shared just a few weeks ago, that we should always be refining and improving our approaches to how we approach this issue and any other issue. I don't have anything to preview for you in terms of a specific policy moving forward, but it's something that he is -- that's, kind of, his principles he will approach this from, moving forward.

Q Well, you said the White House had not spoken to the DOJ about this particular issue. Was it just a suggestion to the DOJ? I mean, how is this going to become codified?

MS. PSAKI: Well, obviously, the President spoke to it himself publicly, and we're in touch at the appropriate layers of the White House and the Department of Justice. And -- but certainly this is the position of the President of the United States -- what principles he wants to abide by as President, and he conveyed that publicly, so it wasn't exactly in secret.

Q Sure. And then, on infrastructure: President Biden tried to give Republicans an alternative to funding infrastructure. He suggested a 15 percent minimum tax, rather than a hike in the corporate tax rates. So, can you talk a little bit about how this informs his broader vision? Is this a change to his broader vision on infrastructure? And is he basically proposing that no profitable corporations should be able to avoid taxes? Is that the, sort of, founding principle of that proposal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, on the last one, that's absolutely a principle. I will note -- and I know this was a lengthy factsheet at the time -- but the "book minimum tax," which is the 15 percent minimum tax, was actually in the American Jobs Plan as one of the payfor components.

So what happened over the last couple of days and also in the meeting yesterday is that the President did a thorough review of all of the tax reforms he's proposed -- many of them on the campaign. So he talked about this on the campaign. It was in the American Jobs Plan as a payfor and also is reflected in our budget that we just put out last Friday. And he looked to see what could be a path forward with his Republican colleagues on this specific negotiation.

Now, I think it's important to step back and remember that what -- the proposals about the American Jobs Plan is a

historic investment in infrastructure, modernizing our nation's infrastructure, becoming more competitive around the world. He's proposed ways to pay for it. Right? Others have not exactly done the same in many capacities.

So, this is a way for him to identify pieces that he's long been a proponent of as ways where he feels it would not violate. This would not -- this would -- this should be completely acceptable to a number of Republicans who have said that they -- they want to leave their bottom lines, they want to leave the 2017 tax law untouched.

So I wouldn't say it's a new approach by the President. This is in our budget. It was on the campaign. It was in the American Jobs Plan proposal. He also talked, of course, about the benefit of tax enforcement and how that could be a revenue raiser.

But what really should stand out at this point to people is that opposing this proposal would not -- would mean not only opposing raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans who've done extraordinarily well during the pandemic; it would mean opposing the very enforcement of the 2017 tax law. It would mean maybe having the view that nobody should pay -- that these 50 corporations who didn't pay taxes shouldn't pay any taxes at all. And that certainly is not the view the President has.

Q And one more quick one. Can you clarify the President's position on the filibuster?

MS. PSAKI: In what way?

Q Where does he stand?

MS. PSAKI: I've said -- I talked about it quite extensively yesterday. I'm happy to repeat it -- and often.

But the President's view is that he believes that there should be a path forward for Democrats and Republicans to work together to get the job done on behalf of the American public, whether that is voting rights and ensuring that more people have access to voting rights, or whether that is moving forward on other priority items for him.

He has talked, in the past, about a move back to the talking filibuster. It shouldn't be so easy to invoke the filibuster; that is his view. But it hasn't changed beyond that.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, following up on infrastructure, quickly: The President and Senator Capito had said they aim to reconnect tomorrow. Is that going to be another face-to-face meeting here at the White House, or is that going to be happening virtually?

MS. PSAKI: It's a great question, Monica. I think it could -- I don't have a definite format for you, but it certainly could happen. They're just going to reconnect and engage. It certainly could happen on the phone.

Q And is the expectation from the White House that tomorrow Republicans will offer yet another counterproposal and that that may be the final step in the set of negotiations? Or do you anticipate this will go through the weekend until Monday, June 7th, as you had noted?

MS. PSAKI: I know everybody is excited to work through the weekend. Look, I'm not going to prejudge what Senator Capito will come to the table with tomorrow. I will leave that to her to speak to and other Republicans who have been a part of these good-faith discussions and negotiations.

I will note that this has been a good discussion and -- good, ongoing discussion where we've -- we're working to find areas of agreement. We also feel there are a number of paths forward.

Next week, the House is going to be marking up the American Jobs Plan; Congressman DeFazio will be leading that effort. There are a number of Democrats and Republicans who have talked about working together -- many of you have reported on -- to come up with a proposal where they can all mutually agree on.

So, the President is looking forward to engaging with Senator Capito tomorrow; feels they've had good discussions -- good-faith discussions. But we're also going to keep options open and keep a range of paths open for how we move his ideas forward.

Q And, on vaccines, how does the two-dose regimen factor into the 25 million doses? How many of them are Johnson & Johnson? Or should this be viewed as something that is potentially more for 10 to 12 million people to get vaccinated given, of course, it requires two shots?

And, also, what is the plan for doses that may expire this month or soon? What is the U.S. going to do to ensure that gets there quickly enough to ensure they can actually be viable?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, on the second question, we are going to, of course, look closely to determine that we get doses out as quickly as possible. And, as I noted, 25 million will be going out as quickly as we can logistically get those out the door. And we are going to -- that's certainly a factor as we are working to operationalize this, which is kind of a historic herculean effort to get these doses to all of the communities and countries that we have committed them to.

In terms of Johnson & Johnson, you know, of the doses that will be going out, they will be all approved doses by the FDA, of which Johnson & Johnson is one of them. I don't have an exact breakdown between the three, but you're absolutely correct that, obviously, if it's Johnson & Johnson, it would be one dose; if it's the other two approved -- Moderna and Pfizer doses -- it would require two doses.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Jen, do you feel like you're close to a deal on infrastructure -- that you've significantly narrowed the gap?

MS. PSAKI: I would say, over time, we feel that all parties -- of course, we have been and we certainly feel that Senator Capino [sic] -- Capito and the other Republicans who've been a part of that have been operating in good faith.

Now, and negotiation -- as you know, Steve, from covering a lot of these -- is exactly that. It's seeing how much each side can come closer to the other. And the President has some priorities, including ensuring that we're investing in infrastructure of the future.

And there are areas that are personally important to him: making sure we're rebuilding veterans hospitals; making sure we're making electric vehicles a reality; charging stations, buses, et cetera. Some of these proposals have been in our counterproposal, on the original proposal.

And, certainly, part of negotiating is coming up in numbers.

Q And has he abandoned the plan to raise the corporate tax rate to 28 percent?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely not.

Q Is that off the table?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely not. What the President believes is, one, that corporations can afford to pay a little bit more, and that's a way that can -- we can pay for a range of the bold proposals that he has put forward. But he also took a look at these proposals, and the -- all of the tax proposals that he has put forward over time to find a way where there should be payfors that, based on their -- based on their bottom lines, many of the Republican negotiators should be able to agree to.

Q And lastly, Israel seems to be on the cusp of a new prime minister. What s at stake for the United States here? Does policy change as a result of this leadership change?

MS. PSAKI: We will leave -- which won t be a surprise to you, Steve -- the politics and the determination about political formation in Israel up to the parties there. Israel will remain an important strategic partner, one where we have an abiding security relationship. And that will continue.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: I ll come back to you guys. I m sorry. Go ahead.

Q So, just to clarify: Is the President s position that he would be willing to do away with this increase in the corporate tax rate if Republicans agreed to a minimum 15 percent corporate tax rate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let s take a step back. The minimum -- the book minimum was in the President s American Jobs Plan proposal as a proposed payfor. It was also in our budget. So this is not a new idea; this is a component of what he s proposed for a payfor that he s lifting up as a question as to whether they could agree to that, because it certainly doesn t violate anything about the 2017 taxes. So that s what he s putting forward as an idea that he s asking them where their point of view is.

Q So he s saying it could be one or the other?

MS. PSAKI: Well, no. He believes that we should continue to look at raising the corporate rate; that is a way to pay for a range of ideas. He s got a lot of ideas out there, a lot of bold proposals, including that aren t a part of this infrastructure negotiation. And he continues to believe that corporations can pay more.

But the bottom line is that these proposals he s put forward as payfors in the American Jobs Plan, including IRS enforcement -- which is also in our budget, of course -- and this book minimum tax are ways that, unless you think corporations shouldn t pay any tax at all -- and we ll leave that to others to speak to -- then there should be a way to find a path to agreement.

Q And how was that proposal received by Senator Capito?

MS. PSAKI: I ll leave her -- I ll leave that to her and others to speak to.

Q Okay. The President said yesterday that he s putting Vice President Harris in charge of the White House s efforts to combat voting restrictions around the country. What is this effort going to look like exactly? What is the White House going to do to push back on bills that are making their way through state legislatures?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that the Vice President put out an extensive statement on this just two days ago. And she has this assignment because she asked to lead the effort on voting rights, because it s an issue she is personally passionate about, and she wants to spend time and effort and energy working on.

What she s conveyed -- the President certainly supports and agrees on -- is that there s a federal component here -- continuing to push for legislation to move forward at a federal level -- but there s also an important component of working with grassroots organizations, leaders in states, and others to see how we can push back on laws that have been -- that are moving toward getting approved, that make it harder to vote, and how we can use the power of the vice presidency to activate energy and engagement on these issues.

Q And then, finally: The FBI has been investigating Postmaster General Louis DeJoy in connection with his former business. Does President Biden believe that the Postmaster General should step down or be replaced?

MS. PSAKI: He'll leave -- he'll let -- he'll leave the investigation and the process forward to the Department of Justice.

Go ahead.

Q Going back to infrastructure: I understand that the President offered to repurpose \$75 billion in unspent COVID money after there was some concern from the White House that doing that would jeopardize aid to rural hospitals in the areas where it was intended in the beginning. What changed in that negotiation?

And then, is there any more room for that, given the jobs report and the 20 states not taking enhanced federal unemployment anymore? Could more be taken from unemployment to dedicate to the \$75 billion (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that what he's referencing -- or there might be some openness to -- is pre-ARP money, which passed during the prior administration; there is a tiny, minimal amount left. So that's certainly not going to pay for the majority -- the vast majority of these proposals.

Also, I would note that a lot of this funding -- as we've talked about before -- the vast majority of this funding is allocated, and it is meant to go to, as you noted, hospitals, to firefighters, to keeping law enforcement on the job, to state and localities that have suffered during the pandemic.

So, we've proposed alternatives to pay for these proposals, as we've been talking about a bit in here. Why wouldn't it be a better option for companies that paid no tax to pay 15 percent? Which is still a lower tax rate than even was in the Trump tax package. Why wouldn't it be a better proposal to invest in enforcement -- IRS enforcement -- something that's supported by 84 percent of Republicans in the country?

So, there are a range of ideas out there. The President's bottom line is: He's not going to raise taxes on people making less than \$400,000 a year. He's proposed a lot of different options that don't cross that red line. And he's looking forward to seeing what the other side has to offer.

Q Where did that \$75 billion come from? What pot did it come out of?

MS. PSAKI: The pre-ARP COVID funding.

Q Okay. And then going to the emails with Dr. Fauci: There was an exchange between Dr. Collins and Dr. Fauci referencing a Fox News report, discussing it as -- basically, the lab leak as a conspiracy. Collins denied, you know, jumping to conclusions, and he asserted that his mention of conspiracies was referring to the thought, the rumor that the virus was engineered -- bioengineered as a weapon.

Is that the position of the administration and their top health experts, that this was not engineered? Or is that still an open question and part of this review?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we've spoken to this pretty extensively from here.

Let me just say, on Dr. Fauci and his emails, he's also spoken to this many, many times over the last -- over the course of the last few days, and we'll let him speak for himself. And he's been an undeniable asset in our country's pandemic response. But it's obviously not that advantageous for me to re-litigate the substance of emails from 17 months ago.

We've launched, based on the President's direction, an entire internal review process to use all of the resources across government to get to the bottom of the origins. And that's a 100-day process, and we'll look forward to providing more when that -- or 90 days, sorry -- when it's concluded.

Q Can you speak at all to the Vanity Fair report about this State Department factsheet that came out five days before inauguration? You know --

MS. PSAKI: Five days before this President's inauguration?

Q Correct. Do you know if there was any crossover of that; how that was seen by this administration -- the conclusions that they were trying to put out in the final days of the Trump administration?

MS. PSAKI: I think I'm just going to focus on our own internal review that's going to use every resource in the federal government -- whether that is our health experts, our medical experts, our national security team -- to see what more we can unearth about the origins, which certainly we all want to get to the bottom of.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, back on infrastructure. So just to be clear on this: One trillion in new spending, and the focus on the minimum tax instead of corporate tax hikes. Is this the President's best and final offer to Republicans?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, I think it's important to note we have a range of means for moving the President's ideas and proposals forward. And the President is going to have a conversation with Senator Capito tomorrow. He's very much looking forward to that.

I will tell you, for clarity, that what he put forward would have been new spending on top of a baseline of \$400 billion over five years. That amount of money -- that would be expected to be invested in infrastructure regardless of these talks.

And beyond that, I think, in terms of the payfors, we're open to other options. The President is just not going to raise taxes on Americans making less than \$400,000 a year. If the Republicans want to go back to raising the corporate rate as a part of this specific negotiation, we are absolutely for that, and we think that these corporations could pay more.

If there are other options, great. We're not going to go down the road of user fees or other areas that would raise taxes on the American people.

Q And how much of the plan does that minimum tax cover? Does the White House --

MS. PSAKI: It's in our budget. You can -- you can take a look.

Q And just on the corporate tax rate: Are you confident progressive Democrats in Congress would get behind a proposal that doesn't include an increase in the corporate tax rate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to be clear, the President absolutely thinks that corporations can afford to pay more, and especially -- including corporations that paid zero in taxes over the last several years. That's why it was in his proposal as a payfor. And certainly, a range of members, including progressives, are certainly well aware of what was in the President's American Jobs Plan proposals as payfors.

Q And just on the hack -- the cyber hacking. The White House is telling businesses to take steps to prevent this. You know, what's the message to Americans, to businesses that keep seeing these hacks happening? Would you consider enforcement? Would you consider other regulations that would try to make this, you know, stricter to prevent these cyberattacks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I will say that there has been. Ransomware is a global problem, as I think we -- you all know. And we have seen these attacks -- ransomware attacks, I should say -- we've seen these attacks disrupt organizations around the world, from hospitals across Ireland, Germany, and France, to pipelines, as you all know, in the United States and banks in the United Kingdom.

banks in the United Kingdom.

These attacks have been on the rise for years because these criminal groups are able to make a profit off the backs of businesses, schools, local governments, and more. That's one of the reasons that we're doing our own review internally, which has the focus of four lines of effort -- because we recognize this is an increasing threat; that it is a threat here, but it's also a threat around the world, and certainly one that we'll be discussing on the President's trip in just two weeks.

Our focus is on the destruction of ransomware infrastructure and actors, including through close cooperation with the private sector -- part of that communication; building the international coalition -- hence part of the President's trip; expanding cryptocurrency analysis to find and pursue criminal transactions; and reviewing our own ransomware policies. That's ongoing -- something that's a priority to the President, and that will be a priority in the national security team.

Go ahead, Kaitlan.

Q Does he view the \$1 trillion in new spending as the lowest he is willing to go?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to negotiate from here, but certainly we look forward to the President having the discussion with Senator Capito tomorrow. And as a reminder, there are some other lever -- or some other paths that are currently happening. We're days away from the House marking up the American Jobs Plan. That's something a lot of Democrats in Congress are pretty excited about, as you all know. And also, there are, as has been evidence in much of your reporting, Democrats and Republicans who have been working together to come up, perhaps, with their own proposal.

So we're looking forward to seeing that as well. So we're going to keep optionality on the table, and we'll see how the conversation goes tomorrow.

Q Okay. So he could potentially be open to going lower than \$1 trillion in new spending?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give you any new bottom lines from here, but I think it's important to note that there are a range of options moving forward. And certainly, his approach and his priority is making a historic investment in infrastructure, creating millions of jobs, and seeing how we can do that as quickly as possible.

Q You noted that the markup is just a few days away. Does he see Monday as, kind of, the deadline for any major breakthroughs on where these talks are going?

MS. PSAKI: No. He's going to continue to have conversations with Democrats and Republicans about what the path forward may look like. And certainly it's an important -- it's an important moment in the timeline, of course, because there will be movement then. We've seen Speaker Pelosi talk about how she wants to move forward with infrastructure in June. We've seen Senator -- Leader Schumer talk about how he wants to move forward with infrastructure in July. Those are some realities in the timeline. But the President is not -- we're not here to set new deadlines; we're going to continue those conversations.

Q Okay, just checking. Because the Transportation Secretary did say on Sunday that they do view Monday as a deadline for any breakthroughs on these talks. So President Biden does not view Monday as a deadline?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're going to keep our options open to see what paths we can move forward on. And certainly, the President is not going to accept a deal that doesn't help create millions of jobs and make a historic investment in our nation's infrastructure.

Q Okay. My last question: Before he goes abroad on his trip next week, should we expect any ambassador nominations to come from the White House?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know yet, Kaitlan. We will see. I know that there's an interest in that, and we hope to have more

S0011.

And I would note that one of the processes in the ambassadorial nomination process is that countries have to agree to these selections, and so sometimes that's part of the timeline.

Q Is that holding this up (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: It's not a holdup. It's just part of the process. So --

Go ahead, Annie.

Q In general, when so much of Biden's agenda includes long-term things that will take a while to bear fruit, even once they're passed -- infrastructure being at the top of that list -- is the White House concerned that Congress is moving slower than a snail's pace on everything from democracy reform, to a policing bill, to these endless infrastructure talks, and that it will get harder as you get closer to the midterms for you to tackle your priorities?

MS. PSAKI: No, that's not our view. I would say, first, the American Rescue Plan passed at a pretty rapid speed. That's typically faster than most pieces of legislation, as many of you know, moves through Congress. I mean, not that this is necessarily our model in terms of timeline, but the Affordable Care Act took a year to move through Congress.

And so, we certainly recognize that sausage-making is messy. It takes some time. The President has talked about wanting to sign a bill into law this summer, and there is certainly appetite and interest and a commitment to moving forward on infrastructure from Speaker Pelosi, as well as Leader Schumer.

I would say, as it relates to police reform, we certainly know that coming together -- in order to get that across the finish line, there needs to be agreement from the negotiators about what the path forward looks like. They've said they're making progress; they've been encouraged by the tone of the discussions. That's a positive sign to us, and we're going to continue to support those efforts as they move forward.

Q I guess, just, the question is: You know, how are you going to show voters who are trying to decide if Biden was an effective President, beyond the falling virus numbers, that his approach is working?

MS. PSAKI: Beyond falling virus numbers? Beyond getting a global pandemic under control?

Q (Inaudible) voters.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, Anne -- you know, from polling and from what the American people care about and are focused on -- getting the pandemic under control; ensuring that we're saving tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of lives; making sure that the majority -- more than 70 percent of people in this country are vaccinated so that they can return to their normal lives, which means returning to their jobs, kids returning to school, seeing friends, going to concerts, returning to life pre-pandemic -- that is the number one, two, three, four, five issue on everyone's mind. That has been the President's focus from day one and absolutely how he has spent the majority of his time to date.

Q One other question on Israel. Gantz was here today and met with Jake Sullivan.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q His plan was to ask for a billion dollars in emergency military aid. Is the U.S. expected to grant -- to provide those funds? And if so, does it have any expectation that we would get cooperation from the Israelis on rebuilding Gaza if we did?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't -- I knew we were going to do a readout of that. I don't know if that's come out yet -- the readout of the call.

Q It came out and it didn't mention anything about whether or not those requests would be granted.

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check and see if there's any update on that. It may be that we have to consider their requests. And I'm not sure we'll have a rapid response, but I will check with our team and see if we have any update.

Go ahead, Mara.

Q Thank you, Jen. In terms of the voting -- the ballot bills that are being introduced around the country -- the President spoke out pretty strongly in Tulsa about them -- other than the Vice President, as you said, working with grassroots groups, if you don't have the votes to stop these laws in the state legislatures, and you don't have the votes to overturn the filibuster so you could pass H.R. 1 or the John Lewis Act, what can he do other than engender a public backlash to them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one, we don't accept that -- that that's the case. We're going to continue to press for Congress to move forward with legislation on voting rights. We know it's not always a straight line and that sometimes it takes time. And there needs to be discussion and negotiation.

And in states, it's not just about engaging with community organizations; we're also talking about working with the private sector, working with voting rights groups, strengthening and uplifting efforts on voting rights nationwide.

So this is an across-the-board effort that's not just focused federally, it's also focused on states. It's also focused on local and grassroots organizations.

And certainly, one of the President's lessons from having been -- done this for 50 years or more is that, you know, the engagement and the activism of the American people is often the driver of change. And so a part of this effort is certainly to engage with that.

Q Even though some of these bills have already been signed into law or are about to be (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, laws sometimes are meant to be changed.

Q Okay. I have a question about the cyberattacks. Is this something that he would talk to Putin about? Is it something he thinks that Russia has some responsibility for or could do something to stop? Or what -- how does he -- what is Putin's -- where does Putin fit into these ransomware attacks?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, we expect it to be a topic of discussion at the summit that is happening in just less than two weeks. And the President's message will be that responsible states do not harbor ransomware criminals, and responsible countries must take decisive action against these ransomware networks. So that will be a part of the discussion when he sees him in less than two weeks.

Q And I just have one more quick one, just to put infrastructure to bed. I understand it --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I don't know if it's to bed. (Laughter.)

Q I understand if --

MS. PSAKI: It's like brushing its teeth or something. (Laughter.) I don't know.

Q He's saying -- he's saying that for infrastructure, it's not -- he can -- he has so many payfors it's not necessary to raise the corporate tax, or just enforcement and the book minimum would take care of infrastructure.

Does he believe that raising the corporate tax and raising the tax on people who make more than \$400,000 is still necessary to fund his other proposals like the American Families Plan? Or is he -- or is he -- does he believe that maybe

necessary to take the other proposals into the American Families Plan. I'm not asking you if he still feels that those hikes are necessary for his agenda.

MS. PSAKI: He wouldn't have proposed them and put them in his budget if he didn't think so. I mean, I think there's a math challenge -- not a math problem here somewhere, you know, in that the President has come down in his proposal, and what -- and as we're negotiating with Republicans on an infrastructure package. As you noted, Mara, there's a range of other ideas that he has put forward that he wants to get passed into law: Child Tax Credit, universal pre-K, et cetera. He's also proposed ways to pay for it.

So these are components that would help pay for his proposals in this negotiation. But, certainly, raising the corporate rate is something -- going back to what the rate was in, you know, the early days of the George W. Bush administration -- is certainly something that he feels -- sees as a viable payfor for many of his bold ideas.

Q "Viable payfor" or necessary to pay for it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important to take a step back and remember this is not about -- these proposals were not standalone corporate tax increases. These proposals were an American Jobs Plan to make historic investment in our nation's infrastructure. They were to level the playing field and make universal pre-K eligible -- you know, kids across the country eligible.

So he's proposed a range of ways to pay for it. Those payfors can be moved around. And certainly raising the corporate rate is a -- is an area he feels is a viable, good, positive, essential option.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, in light of the recent ransomware attack, what is the White House guidance to private companies, the private sector about paying ransom?

MS. PSAKI: Our guidance continues to be -- from the FBI -- that companies should not pay ransom because it incentivizes these attacks on other companies.

Q Okay. And then, separately on the -- on a fourth stimulus check idea that is supported by dozens of Democrats in Congress. I know, a month ago, you said, you know, stimulus checks aren't free, and it's really up to Congress to decide whether to move forward on that. I'm wondering, at this point, does the President support that idea? Or does he believe that his American Jobs and Families Plan provide enough economic assistance that a fourth stimulus wouldn't be necessary?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, as he said at the time -- as I said at the time, I should say when you asked this before: The President is certainly open to a range of ideas. There are some who are proposing an elimination of the SALT deduction.

I think I said it the right way.

And there are some who are proposing making the Child Tax Credit permanent. There are some who are proposing additional stimulus. He's happy to hear from a range of ideas on what would be most effective and what's most important to the economy moving forward.

But he's also proposed what he thinks is going to be the most effective for the short term, for putting people back to work, to getting through this pivotal period of time, and also to making us more competitive over the long term.

Q And just to clarify, the President does support an extension of the family Child Tax Credit that's going to start taking effect next month, correct?

MS. PSAKI: It's in -- in his American Families Plan, he's proposed an extension of the Child Tax Credit.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Does the choreography of the Europe trip, having these sit-downs with allies and NATO before Putin, is this meant to effectively project President Biden as a messenger of the West, not just the U.S., when he sits down with the Russian leader?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that his commitment to attend the G7 and NATO predated the scheduling of the summit, just factually, as you all know. But I would certainly say thematically that what you'll see from the President, and him talk about on this trip, is his advocacy for democracy over autocracy -- domestically, here in the United States, but certainly around the world.

And he's always felt that we are stronger when we are working with our partners and our allies -- many of them are in the G7 and in NATO -- and certainly discussing issues as it relates to cyberthreats, the threat of climate change, or problematic behavior from some where we have disagreements -- including Russia, including China -- would certainly be a part of those engagements.

Q Would it be fair to say that that theme you're talking about, the democracy over autocracy, is that maybe his guiding theme through that whole week?

MS. PSAKI: Stay tuned.

Okay. Go ahead, Eugene.

Q The President hasn't nominated a -- someone for the top Antitrust role at the DOJ yet. It's the longest since before H.W. Bush. I'm just wondering if there's a hold-up there. And if so, what is it?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of any particular hold-up. And certainly, he wants to select and nominate the right people for each of these important positions. We can check and see if there's any update on the timeline.

Q And on H.R. 40 -- President Biden was obviously in Tulsa there. I was also there talking to some activists, and they heard from the President and they've heard from this White House that he is supportive of a committee to study reparations, which is what H.R. 40 would do.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But he hasn't called for Congress to pass H.R. 40 or talked about his support for the bill specifically, so I'm just curious if he supports the bill as written that just went through (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, he supports a number of components of the bill, including the funding and the proposal for a study, which he feels would be the next important step forward and something that he feels would be absolutely correct in addressing this moment in history -- these moments in history.

Q But not H.R. 40 as it stands?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more of an assessment of the legislation. But he, of course, supports a study of reparations and feels that would be the best next step.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I know that you don't want to relitigate what happened when Biden wasn't in office and when those e-mails were sent. (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Uh-oh. That's a setup. (Laughter.)

Q Probably not.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q But has anyone from your team briefed the President of what was in those FOIA-ed Fauci e-mails?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of him being briefed on the publicly reported e-mails.

Q And then, given that there were some things that Fauci said privately that contrasted -- contrasted with what he said publicly -- whether it was masks or whether or not someone who had the virus, you know, could have immunity, or you know, other questions as well -- I mean, does he still have confidence in his NIH director? Does this change anything at all -- these e-mails?

MS. PSAKI: No, the President and the administration feel that Dr. Fauci has played an incredible role in getting the pandemic under control, being a voice to the public throughout the course of this pandemic. And, again, I would reiterate a lot of these emails are from 17 months ago or more, certainly predating this administration, but some time ago in -- as we look to history.

Q Just one more. This morning, on "Morning Joe," Anthony Fauci said that one of the ways to get transparency from the Chinese on the origins of COVID-19 was to, quote, "don't be accusatory."

Does the President feel that the initial investigation of the origin of the virus, including that WHO survey that your team had deep concerns over -- was the problem with that that it was too accusatory? I mean, is that a problem that this administration is being accusatory? Or -- I mean, is this a situation where, you know, "we're just following the evidence where it leads"?

MS. PSAKI: I think our primary objective here has been working with the international community -- rejoining the WHO, working with the international community to unite in pressing the Chinese to be transparent, to provide the underlying data so other scientists can take a look at that data, and to participate in a constructive way in the second round of -- the next round -- or the next phase, I should say, of the WHO investigation.

As we noted at the time when we announced our own internal next step here, our 90-day review, one of the things that was happening in the timeline was the Chinese conveying that that was not their inclination.

So, I can't assess what the impacts are. I can tell you what our position is and what we've been pressing for on the international stage.

Go ahead.

Q Yes. Just about the 90-day review. One thing that's not clear is: How is it that the U.S. intelligence officials knew about the workers in Wuhan lab -- that they knew about them getting sick back in 2019, and then, in February, the intelligence officials were saying that they still hadn't ruled out the possibility that the virus came from the lab? But the inquiry didn't happen until late May of this month, and I'm wondering what took the U.S. so long before it launched its --

MS. PSAKI: That's not actually an accurate depiction of the timeline. The President actually asked his intelligence

community to look into -- to do an internal assessment, which then was presented to him in an internal meeting back in March.

Q Yes, but the official -- the 90-day inquiry, the one you're describing, but the full look at this hypothesis, that was not announced publicly -- I mean, people were not aware of -- until May 26. So --

MS. PSAKI: He didn't -- he didn't decide to launch it. The timeline here was: He asked the intelligence team to do an internal review, an internal assessment. When that was done several weeks ago, he asked it to be made public -- to declassify that information. That goes through a process. Sometimes it takes a couple of weeks to do.

When that assessment was done, we were presented with an option for a public statement, and the President decided we wanted to do a more extensive review and tap into our lab scientists and experts, our -- more of our national security team to see what more we can uncover over the course of 90 days. That's the timeline.

Q Yeah, maybe I wasn't saying it -- or maybe I was saying it too specific with the dates. But the question -- the bigger question is: What took the U.S. so long to take it seriously, when there were reports about the possibility of this virus coming from there, you know, way, way (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: We completely refute that argument or notion. Obviously, the President asked his intelligence team to do an internal assessment, which happens all the time. We rarely talk about that publicly. We obviously took the step to declassify that, and that's something that he did early on in his administration.

Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Oh, great. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, Nancy. I didn't mean to skip you.

Q No, that's fine. Come back to (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. (Laughs.)

Q Are you concerned that vaccination rates are slowing down? And with the National Month of Action, if you do not get to that 70 percent goal, what is your plan B? And is there a concern that you have to throw in some more incentives in there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we're not going to prejudge our outcome here on July 4th. That's why we launched the Month of Action and one of the reasons why we are working with every entity that can play a constructive role here. Free beer -- that seems to be very appealing to the public, it seems, by headlines. Krispy Kreme Doughnuts. Getting into raffles for flights. And a range of incentives that states are implementing. Many of them did not come from us, obviously.

Because we recognize that, at this stage -- and we always knew that the rate of vaccination would slow down because we were at a period of time -- we went through a period of time where there wasn't enough supply for the demand, and then we got to a period of time where we had more supply than the demand. And that's why we launched a \$3 billion effort to do local engagements, working with community leader leaders, clergy, other trusted voices, doctors, pediatricians.

But now we're at a one-month -- it reminds me a little bit of political campaigns where you are knocking on doors, you're making phone calls, you're incentivizing -- all legal, of course -- ways to get people to the polls. This is: How can we get more shots in arms? And we're -- we've welcomed the engagement from a range of -- range of entities in the private sector to do exactly that.

I will also say, as of yesterday, about a dozen states had met their 70 percent or higher. And ultimately, this is going to be up to individuals to get shots in their arms. We can take every creative step we possibly can take. We also understand we

don't have 100 percent control here, but we're going to do everything we can from the federal government to reach that goal.

Q He did create this initiative with Shots in the Shops within barber shops across the country. How are you going to work with other, you know, I guess, communities, especially in the South, where there is a concern that those vaccination rates are going down?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you're absolutely right that we are -- and they're going down in different parts of the country, which, again, we anticipated. But in communities and areas where we've seen -- the lower numbers are actually primarily under 40, and they're more among young people.

And so, one of the ways we focused is on how we can reach and engage with the communities that don't have the highest percentage rate. People over 65: there's a huge percentage of people who have received their first and even second doses. And even over 40, it's quite a high percentage.

So, again, what we've learned from our data is that local engagement, working with trusted voices. Maybe it's the primary care physician that somebody has been seeing for 20 years; maybe it's local churches where they go every Sunday or they go more than once a week. We're working at a very local level to do this, and also working through the private sector on, kind of, some of these engagements where it could incentivize some of the communities that have not -- that don't have as high of a percentage rate.

Q And last question: Does the President have an idea of when things would be quote, unquote, "back to normal," especially with these ramping up of vaccine efforts?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you know, we obviously are guided by CDC guidance. But what we've seen -- and they've announced over the last several weeks -- is that, you know, if you're vaccinated, you don't have to wear a mask inside, outside, you know, going into stores. We've seen that in -- around the country, as well.

So, we're already seeing a move toward "back to normal," but it really depends on community to community. And that's the other guidance that we have been providing and emphasizing -- because if a community has a vaccination rate of 80 percent, they are clearly in a different place than a community that has a vaccination rate of 55 percent. So, it's really going to be determinations made at a very local level about what is safe.

Go ahead, Nancy.

Q Just in terms of -- back to the corporate tax rate for a second. If it's something that the President is willing to, you know, drop out of a potential bipartisan infrastructure deal, does the White House see it fitting in as a payfor for the American Families Plan? Or where else could that be slotted in?

MS. PSAKI: We have no shortage of ideas around here, Nancy. I will note that, again, he's put forward a range of ways to pay for his big, bold ideas, including raising the corporate tax rate. And there are a number of components of his ideas that are not in this infrastructure negotiation right now -- and you've referenced many of them -- in the American Families Plan.

I'm not going to predetermine what all the aligning of items will be in the future because that obviously isn't a package that's a part of this specific negotiation. But, certainly, he thinks that raising the corporate rate, ensuring -- asking corporations who have -- many of whom have made a big profit during the pandemic -- to pay a little bit more is a very viable way to pay for ideas moving forward.

Q And just one more thing on the COVID vaccination distribution.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q How does the White House expect to donate 80 million doses without AstraZeneca? Does that mean that the J&J shot will definitely be part of the distribution?

MS. PSAKI: Well, J&J has been approved by the FDA, so it would be a part -- those doses would be a part of what we're distributing, along with Moderna and Pfizer, including in this initial set of 25 million. AstraZeneca, as you know, we're waiting for FDA approval to -- to even approve it to go overseas. That's something that certainly we could utilize those doses, and they would be a part of the doses of the 80 million.

Go ahead, in the -- go ahead. Oh, go ahead, Alex.

Q Yeah, just -- we're weeks and weeks into these infrastructure negotiations, and I'm curious, what does the White House think it has to show for it? What do you think -- what progress would you point to? What would you point to to show that, you know, we're closer to a deal than when this process began?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that it may feel foreign, but the process of policymaking and negotiating can be messy and can -- the sausage-making isn't always beautiful or pretty. So that's what we're in the middle of right now.

And the President has pledged to the American people, when he ran for office, that he would work with Democrats and Republicans to try to get important initiatives forward on behalf of the American people.

This is an example of that. We're having ongoing discussions with Republicans. We feel that those discussions have been done in good faith. The President is looking forward to talking to Senator Capito tomorrow. We also are eager to see what proposal may be put forward by Democrats and Republicans who are talking about what they might agree on.

So, there are a range of paths forward here, and the President remains committed to his goal of signing a bill into law -- historic investment infrastructure -- by the summer.

Q And just one more.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The Remain in Mexico Policy has ended. Is it still your message to immigrants coming from Central America not to come -- that the border is still closed?

MS. PSAKI: Correct. Our message is still: "This is a dangerous time to come." We've been clear in our assessment that the MPP program -- more commonly known as Remain in Mexico -- was quite problematic. It led to dangerous and inhumane conditions along Mexico's northern border, in part because of the camps and the conditions at the camps.

That's something the President talked about, or we've talked about, for some time. And Secretary Mayorkas and DHS determined that the program does not adequately or sustainably enhance border management either.

So, our message continues to be: "This is not the time to come." We want to have an effective immigration system in place, including asylum processing at our border. And that has not changed, but the -- ending the "Remain in Mexico" program is something we've long talked about our commitment to.

Brittany, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President has tasked Vice President Harris with two contentious, if not at least very-difficult-to-wrap-your-head-around, time-consuming issues in American politics: you know, immigration, the Northern Triangle, and race (inaudible) voting rights. It's not just National Space Council stuff that hasn't kicked off yet. Broadband, dealing with labor unions. Should we expect any other major additions to Vice President Harris's portfolio in the coming months -- let

me say, by the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, the President is confident that the Vice President is absolutely up to the task. He sees her as a partner and someone who he -- is playing the role of a modern-day Vice President, which is taking on challenging tasks, tasks that won't be easy. And that's certainly something he felt he did as Vice President, and he is confident that Vice President Harris will do exactly the same thing.

And, as you know, she's traveling to the Northern Triangle next week. She's just taken on this initiative, per her request, on voting rights. She's going to be active on that in the weeks ahead.

So, I can't predict what's going to come our way or what initiatives she'll need to take on over the months ahead, but certainly, these are two big tasks that he's confident in her ability to lead.

Q I know you said earlier that Harris had asked to take on this issue of voting rights. Is that how she's -- her portfolio has been determined. Has she been the one advocating for herself for these other assignments? Or has it been (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Typically a discussion. They have regular lunches, and they discuss areas where they know there needs to be one of them at the helm. And certainly, this is an area where she expressed a direct interest in.

I'm going to have to just wrap it up shortly, but go ahead.

Q Just quickly, a little update on the White House cat. Is that something that is still happening here? Our readers are asking us a lot, so I figured I have a right to ask.

MS. PSAKI: I bet. I've been joking, although maybe it might be true, that we're waiting for a bad news day for that to come out. If you see a tail wagging coming out of the briefing room, you'll know something bad is about to happen. I don't have any update on the cat. I know there's a lot of interest.

Go ahead.

Q What's the symbolic importance of the President's meeting with the Queen at Windsor Castle in the UK? And also, when he sits down with Boris Johnson -- there's also a long history of meetings between American presidents and British prime ministers, but will this one be different because the UK is no longer part of the European Union?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we continue to have a Special Relationship with the United Kingdom, and I'm certain we'll have more to preview early next week about what the trip looks like.

But there's a range of issues of mutual interest. We've talked about some of them in this briefing -- from the future of economic growth in the world, to addressing the COVID pandemic, to security issues around the world.

So they have a range of topics they can clearly discuss, and certainly it should be seen as significant that it's the President's first stop on a foreign trip.

Q And this is his first meeting with the Queen. Is that something he's always looked forward to? Does he have any kind of relationship with her? Obviously the first time.

MS. PSAKI: Who among us wouldn't want to meet the Queen? I don't have anything more personal to read out. I will check and see if he has met her in the past. I believe he has, but let me check on that to confirm for sure.

They issued, of course, a graceful invitation, which he certainly accepted. He's looking forward to seeing her with Dr. Biden, as well, on -- a couple days into his trip.

Q In Tulsa, the President talked about the American Jobs Plan and what it does for closing the racial wealth gap. Does he give a cast-iron guarantee that whatever these negotiations are with Republicans, that will remain intact, there'll be no compromise on racial equity?

MS. PSAKI: Racial equity and addressing racial equity is central to the President's initiatives, his commitments to rebuilding our economy around the country, and certainly he's not going to give up on that.

I'm sorry, I've got to wrap it up for another meeting. Apologize.

Thanks, everyone.

Q Is it fair to call it a 1.4 trillion-dollar plan? Because it's a --

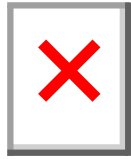
MS. PSAKI: I will allow you to do the math yourself. Thank you, everyone.

1:50 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on APNSA Jake Sullivan's call with National Security Advisor Thanos Dokos of Greece
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 4, 2021 4:23 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on APNSA Jake Sullivan's call with National Security Advisor Thanos Dokos of Greece

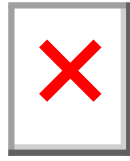
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Dr. Thanos Dokos, National Security Advisor of Greece. Mr. Sullivan welcomed the strong relationship between our countries, including our growing defense cooperation, and conveyed the Biden Administration's commitment to further deepening these ties. They discussed the importance of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. Mr. Sullivan welcomed the resumption of dialogue between Greece and Turkey, and he pledged continued U.S. support for UN-facilitated efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bizonal, bicomunal federation. They also discussed the importance of countering harmful influence in the region, as Mr. Sullivan welcomed Greece's recent efforts to secure its critical telecommunications and energy infrastructure. They agreed to remain in touch on shared interests, underscoring the importance of regional cooperation.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, June 7, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 7, 2021 6:30 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 7, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, June 7, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:42 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Full room. I hope everyone is cozy. So, today, we are fortunate to have a very special guest, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, here to join us and give a preview of the President's trip. And then, of course, we'll do a full briefing after that.

With that, I'll turn it over to Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jen. And thanks, everybody. So, as you all know, this week President Biden will head off to Europe on the first foreign trip of his presidency -- certainly not his first foreign trip, but the first one as President of the United States. And the trip, at its core, will advance the fundamental thrust of Joe Biden's foreign policy: to rally the world's democracies to tackle the great challenges of our time.

We believe that President Biden goes on this trip from a position of strength: dramatic progress against the pandemic at home; strong, projected growth that will help power the global economic recovery as well; renewed American power and purpose; and a rock-solid foundation of alliances that will serve as force multipliers for our global agenda.

At the G7, he will join with his fellow leaders to lay out a plan to end the COVID-19 pandemic with further specific commitments towards that end. He will also join his fellow leaders to announce a new initiative to provide financing for physical, digital, and health infrastructure in the developing world -- a high-standard, climate-friendly, transparent, and

rules-based alternative to what China is offering.

He and the other leaders will endorse a global minimum tax of at least 15 percent, as you saw coming out of the G7 Finance Ministers Meeting a few days ago. And the G7 leaders will make a number of significant commitments on climate, on labor standards, on anti-corruption, and on ransomware.

At NATO, President Biden will address enduring security challenges that have been at the core of the Alliance for a long time, including Russia and coordinating the remaining period of the drawdown of forces from Afghanistan. But they will also focus on emerging security challenges to the Alliance, critically including cyber and the challenge posed by China.

President Biden will also reinforce the importance of burden sharing -- not just the 2 percent commitment that Allies made back in 2014 at the Wales Summit, but the need for Allies to give not just cash, but contributions to exercises and to operations that NATO is undertaking, and to have the kinds of capabilities that make sure that NATO is a full-spectrum alliance with Allies across the board providing the kind of high-end capabilities NATO requires.

At the U.S.-EU summit, the President and European Union leaders will focus on aligning our approaches to trade and technology so that democracies and not anyone else -- not China or other autocracies -- are writing the rules for trade and technology for the 21st century.

President Biden will also have a series of bilateral engagements, including a U.S.-UK summit with Prime Minister Johnson, where the two leaders will reaffirm the Special Relationship and update and upgrade it for the modern era. And we will have further announcements about additional bilateral engagements that he will have both in Cornwall and in Brussels in the days ahead.

After his time at the G7, at NATO, and at the U.S.-EU summit, President Biden will go to Geneva to meet with President Putin. He will do so, of course, after having had nearly a week of intensive consultations with allies and democratic partners from both Europe and the Indo-Pacific. So he will go into this meeting with the wind at his back.

Now, we have made clear repeatedly, and I will reinforce again today, that we do not regard a meeting with the Russian president as a reward. We regard it as a vital part of defending America's interests and America's values. Joe Biden is not meeting with Vladimir Putin despite our countries' differences; he's meeting with him because of our countries' differences. There is simply a lot we have to work through.

We believe that President Biden is the most effective, direct communicator of American values and priorities. And we believe that hearing directly from President Putin is the most effective way to understand what Russia intends and plans.

There is never any substitute for leader-to-leader engagement, particularly for complex relationships, but with Putin this is exponentially the case. He has a highly personalized style of decision making and so it is important for President Biden to be able to sit down with him face to face, to be clear about where we are, to understand where he is, to try to manage our differences, and to identify those areas where we can work in America's interests to make progress.

When President Biden returns to Washington next week, we believe that we will be in a materially stronger position to manage the major threats and challenges this country faces: COVID, climate, China, cyber, Russia, and shaping the rules of trade and technology for the future.

So, with that, I'd be happy to take any questions that you have.

Yeah.

Q Thanks, Jake. Is this the right time to be having a one-on-one meeting with Vladimir Putin so early in President Biden's presidency, before he's met one-on-one with so many other world leaders, and at a time when there isn't a specific deliverable that the White House is looking to achieve from the one-on-one meeting?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, we don't think in terms of U.S.-Russia summits as being about deliverables. Because if you're going to wait for really significant deliverables, you could be waiting a long time, conceivably. So what we need to think about this summit as doing is fundamentally giving us an opportunity to communicate from our president to their president what American intentions and capabilities are and to hearing the same from their side. That has value in and of itself.

Secondly, in terms of the timing, it is hard from our perspective to find a better context for a meeting with the Russian president than after time spent with the world's leading market economies -- the G7 -- plus India, South Korea, Australia, and South Africa; after a meeting with all of his fellow leaders at NATO; after a meeting with the presidents of the European Union; and then, and only then, going into this session to be able to talk through the complex set of issues in the U.S.-Russia relationship. That, from our perspective, is the right context within which to engage Russia.

And as far as whether it comes too early in his presidency, if you think about what we've dealt with from the outset on Russia, it's been a busy time: We've extended the New START agreement. We've imposed costs for election interference and for SolarWinds. We've dealt with a Russian buildup on the Ukraine border. And, of course, we are contending with a range of issues in the cyber and ransomware domain. So, we feel that it is an effective and appropriate context and time period for us to have this summit.

Q And then, just as a follow-up to that: The Ukrainian President did an interview today and implored President Biden to meet with him first, before Mr. Biden sits down with Vladimir Putin. Is that something that you're considering? If not, why not?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, actually, I have come into this briefing room from the Oval Office where President Biden was on the phone with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine. This is a call that they had been planning to make in advance of President Biden going to Europe and meeting with President Putin. They had the opportunity to talk at some length about all of the issues in the U.S.-Ukraine relationship. And President Biden was able to tell President Zelenskyy that he will stand up firmly for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and its aspirations, as we go forward. And he also told President Zelenskyy that he looks forward to welcoming him to the White House, here in Washington, this summer after he returns from Europe.

Q Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q Hi, Jake. Thank you. We know that Afghanistan is going to be discussed with our NATO Allies. There's been a lot of concern about replacing some of those U.S. assets, such as the drones, to be able to fight against the Taliban. Can you bring us up to speed on where are the negotiations with Pakistan? And would the United States like to have a drone base in Pakistan?

MR. SULLIVAN: So I'm not going to get into the details of our negotiations with Pakistan. I will only say this: We have had constructive discussions in the military, intelligence, and diplomatic channels with Pakistan about the future of America's capabilities to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a base from which al Qaeda or ISIS or any other terrorist group can attack the United States.

But in terms of the specifics of what that will look like, that will have to remain in those private channels as we work through them.

What I will say is that we are talking to a wide range of countries about how we build effective, over-the-horizon capacity, both from an intelligence and from a defense perspective, to be able to suppress the terrorism threat in Afghanistan on a going-forward basis.

Q Jake, two questions -- one with Putin and one here back at home. With Putin, the President is going into this meeting

where there's great tension between both leaders. And let's talk about the trust factor: How can you trust anything Vladimir Putin says in this sit-down when the President comes back? You say you're going to learn what he's thinking and what he wants to moving forward. How can you trust that, as Vladimir Putin has already smeared the President's name? How can you do that? How can you trust?

MR. SULLIVAN: Taking the measure of another president is not about trusting them. And the relationship between the U.S. and Russia is not about a relationship of trust. It's about a relationship of verification. It's about a relationship of clarifying what our expectations are and laying out that if certain kinds of harmful activities continue to occur, there will be responses from the United States.

Q What are those responses?

MR. SULLIVAN: And our -- well, we will lay those out for President Putin in this meeting, and he will understand fully where the United States stands and what we intend to do.

But one thing I will say, April, is we believe fundamentally that our capacity to ensure that harmful and disruptive activities against the United States do not continue unabated is to be able to communicate clearly, directly -- not by negotiating in public, but by explicating our position and our capabilities in private. And that's what President Putin intends to do.

Q My second question, Jake, on voting -- the For the People Act. If it is not passed, what is the national security issue with it? Is there a national security issue with it if it's not passed? Because we've heard so much over the past few years about issues of voting. If that is not passed, is it a national security issue?

MR. SULLIVAN: I would say the basic notion of democratic reform and voting rights in the United States is a national security issue. We are in a competition of models with autocracies, and we are trying to show the world that American democracy and democracy writ large can work, can effectively deliver the will of the people. And to the extent that we are not updating, refurbishing, revamping our own democratic processes and procedures to meet the needs of the modern moment, then we are not going to be as successful in making that case to the rest of the world -- to China, to Russia, or to anyone else. And so there is a national security dimension to this today, just as there was through the decades of the Cold War.

Yamiche.

Q Thank you so much. My question is: Can you talk a bit about how President Biden plans to convince, especially our European allies, that President -- former President Trump was an anomaly in some ways -- all the things that he did to, in some ways, traumatize those leaders; calling into question the need for NATO. What's the plan there? And is he concerned that those scars are going to be deeper than his ability to address them in this one trip?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think our view going into this trip is that actions speak louder than words, and that showing that the United States is capable of turning the corner on the pandemic; showing that the United States is capable of making the dramatic investments that will pull us up and out of this economic recovery and help power global growth; showing the world that we are ultimately capable of making the investments in R&D and infrastructure, innovation, and workforce -- ultimately, setting that foundation for this country will be the most effective way to show the rest of the world that the United States has the power and purpose to be able to deliver as the world's leading democracy.

So that's what he's going to try to demonstrate. And he, as I said at the outset, feels he goes into this from a position of strength because of the record he's built up over the course of the first four months.

Q And on voting, can you talk a little bit -- is Congress being briefed on the idea of voting as a national security issue? And if the For the People Act isn't passed, what will that say globally, given the fact that you just laid it out as a national security issue?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I will say, humbly, as the National Security Advisor, I don't tend to get into the middle of the debates up on the Hill on issues like voting rights. All I can say is the bottom-line principle -- not a specific question about the vehicle or the timeframe, but rather the fundamental principle -- which is that a strong, vibrant American democracy that protects voting rights is the best way for us to make the case to the world that our model, and not some other model, is the right model to actually vindicate the will of the people here in the United States, and for other democracies to be able to do the same.

Yeah.

Q Two quick questions. One, a follow-up on Yamiche. The biggest concern of some of our allies has been, over the last four years and even before, just the rapid swaying back and forth of our foreign policy. Now, you can't assure anyone what's going to happen after you leave, but what assurances and what will you tell our allies that, despite what we've seen in the past, that we have returned to normal?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think the best way to answer that question -- and this builds on what I said to Yamiche -- is what President Biden can do is show the rest of the world what America is capable of. If we can lead the world in ending the COVID-19 pandemic more rapidly; if the growth we are powering for the American people here at home helps power a global economic recovery; if we can help rally, as the President did with his Climate Leaders Summit, action on climate -- on the climate crisis so that we actually beat this thing, ultimately, that is going to be the best way for people to say, "Hang on, the United States can do this. They can deliver and we will stand up and stand behind them." And that is the approach that he has taken from the first day he's been in office. That's the message he's going to carry into these meetings.

And what I believe we will deliver just out of the G7 alone, in addition to the other meetings he's going to have on this trip, will show that the United States retains profound capacity to help rally the world's democracies to solve big problems.

Q And the second question --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q Yes --

Q And I had a second question. The second question was: Will you look at ransomware as a national security priority? How will we address that in the G7?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, ransomware is a national security priority, particularly as it relates to ransomware attacks on critical infrastructure in the United States. And we will treat it as such in the G7. We will treat it at such at every stop along the way on this trip.

Yes.

Q Thanks, Jake. What is the point of meeting Putin in person if there are no deliverables and there's no real trust to that relationship? Why does the President think in-person is the most effective way to address Putin when you could just do this on the phone?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, first of all, there's no substitute for face-to-face engagement in any dynamic. He's not just going to Geneva. Right? He's going to Cornwall. He's going to Brussels. He will have the chance to look in the eyes of literally dozens of leaders over the course of his time, and all of that will be better than just operating on the telephone. That's --

Q I'm asking about Putin though, not the other leaders. If there's -- if the relationship --

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, but I --

Q -- is centered around these issues that are so complicated, what does this President believe -- what does he believe he can bring to the table with Putin? And how does he assess Putin as a leader that he can talk to across the table?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, the reason I answered with "all the other leaders" is this isn't something unique to Putin. Meeting face to face is not just something you do with Vladimir Putin; it's something President Biden is going to do -- I think, all told, when you add it up -- with somewhere approaching 35 or 36 leaders just on this one trip alone. And he has welcomed the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of Korea. He will welcome other leaders here over the course of the summer, because face-to-face engagement is just of a different order of magnitude of diplomatic engagement from doing it over the phone.

Second, on this notion of deliverables in the U.S.-Russia summit: At the end of the day, what we are looking to do is for the two presidents to be able to send a clear signal on question -- to their teams on questions of strategic stability so that we can make progress in arms control and other nuclear areas to reduce tension and instability in that aspect of the relationship. And then, second, being able to look President Putin in the eye and say, "This is what America's expectations are. This is what America stands for. This is what America is all about."

This, we believe, is an essential aspect of U.S.-Russia diplomacy because President Putin is a singular kind of personalized leader, and having the opportunity to come together in a summit will allow us to manage this relationship and stand up and defend American values most effectively.

Q Following up on the ransomware issue, given how pervasive it is and has been for some time. U.S. officials have talked about the need for international allies to work together on this issue. Are you looking for specific commitments from allies? What do you want to come out of the G7 and NATO summit with, as it pertains to ransomware to help better protect the U.S.?

MR. SULLIVAN: So one of the things we'd like to see out of the G7 is the start of an action plan that covers a number of critical areas.

First, how to deal with the -- increasing the robustness and resilience of our defenses against ransomware attacks, collectively.

Second, how to share information about the nature of the threat among our democracies.

Third, how to deal with the cryptocurrency challenge, which is -- lies at the core of how this -- these ransom transactions are played out.

And then, finally, how we collectively speak with one voice to those countries, including Russia, that are harboring or permitting cyber criminals to operate from their territory.

So those are some of the things that we are looking for as outcomes out of the G7+. We will also speak, in the NATO context, about cyber threats, particularly as they relate to critical infrastructure, as being of a different order of magnitude of security threat that the Alliance has to concern itself with in a way that it hasn't historically. But it's got to become a priority on a going-forward basis.

Q Jake?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you so much. Okay, so about the infrastructure financing problem that you were talking about is going to be announced, which countries is the United States and G7 look at? Is Brazil one of these developing countries to receive this financing?

And if you could update us about the discussions with Brazil on 5G, because you have a delegation from Brazil here discussing with NSC officials.

And, finally, why hasn't President Biden still talk with the Brazilian president, Bolsonaro? Why are -- why he hasn't? And what is the message that this send to Brazil? It's June. He's already going to -- for international trip. He has not yet speak with Brazil. So why is that?

MR. SULLIVAN: So there are a number of leaders that he hasn't had the opportunity to speak with. And one of the reasons why, of course, as many people in this room know, is he's had an unbelievably packed and crowded agenda, particularly domestically, and trying to beat the pandemic and get on the road to COVID-19 recovery.

So he's looking forward to making sure he gets to touch the leaders of every significant country in the world over the course of the coming weeks and months.

On 5G, we have made clear our view and we will communicate that with the delegation visiting from Brazil that we believe that trusted vendors for 5G are the best way, both for -- to secure telecommunications networks and to ensure that a country's democratic values can be protected.

And then, finally, I'm not going to get ahead of the announcements on the financing for infrastructure package. I will let that speak for itself. But I will say, it will cover all of the significant regions of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean.

Q Mr. Sullivan?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q Thank you there. When the United States rejoined the World Health Organization, you wrote in a statement that that meant, quote, "holding it to the highest standards." Does that mean that the World Health Organization had failed to meet those standards at some point? And then, what specifically is this administration doing to make certain that they are held to those standards?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, we have made clear from the beginning of this administration, and in rejoining, that we believe the WHO does need to be reformed. Some of those reforms are more programmatic and bureaucratic; they relate to ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness in responding to things like the outbreak of COVID-19. Some of them are about making sure that there is not undue influence or interference by any single member state or country in the WHO.

And then some of them relate to very targeted issues like the COVID-19 origins investigation where I have personally, and we collectively, have been quite vocal about our view that there needs to be a second round to this investigation that truly gets to the heart of the matter, which is the original data and original information that is still being withheld by China. And our hope is that in the coming months we will see a credible international investigation progress, including in respect to those items.

Yeah.

Q Thank you, Jake. What is your expectation for when the U.S. will lift travel restrictions on the UK and on Europe? And what are your current concerns? Why haven't they been lifted yet? What specifically are you looking for to have happen -- for that to happen?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, let me start by saying it doesn't really matter what I am looking for personally, because at the end of the day this is a process being driven by science and public health guidance. And so it is ultimately up to the public health professionals in the U.S. government to make that determination.

We have heard very clearly the desire of our friends in Europe and in the UK, to be able to reopen travel across the Atlantic Ocean, and we want to see that happen. But we have to follow the science and we have to follow the guidance of our public health professionals. So we are actively engaging with them to determine the timeframe.

And I can't give you a date today, but I will tell you that we recognize the concern and we are fundamentally being guided by objective analysis in this regard.

Q What is your response to arguments that those continuing restrictions on the UK and European countries are unfair, given that there are other countries that the U.S. does not have travel restrictions on?

MR. SULLIVAN: My view on this is: We have been transparent and clear about the basis for our travel restrictions. We have done so through a process that has been guided by science and evidence. That is how we've determined how the travel restrictions have been applied and to whom, and that is how we are going to proceed on a going-forward basis.

This could -- this administration's commitment to that kind of analysis is fundamental. It is how -- it is what has guided every aspect of our response to the pandemic, including this issue.

Q Thank you very much, Jake. Nice to see you. I'm Jeanne Pak with (inaudible) Korea. And regarding about the North Korea issues, is there a possibility of U.S. and South Korea, Japan trilateral meeting at the G7, and you'll be discussing with the North Korean issues?

MR. SULLIVAN: We don't currently have a trilateral scheduled between the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, but I will tell you there's a possibility for virtually anything in these small spaces where you have just a -- you know, in this case, 10 or 12 leaders in person there in Cornwall. But there's nothing currently on the schedule.

Q We have a logistical question, actually. Do you expect President Biden and President Putin to spend any time together alone, or do you expect that staff and aides will be present throughout all this summit? And can we expect a joint press conference between the two leaders? Is this something that you're actively pushing for?

MR. SULLIVAN: All of that is still being worked out. So when I've got more to report on the modalities, both in terms of how the meeting will be structured and the press elements, we'll come back to you.

Q Jake, I want to ask you about the relationship specifically with two leaders. It was announced last week that the President will have a bilateral with the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. I know that talks have been challenging with him. Can you describe what the administration is hoping to accomplish on that?

And also, secondly, with the UK, what is the dynamic, or what's the personal relationship between Boris Johnson and Joe Biden? I know we've heard about the Special Relationship between the two countries. What's their relationship like?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, President Biden and President Johnson -- or Prime Minister Johnson -- have had the opportunity to have a couple of phone calls. And those phone calls have been warm. They've been constructive. They've been very much down to business. They've gone through extensive agendas in both of them. And I expect that their meeting together will just cover the waterfront. I mean, really, a wide range of issues where the two of them and the U.S. and United Kingdom do see eye to eye. They've been collaborating on this plan to end the pandemic. They've been collaborating on this infrastructure financing plan. They've been collaborating on virtually every aspect of the G7 agenda. And they talked very closely about how the Leaders Summit that President Biden hosted on climate could help provide the runway into COP26, which Prime Minister Johnson will be hosting in Glasgow.

And then, as far as President Erdoğan is concerned, they will have a bilateral on the margins of the NATO Summit in Brussels, and there, too, it's going to be a broad and expansive agenda -- issues right there in the region; of course, in the Eastern Mediterranean with Syria, with Iran, Nagorno-Karabakh -- but also the role that Turkey will play on a going-

forward basis with respect to negotiations and diplomacy in Afghanistan and how the U.S and Turkey itself deal with some of our significant differences on values and human rights and other issues.

And President Biden knows Erdoğan very well. The two men have spent a good amount of time together, and they are both, I think, looking forward to the opportunity to really have a business-like opportunity to review the full breadth of their relationship.

I m afraid I have to go. I m sorry, guys.

Q One more question about Ukraine -- about the Ukraine (inaudible). Can we ask you one question about Ukraine --

MR. SULLIVAN: Sure.

Q -- and whether President Zelenskyy -- you mentioned his ask to have Ukraine join NATO. What message will the President deliver in response, if it came up?

MR. SULLIVAN: So they were able to talk about, basically, every significant aspect of the relationship, including with respect to the U.S.'s support for Ukraine security. But in terms of the specifics of what they discussed, I m going to let the two of them speak for themselves. I m not going to read out that aspect of the meeting. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, Jake.

Okay. All right, well, what a good way to start off a full briefing room -- our first full briefing room day since the President took office.

A couple of updates for all of you at the top:

Over the weekend, the Department of Health and Human Services released new data that showed more than 31 million Americans have gained access to quality affordable healthcare through the Affordable Care Act -- a record high that demonstrates the strength, durability, and impact of the historic law after years of relentless attacks on Americans' healthcare.

President Biden also reunited with President -- former President Obama for the White House's weekly conversation to share the news, discuss how the administration's special enrollment period has allowed more than 1.2 million Americans to enroll in health coverage, and highlight how the American Rescue Plan has lowered premiums and healthcare costs.

Another update from the weekend: Over the weekend, the G7 finance ministers also endorsed President Biden's plan for a global minimum tax of at least 15 percent. This is a historic unprecedented progress made possible by the President's and Secretary Yellen's commitment to a global tax system that is equitable and equipped to meet the needs of the 21st century global economy.

The G7's endorsement is another example of America reasserting its leadership on the world stage -- something we look forward to doing later this week. And establishing a global corporate minimum tax will help level the playing field for the United States, ensure fairness for the American middle class and working families everywhere, and focus competition for business where it belongs.

Last item for all of you: Today, the Department of Justice announced two new steps to stem the epidemic of gun violence in our country, following through on the President and Attorney General's announcement in April of a set of initial actions. First, the DOJ has issued a notice of proposed rulemaking to strengthen regulations on stabilizing braces that helped convert pistols into dangerous short-barreled rifles, which it appears the perpetrator of the Boulder shooting used -- now that we know more.

The Department is also publishing model legislation and guidance that will make it easier for states to implement red-flag laws -- something that's already law in a number of states across the country -- which studies have shown can be effective in reducing gun violence, including by preventing suicides and even potential mass shootings. This is part of the President's longstanding commitment to addressing the scourge of gun violence, which continues to claim far too many lives every single day.

Josh, kick us off.

I'm very thrown off by where everyone is seated. I'll -- (laughter) -- I'll adjust to it. Okay, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions. First, Senator Manchin laid out the argument that election reform should be bipartisan because anything partisan would, quote, "destroy the already weakening binds of our democracy." Does the President agree with that sentiment, or is that sentiment untenable because of the state-level changes being pushed by Republicans?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first let me say that the President knows he was elected to deliver on -- deliver for the American people. And his view is that that includes making voting more accessible for people across the country -- making it easier and not harder to vote.

And he's made clear that there's a real need for federal legislation to protect the sacred right to vote, and we are not going to wait for Congress either. That's why we've taken some steps through our Department of Justice and also why we've -- he's asked the Vice President to lead this effort both in working with Congress, but also at the state level. Because as you noted, there are a number of problematic laws that have been moved -- that have moved forward in states across the country.

I think where we are at this point is, clearly, Senator Manchin has stated his point of view in his opinion piece over the weekend, which many of you, it sounds like, have read, as did we.

But the President's view is that we need to move forward not just with the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, but also with legislation, like the For the People Act, which enjoys, I should note, broad support for -- from the American people and -- because it does a couple of things that he thinks are essential: It provides basic protections for registering to vote and how we cast a ballot; it will prevent politicians from drawing congressional district lines for partisan advantage; to ensure that people are choosing the representatives that will help end the corrupting power of money and politics.

Now, in terms of the path forward and what that looks like and the mechanics of how it moves forward in Congress, the President is quite open to and willing to work with anyone to enact commonsense reforms that benefit the American people. We will stay lockstep with Democratic leadership on what that looks like from here, but I don't have anything to preview about the next steps.

Q And then, secondly, the Justice Department has had a series of policy changes with regards to its relationship with reporters and pursuing reporters' sources and possible prosecutions. I was wondering: Under this administration, will the Justice Department still be trying to compel reporters to name sources who are anonymous or unnamed in court? Will they continue to do that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that the announcement from this weekend -- or the statements from this weekend, which are entirely consistent with the President's comments he made just a few weeks ago, make very clear that going forward, consistent with the President's direction, the Department of Justice, in a change to longstanding practice, as many of you have noted in here before, will not see compulsory legal process in leak investigations to obtain source information from members of the news media doing their jobs.

That is entirely consistent with delivering on the President's comments just a few weeks ago and entirely consistent with his policies now. It doesn't mean -- there are still -- it's an independent Justice Department. They will proceed, of course, with a range of investigations, which, as we noted in our statement on Saturday morning, we did not know about the gag

order until minutes before the reporting came out on Friday night. So that's appropriate, but at the same time, moving forward, consistent with the President's policies, they will not be proceeding with those actions that have been consistent over the last several years.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q The President is not happy with the Capito counteroffer. What happens now on infrastructure?

MS. PSAKI: A couple things, Steve. One: First, the President, I expect, will speak with Senator Capito before he leaves on his trip -- today or tomorrow. I know we noted Monday in our readout on Friday, but we're looking to schedule that call, and it'll be prior to his departure on Wednesday morning.

As we noted also in our statement on Friday, the offer did not meet the President's bar of growing the economy, tackling the climate crisis, and creating new jobs. And I would remind all of you -- both in our counteroffer, but then in a lot of your reporting -- it's clear the President has come down by about a trillion dollars. What is -- what we've seen on the other side is they only come up by a small percentage of that.

So, look, moving forward, he's looking forward to having a discussion with Senator Capito today or tomorrow, and he certainly is eager to see what can -- what that discussion can entail, knowing that in any discussion, any negotiation, both sides come closer together. That's always the objective. He's come down quite a bit. We're looking to see more.

Now, at the same time, there are a lot of paths forward here, as many of you know, even though our muscles have atrophied a bit on this -- on this front. One is, Congressman DeFazio, as we noted in our readout on Friday as well, is marking up -- leading the markup of the House legislation that has a lot of overlap with the American Jobs Plan this week and a lot of -- it's a -- that is a path that has a lot of opportunity to move forward in the House. As we know, sometimes the House and the Senate may move forward on different paths, and we've seen that take place on lots of pieces of legislation.

The third pathway I would just note is there are Republicans and Democrats who have been out there talking about their eagerness to be a part of this discussion and a part of an opportunity to move forward on the President's bold ideas and historic investment in infrastructure. So we'll look forward to seeing what they have to offer and what conversation we can have with them.

So all of these paths we expect to continue to make progress on this week.

Q Separately, what is the status of the semiconductor reviews? Should we expect that today, tomorrow? When exactly?

MS. PSAKI: Soon, Steve. I would expect you will have more this week. I know there is a lot of interest and eagerness on hearing what the status of the review is and any policies that have -- will come out of that review.

Q On infrastructure, does --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q On infrastructure -- back on that -- does the President have an agreement with Senator Manchin that if the bipartisan talks fails, then Manchin will support the -- using reconciliation to pass infrastructure?

MS. PSAKI: I'm certainly not going to speak on behalf of where Senator Manchin is. Obviously, he's spoken to his interest in making historic investments in infrastructure. He's also spoken to his openness to raising the corporate tax rate. Those are all positive signs, in our view. We'll let him speak for himself on where he stands on any pieces of legislation.

Go ahead.

Q Given the concessions that you just outlined that the President has made so far, should we expect this to be the final round of negotiations with Senator Capito?

MS. PSAKI: I think we have to see where the conversations go over the next day or so. And we're certainly not going to prejudge them.

Again, look, the President has come down by approximately a trillion dollars. We'll see where the conversation goes when he has the opportunity to speak with Senator Capito. And there are a number of paths where we can move these ideas forward at the same time.

Q You mentioned your support for this markup that's happening on Wednesday. Is that a signal -- should we read this as some kind of signal to your Republican counterparts that you are ready to go at this alone?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's only just a statement of what's happening as a bill becomes a law, which is that a leader in the House is moving forward with marking up a piece of legislation that has quite a bit of overlap with the American Jobs Plan the President proposed.

So, the time is not unlimited here, as we've stated from the beginning, nor is the President's willingness to compromise. He has areas where he wants to see greater investment. He made clear that the proposal -- or the offer put on the table didn't meet his own bar, but we're very open to where the discussion goes from here. And he's looking for the opp- -- looking forward to the opportunity to talk with Senator Capito, as well as others who may come forward with ideas about how to move this forward.

Q And just one more on this, sort of, big picture. Secretary Buttigieg had said that, you know, by today, you had hoped to see a clear path on infrastructure. Do you have a sense that there is an emerging clear path?

MS. PSAKI: We have several paths. That's the good sign.

Go ahead.

Q Is there a new deadline that the President has set for progress on infrastructure? I know there -- you know, there was Memorial Day; now you're outlining a few different paths. Is there a time in which he's going to make a decision about which one he's going to take, given the deadline keeps moving?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, what we said is, by Memorial Day, we would hope to have a sense of where it looked like moving forward, and we do. We have a couple of paths forward. We don't know what the end outcome will look like, as you typically don't as a bill is moving its way to becoming law. And there are several paths forward as I've noted, so we're going to continue to work on all of those lines.

I would also note that Speaker Pelosi has said she wants to move forward with legislation on infrastructure in the House in June. That's exactly what's happening here. Leaders -- Leader Schumer said he wants to move forward in July. Again, the House and Senate can be on different timelines and pathways.

Q And then, just a quick follow-up on the voting rights. Did Manchin give the White House a heads up that this op-ed would be coming out? Did you guys have any sense of how firm his position was on this legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to get into any channels of private conversation with Senator Manchin or any other senator.

Q And then, just on the Vice President: Obviously, you know, last week, the President said that she was going to take a leadership role in --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- in voting rights. Democrats have warned that if, you know, if Washington doesn't take action, that the midterms will be quite difficult given the changing voting laws. Is there going to be a more -- you know, are we going to see signs of more urgency from the White House about taking action on voting rights? Obviously, the President has had a lot of lawmakers in the Oval Office to talk about infrastructure. Will we see more signs of an increasing focus on trying to make progress on voting rights?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. But I would also note that, early on in the presidency, the President signed into law an executive order that put in place a number of positive steps forward on voting rights, something -- an action he could take without Congress. We've also empowered the Department of Justice, of course, to take actions to implement some of these policies. So, we're not waiting.

I would also note that the fact that he asked his Vice President -- well, or he -- they agreed, I should say, since it was her ask -- but that she would lead this effort moving forward tells you what a significant priority it is for this White House.

As you know, she's currently on a trip to the Northern Triangle. She'll be back, and I'm certain you'll hear more from her soon.

Go ahead, Phil.

Q Voting rights, Jen. Back on voting rights, real quick.

MS. PSAKI: I'll go to you next, April. I promise. I'm just jumping around so I don't forget.

Go ahead, Phil.

Q I just have a bigger picture one, and then one more to drill down on infrastructure. What's the President's message, or what's your message to Democrats, particularly progressives who've started to get a little bit antsy that, you know, the window is closing; we went through this back in 2009; it's time for us to move; it's not just infrastructure -- if you don't move infrastructure, the rest of the \$4 trillion agenda doesn't move either? What's -- how does the President, kind of, calm that down, if he does?

MS. PSAKI: I think -- I think his message is: He remains absolutely committed to moving forward with a historic investment in infrastructure, and also to put -- pushing forward the American Families Plan that will help level the playing field, lift up the next generation of workers, ensure there is universal pre-K and access to free community college.

These are all initiatives that he has a commitment to moving forward on. And part of the discussion, which we talked about a little bit last week, is also about tax reform and ensuring there's a way to pay for a range of these ideas. It's not that one is assigned by a blood oath to one piece of -- you know, one piece of the agenda is assigned to one piece of a payoff.

There's opportunity to move forward with several components of the President's agenda. We do have time. We're not going -- we're not using the timeline of the Affordable Care Act as a model here, Phil. But as you know, and anyone here knows, it takes time to move these things forward, to get Democrats on board, to get Republicans on board.

Ultimately, we're looking to have enough of a coalition to move forward on these bold, historic ideas, and we obviously don't have that at this moment, but we're working toward that.

Q And then, just to drill down a little bit on the -- on June 9th markup. I mean, this is Surface Transportation package.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q It doesn't have -- most Republicans are cool to it right now. Can you elaborate how that is a pathway -- a viable

pathway forward, given you're looking for a bipartisan pathway right now? Or, kind of, what the thinking is behind that markup in that piece of legislation.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important to note, primarily, because it has a great deal of overlap with the American Jobs Plan, and certainly it provides an opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to vote to support a historic investment in infrastructure. Obviously, a markup is just the beginning stage of the process; there's some time to go. But it's important to note because it is a piece of legislation that's moving its way forward, even as these negotiations are continuing.

Okay. Go ahead.

Q And you said you'd come back to me next.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, I'm sorry. April, you're right. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q Yes. Back on the issue of voting rights: You said the President issued some executive orders on voting rights, but they don't deal with the issue of Shelby vs. Holder 2013 when it comes to preclearance. So how do you equate that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wasn't intending to equate it. The question earlier was broadly about voting, right? It was not about whether or not it's essential to move forward with legislation that would make voting more accessible, ensure that everyone knew that every vote was counted.

I think it's important to know and understand: The President doesn't feel that, you know, the John Lewis Voting Act -- Voting Rights Act is a replacement for the For the People Act, and that it is necessary to move forward with more than that.

Q And a follow-up on that: Tomorrow, Joe Manchin is meeting -- it's reported he's meeting with civil rights leaders, civil rights leaders who pretty much align themselves with this administration. What are your hopes? Because, I mean, they seem like they could be your last hope -- if there is any hope - to move him on his opposition against the For the People Act.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I don't know that I can speak to a meeting that has no member of the administration as participating in, April.

But I can tell you that the President is going to continue, and as are members of this administration who've been leading this effort -- from Susan Rice to Cedric to anyone who's at the highest level, and, obviously, to the Vice President, when she returns from her trip -- to advocating for a path forward on how we can ensure that everyone knows their vote counts, that we make voting more accessible, that we make it easier and not harder. Those are fundamentals.

The President, the Vice President, and other members of the administration will be open to, eager to have that discussion with anyone who wants to be constructive in that, moving forward.

Q Are you hopeful that his heart will change?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make a prediction about Senator Manchin's position on an issue. I'd point you to him to speak to that.

Go ahead.

Q On the same topic: Could you speak more to the actual argument that Senator Manchin was making, which was less about the content of the For the People Act and more about the fact that it doesn't have bipartisan support and that being behind it would be wrong for that reason alone?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the President's view continues to be that making voting easier for people, making it easier to vote, ensuring people have access to that fundamental American right should be something that Democrats and Republicans all support. And he certainly will continue to advocate for that.

I don't know that I have more of a comment on Senator Machin's position. I would point you to his spokespeople for that.

Q And then, given the fact that we've been talking about how a bill becomes a law, if he's against the For the People Act, does that mean that for all intents and purposes -- at least for right now -- it is dead?

MS. PSAKI: I'm certainly not going to make that prediction. As you know, there can be many ups and downs of legislation moving forward. And as I noted earlier, he's been -- the President has been clear he's willing to work with anyone to enact commonsense reforms that benefit the American people, that make it easier to vote. He'll have those discussions with Democratic leadership, and we'll work together on what the path forward looks like.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. On COVID-19 origins: China has basically already said they think their part in an international investigation is done. So, why is Jake Sullivan still here saying he thinks it's possible that they're going to provide the preliminary data at some point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't think we just give up that easily. We are going to continue to press -- in coordination with the international community -- China to be transparent, to be forthcoming with data and information. We're not going to just stand by and accept that they've said they're not going to participate.

Now, at the same time, as you know, we're also launching our own review and our own process. And I'm certain this will be a topic of discussion as the President goes overseas this week.

Q And when you say that the White House is going to continue to press, what is that -- what is that? What is "pressing"?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

Q What are you doing?

MS. PSAKI: Okay --

Q No, sorry. I just mean like what -- what mechanisms --

MS. PSAKI: What steps are we taking to press?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We are engaging, certainly, at the highest levels, and we'll continue to do that, whether it's the Secretary of State or other leaders who engage on -- through national security, diplomatic conversations. And we will continue to work through the WHO and also with our international partners to exert that pressure and ensure that we're all going to keep pressing for them to release underlying data and participate in the second stage of this investigation.

Q And then, just quickly, a housekeeping thing: Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump all commemorated D-Day anniversaries on D-Day -- on the D-Day anniversary. Why didn't President Biden?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can tell you that, certainly, the value -- his value for the role that men have -- the men who served on D-Day, and the memory of them -- the families who have kept their memories alive over the course of years on this day --

is something the President has spoken to many, many times in the past. It's close to his heart. And I wouldn't be surprised if there's more we would have to say on it.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, I know you said you don't want to read out any private conversations --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- but it certainly seems like the President and Senator Manchin are sending messages to one another in the public. You had the President, last week, expressing some frustration about -- you didn't name him, but senators in his party who vote with the other side. You have the op-ed from Senator Manchin this weekend.

Are these two men on the same page? Does the White House feel like it understands and knows what Senator Manchin wants out of this, particularly these infrastructure talks? And can you say when -- how often these two have been speaking with one another -- if not in person, by phone?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can certainly tell you that the President and senior members of the administration are in close touch with Senator Manchin and his team about infrastructure and about a range of issues where there is an opportunity to work together, moving forward.

I'll also note that I'm pretty sure Senator Manchin is pretty proud of his independent streak. And he made clear he took no offense to the President's comments last week.

And he also noted -- I think over the weekend -- that West Virginia doesn't usually get this much attention, so maybe it's a -- you know, that's something he doesn't seem to mind too much.

Q Does the President see Senator Manchin as potentially an obstacle to his agenda? If he follows through on not backing changes to the filibuster, not wanting to pursue infrastructure through reconciliation, that pretty much grounds the President's domestic agenda.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're certainly not ready to accept that -- that analysis.

I will say the President considers Senator Manchin a friend. He knows that they may disagree on some issues, as they do on this particular piece of legislation. He's going to continue to work with him, reach out to him, engage with him directly and through his staff on how we can work together moving forward.

Q On the issue of healthcare, you mentioned the video of President Obama and President Biden over the weekend.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q One of the remaining Supreme Court decisions we're waiting on deals with the Affordable Care Act. Can you talk about the White House's preparation for that decision -- what we would expect to hear from the White House if they strike down the former President's signature law?

MS. PSAKI: Certainly. Well, "reunited and it feels so good" for the Vice President and former President. Who -- someone -- someone gets this in here. Hey. (Laughter.) So, even a full room, no laughs. Okay.

Look, I will say that this is one of the roles that Neera Tanden, who has come in as a policy advisor, is playing -- is planning for what the contingencies are.

As you well know, we don't know what day this is going to come out or what the outcome is going to look like. And what we

are staying rooted in is our fundamental view -- the fundamental view of the President and the Vice President that the American people deserve access to affordable care -- healthcare; we should continue to improve and build upon the Affordable Care Act. And that's how we're planning for.

But, you know, there's a range of options. I'm sure when we know the outcome, we can -- we can speak to that more directly.

Go ahead, Andrew.

Q Thank you. So, you answered a number of questions about voting rights and people casting their votes. I wanted to ask you about counting the votes.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q A number of the bills that have passed Republican legislatures and are pending before Republican legislatures take the voting and the counting of votes and the running of elections out of the hands of nonpartisan officials and put them in the hands of Republican state legislatures. This is what Donald Trump wanted done during the runup to when Congress certified President Biden's victory. This is what a lot of scholars are saying Republicans as a whole are preparing to do in the event Democrats win close elections in 2022 and 2024.

The For the People Act does not address the issue of counting the votes and rigging or ignoring the counting of votes if a Democrat wins. How much of a concern is this to the President? And what -- what's he going to do to highlight this and find a solution?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Andrew, it's a really important issue to raise. And as you've noted, there are pieces of legislation -- putting the federal effort aside -- that are moving their way through state legislatures, which would make it part -- a partisan -- in some scenarios, in some cases, put the hands in the power of a partisan decision-making body or individual. And clearly that's concerning.

We noted in the announcement about the Vice President's role -- is that her effort would be focused partially on federal legislation and moving that forward, seeing what path -- the path looks forward -- looks like moving forward, but also working with voting rights groups, working with state activists, working with others to see how we can address these challenges.

It is a priority. It is a focus. And again, the President's fundamental view is that it should be easier to vote, not harder, and that we should ensure that everybody knows their vote is counted.

Q Would the President support Congress amending the Electoral Count Act?

MS. PSAKI: I -- I'm happy to see if there's any specific statement of administration policy we have on that particular piece.

Go ahead, Francesca.

Q Thanks, Jen. With the President leaving the country on Wednesday, is that the cutoff time for talks with Senator Capito's group? Or is he advising staff, while he's gone, to continue negotiations with those Republican senators?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would expect, certainly, things will continue. We don't know, again -- we'll see what the conversation looks like when the President speaks with Senator Capito today or tomorrow.

But either way, the President will certainly empower, as he has, his Jobs -- Jobs, you know -- Jobs Cabinet to continue to engage directly with members of Congress and leaders to continue to move his agenda forward.

The other piece of good news is that any White House is pretty well practiced in continuing to operate and work on domestic issues while they're traveling overseas. And I expect the President will remain engaged on the American Jobs Plan, even as he's overseas meeting with a number of global counterparts.

Go ahead.

Q Sorry, and I have a quick follow-up.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q How about Senator Romney? Is he one of the Republicans that you've alluded to that the President and the White House are also having conversations with?

MS. PSAKI: He has -- Senator Romney has spoken publicly about his interest in engaging, so certainly he'd be a person we'd be happy to have that conversation with. And there are certainly others as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. If I can go to the Vice President's trip to the Northern Triangle states for a minute.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q What's different about these announce- -- this announced initiative that just landed in our inbox from the Justice Department, especially from what was already announced with Homeland Security a few weeks ago in terms of anti-smuggling, anti-trafficking? Is that just to give the Vice President something to point to today, given that there isn't going to be additional aid announced in the Northern Triangle?

And one more thing.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q How do you respond to criticism from experts, as well as the administration's own border officials, who say that the Title 42 policy is actually contributing to and exacerbating smuggling and trafficking at the border -- with people trying again and again, taking more dangerous routes, kidnappers literally waiting at ports of entry?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I have not seen what the Department of Justice just announced, so I'd have to take a look at that.

I will say that the purpose of the Vice President's trip is to meet directly with counterparts in these countries to discuss how we can work together on reducing the number of people who want to make the journey to our border.

And what -- in terms of the due outs of that, of what will be announced, I will certainly leave that to her team to announce on the ground, but that's broadly the purpose.

But -- go ahead. Go ahead.

Q And, sorry, one more. Jake just said that -- in regard to Francesca's question about the travel restrictions in Europe, he said that the administration is going to be following the science, following the public health experts.

There was reporting over the weekend that CBP has now been told twice that the Title 42 policy was going to be lifted in March and in May.

There's also reporting that part of the Vice President's trip is pushing Mexico to take back more migrants and asylum

seekers who are expelled from the U.S.

You've got public health experts, including at the CDC, saying it serves no health -- public health purpose.

So, all of this seems to indicate that it's not actually about public health; it's about immigration and political optics. So how do you respond?

MS. PSAKI: Well, actually, what Jake was referring to is the overall guidance by the CDC. And there may be individuals who have different points of view -- we certainly understand that -- within the CDC or other places, but we're talking about what the overarching recommendation is from leadership and through their own thorough process. So that's what Jake was referring to.

Q And then, a sense of timeline on -- on those restrictions on the southern border?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any sense of the timeline on that quite yet.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. To meet the President's goal of 70 percent of Americans vaccinated by July 4th, there needs to be about 4.2 million adults per week vaccinated. Last week, there were 2.4 million, indicating a slowdown in the number of vaccinations. Is there any concern that the President's goal will come close -- high 60s -- but not meet 70?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say we expected a little bit of a slowdown because of the holiday, but it is -- there's no question it's a bold and ambitious goal. It's one of the reasons that we launched this "Month of Action" to ensure that we were using every tool at our disposal to push these numbers.

I'll also note that, regardless of where we are on July 4th, we're not shutting down shop. On July 5th, we're going to continue to press to vaccinate more people across the country.

So, what we're looking at -- just a couple more things here -- are a couple of factors. One, there's a difference in data, as you all know, as it relates to age. Right? So over -- people who are over 40 have a much higher percentage of vaccination than people under 40. So, clearly, some of our focus needs to be on people under 40 for this period of time and this push. We've also looked at the fact that there are about 12 or 13 states who've already met this 70 percent marker.

So, we're going to continue to push through the finish line, through the red tape here -- not the finish line -- through the red tape, to July 4th. But I can't make a prediction weeks ahead of time where we will be; we're just going to use every -- every tool at our disposal to get there.

Q And then one more on voting rights.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Where does the President feel the Vice President can best be used? I know that her office has made an emphasis that this legislation is only one little piece -- not little; it's huge -- but only one piece of her work on voting rights.

So does he see her as somebody who can be out in the country drumming up support, you know, alongside civil rights groups and private corporations? Like where does he see her strengths as a politician fitting into this issue?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, all of the above. And as she noted in her statement when this was announced, she intends to be engaged with voting rights groups and community activists, with leaders and states -- as well as on the federal level.

And I think the important component of that or the important note of it is, even as we're continuing to move -- or press and

advocate for legislation on a federal level, there are other areas where we can have an impact. I expect when she gets back from her trip, we'll hear more from her on this.

Go ahead.

Q I wanted to get a point of clarification on an earlier question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q So, as it relates to the Supreme Court in the healthcare case, does that mean that the White House is starting to think about plan B legislation in the event that a plan B legislative path is necessary?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I think we are -- Neera Tanden, again, is leading this effort, and we are planning for a range of contingencies of what the outcome might look like. But I'm not going to outline that quite yet.

Q And on the surface transportation bill that you mentioned --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- working its way to the House, is that a signal that the White House and the President is okay with sort of breaking up these proposals into little bits and kind of just getting what you can get along the way over a much longer period of time than maybe this June and July grand, sort of, legislative path that the Democrats are on?

MS. PSAKI: He's always been quite open to a range of mechanisms for his bold ideas moving forward. So, certainly, that's been his approach from the beginning and continues to be what his view is on mechanics.

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

Q Real quick, can --

MS. PSAKI: Let me -- Brian, you got a question before. So let me -- I'm going to abide by Josh here, but let me just do like two in the back because there's new people here who haven't -- who have not asked any questions.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thanks, Jen. I want to ask you a couple on infrastructure. Your statement that you put out on Friday afternoon -- you said that the President indicated that the offer did meet his objectives to grow the economy, tackle the climate crisis, and create new jobs.

On the climate crisis component, can you outline what the President believes needs to be in an infrastructure package in a bipartisan deal on the climate front?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what that is a reference to is investment in areas like EV buses and EV charging stations and some of the components that are essential to investing in industries of the future and ensuring that we're creating millions of jobs while also doing it in a way that protects our climate.

Q So those are must-haves?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not outlining must-haves here; I'm outlining what the President would like to see more of in a piece of legislation.

Okay. Let's do one more. Last, in the -- right there. Right behind the green shirt, green sleeves. Yes, go ahead.

Q Hi, Jen. I wanted to ask you, going back to the tax proposal from over the weekend -- part of that was talking about the -- where large multi- -- multinational corporations are taxed.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you have an estimate at this point of what that would look like for revenue for the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Of the components the President put forward in his propos- -- or which piece? Sorry. The global minimum tax or the --

Q The other part of it, what the President --

MS. PSAKI: The bookend -- the book ta- -- yes. It's in our -- it's in our budget. It's outlined in detail in our budget, which is public. I'm sure we can get that to you after the briefing.

Thanks everyone so much. Let's do this again tomorrow.

Q Jen, real quick: Can you all set a deadline for when you'll get a grant coalition together? Have you set one for yourself?

MS. PSAKI: I think somebody asked a similar question.

Q Yeah, but it wasn't answered. That's why I asked.

MS. PSAKI: I'll see you tomorrow.

1:43 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Director of the NEC Brian Deese Meeting with Cabinet Members on 100 Day Supply Chain Reports
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 8, 2021 5:28 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2021

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Director of the National Economic Council Brian Deese Meeting with Cabinet Members on 100 Day Supply Chain Reports

Today, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Director of the National Economic Council Brian Deese met with Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, Small Business Administrator Isabel Guzman, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, and Acting Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Dr. Janet Woodcock to discuss the Biden Administration’s whole-of-government effort to build diverse, resilient supply chains essential to our national security, our economic security, and our competitiveness. Sullivan and Deese thanked the Cabinet members and their teams for their work to deliver immediate next steps and robust recommendations to strengthen our supply chains in both the short-term and the long term.

Sullivan, Deese, and the cabinet members stressed the importance of using all available tools across the United States government and continuing partnerships with all stakeholders—including business, labor, and environmental groups—to identify further actions we can continue to take to strengthen our supply chains.

In the meeting, they also discussed the importance of being nimble to address emerging supply chain issues resulting from a rapid return of economic activity, in part due to President Biden’s historic vaccination program and economic relief efforts. They thanked Secretaries Raimondo, Buttigieg, and Vilsack for taking lead on the new Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force, which will work closely with the White House including the Domestic Policy Council, the National Economic Council, the National Security Council, and Council of Economic Advisers, to tackle near-term bottle-necks in the semiconductor, homebuilding and construction, transportation, and agriculture and food industries.

Lastly, they discussed the broad bipartisan agreement for strengthening supply chains, including the bipartisan bill to investment more than \$50 billion in domestic production and R&D to advance U.S. leadership in the semiconductor industry. The participants also discussed how the findings of the reports reinforce the need for the transformative investments proposed in the President’s American Jobs Plan. The American Jobs Plan will make a once-in-a-generation capital investment to create millions of good-paying jobs, rebuild our country’s infrastructure, and position the U.S. to compete globally in key industries.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Psaki, Deputy Director of the NEC Fazili, and Senior Director for International Economics & Competitiveness Sameera Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 8, 2021 7:14 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, Deputy Director of the National Economic Council Sameera Fazili, and Senior Director for International Economics and Competitiveness Peter Harrell, June 8, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:15 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Happy Tuesday. So, we have two very special guests with us again today. As you know, the Biden-Harris administration -- I'm just going to let you all settle in here. Okay. All right. Great. Okay.

So, as you all know, today, the Biden-Harris administration announced key findings from the reviews directed by the President's executive order on America's supply chains. The executive order, signed February 24th, directed a whole-of-government approach to assessing vulnerabilities in and strengthening the resilience of critical supply chains.

So, here to discuss the immediate actions we will be taking to promote economic security, national security, and create good-paying union jobs by strengthening American supply chains are repeat guests -- back for the second time; they had so much fun the first time -- Deputy Director of the National Economic Council Sameera Fazili and Senior Director of International Economics and Competitiveness at the NSC Peter Harrell.

Okay. Thanks, Sameera. You're kicking us off.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR FAZILI: Thank you. Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. And thank you, Jen. It is good to be back here at the end of this whole-of-government review that we just undertook of America's supply chains, following President

Biden's direction back in February.

We said from the beginning that our approach to supply chain policy needs to be an integral part of the President's overarching economic strategy to grow the economy from the bottom up and the middle out.

We also said that we were not going to simply be writing reports in this 100 days that were going to sit on a shelf; we are going to be taking action to address specific supply chain vulnerabilities. I think today's reports make both those things crystal clear.

To achieve supply chain resiliency, we need to build back better by leveraging America's greatest strengths:

First and foremost, American workers. Decades of focusing on labor as a cost to be managed and not an asset to be invested in have weakened our domestic supply chains, undermined wages and union density for workers, and also contributed to companies' challenges finding skilled talent.

We must focus on creating pathways for all Americans to access well-paid jobs with a free and fair choice to join a union and bargain collectively.

Second, our diversity. We need to unlock the full potential of the American people, including making economic opportunities available across our country and for women and for people of color.

Third, our small businesses. To build a diverse and healthy ecosystem of suppliers, we must rebuild our small- and medium-sized business manufacturing base that has borne the brunt of the hollowing out of U.S. manufacturing.

Fourth, our alliances. We need to diversify our international suppliers and reduce geographic concentration risk. For too long, the U.S. has taken certain features of global markets -- especially the fear that companies and capital are going to flee to wherever wages, taxes, and regulation are the lowest -- as inevitable. The pandemic laid bare the challenges of this approach, and we need to change it. We are committed to working with partners and allies to decrease the vulnerabilities in our collective supply chains.

And finally, fifth, our imagination. Our approach to supply chain resilience needs to look forward to emerging threats, from cybersecurity to climate issues. And so we are future-proofing and building back better.

Second, it's clear from these reports that we need to take action. And today, we made a series of announcements to that effect, including on pharmaceuticals.

The Department of Health and Human Services is going to be using its Defense Production Act authority and funding appropriated under the President's American Recovery Plan to invest \$60 million in advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing technologies and R&D.

On advanced batteries, the Department of Energy will take steps to advance its support for battery research, manufacturing, and processing. This is going to include new rules to ensure that companies that develop new products based on federal R&D funding manufacture those products in the U.S., so what is invented in America will also be made in America by American workers.

On critical minerals and materials like lithium and rare earths that are essential in our fight to combat the climate crisis, we will be announcing a comprehensive strategy that includes increases in sustainable U.S. production and processing, and working with allies and partners to increase sustainable global supply and reduce reliance on geopolitical competitors.

Across all of our domestic and international efforts on minerals, we will maintain a commitment to adhere to the highest environmental, labor, and social sustainability standards, and support robust community engagement in the process, including Tribal consultations here in the U.S.

On semiconductors, the Department of Commerce will double down on their ongoing work to convene industry and work with allies and partners to increase transparency, communication, and trust throughout the semiconductor supply chain.

Finally, as we move to focus on our one-year reviews, the Department of Agriculture is announcing more than \$4 billion in a robust suite of Build Back Better initiatives focused on building a more fair, competitive, distributed, and resilient food supply chain and food system.

Third, we need to be nimble and be able to address emerging supply chain issues at the same time as we re continuing this work on these longer supply chain resiliency strategies. And that is why today we are launching a new Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force to tackle near-term bottlenecks in the semiconductor, homebuilding and construction, transportation, and agricultural and food industries.

This task force is going to be led by three Cabinet Secretaries -- Secretaries Buttigieg, Raimondo, and Vilsack -- and will bring in all-of-government approach to addressing the near-term supply and demand mismatches we are seeing in these sectors as the economy reignites.

They will be collaborating closely with industry, labor, and other stakeholders to surface solutions, share best practices, and take actions. And we at the White House are going to be their partners by their side. It s going to be NEC, DPC, CEA, NSC -- all of us working with them.

Throughout our work on supply chains, we have been heartened to see the bipartisan support for supply chain security and resiliency, including when the President started this review by meeting with a bipartisan group of senators in the Oval Office.

We look forward to working with Congress as we move these ideas into action.

And before I turn it over to my colleague and friend Peter Harrell, I want to note that our report s findings reinforce the President s call for making a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation s production and innovation infrastructure. Those investments proposed in the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan will strengthen the public systems that connect manufacturing, researchers, workers, and small businesses, and will help unleash the power and ingenuity of the private markets to drive towards national resiliency.

Thank you. Peter?

MR. HARRELL: Good afternoon. Thanks, Sameera. And it s a pleasure for me to be here this afternoon. This is a signature initiative for President Biden. He is focused on supply chain resilience since his campaign, when he promised, almost a year ago, that if elected, he would direct his administration to expand investments in U.S. manufacturing and to take other steps to strengthen the resilience of U.S. supply chains.

Earlier today, pursuant to Executive Order 14017 that President Biden signed in February, we released publicly 250 pages of reports, assessing supply chain vulnerabilities and making recommendations, including immediate actions to address them.

Earlier this morning, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and National Economic Council Director Brian Deese convened a meeting of many members of the Cabinet here at the White House, in the Roosevelt Room, to discuss the recommendations in this report and for the Cabinet members to commit to taking action across the U.S. government to implement those recommendations and other critical steps to address supply chain resilience.

While the President s supply chain initiative has identified a number of vulnerabilities, I want to stress that our work has also found that the United States is well positioned to rebuild our productive capacity in key sectors and to strengthen our innovative leadership. We re confident that working together with Congress, industry, labor, and other stakeholders, we

can chart a new path that emphasizes resilience, security, broad-based growth, and sustainability.

As Sameera mentioned, the President and the entire administration welcome the strong bipartisan support that exists on Capitol Hill for strengthening American supply chain resilience.

Sameera highlighted a number of the domestically focused specific actions that the administration announced earlier today. I want to briefly discuss just a few of the actions that we're taking internationally.

As Sameera said, America's allies and partners are a great strength of our nation, and we must work in partnership with them on supply chain resilience. We're announcing today a commitment from the U.S. Development Finance Corporation to increase high standards overseas investments in U.S. allies and partners and projects that strengthen supply chains.

We're also asking the U.S. Export-Import Bank to develop a proposal for a new domestic finance window that would, if approved by EXIM's board, provide financing to build manufacturing facilities and infrastructure here in the U.S. that will support U.S. exports of critical products, which will help our allies and partners.

We're going to be increasing our diplomatic work with our allies and partners on supply chain security. Supply chain security will feature prominently on the agenda for President Biden's trip to Europe starting later this week, including at the U.S.-EU Leaders Summit scheduled for early next week, and was already a major element of President Biden's summits earlier this spring with key U.S. allies in Asia.

We're also recommending that President Biden host a global forum at the head-of-state level to convene key global leaders to strengthen supply chain cooperation.

Finally, we know that as we strengthen cooperation with our allies and partners, we also have to push back against unfair trade practices by competitor nations that have hollowed out the U.S. industrial base and undermine our supply chain security. We're launching a U.S. Trade Representative-led supply chain trade strike force to identify unfair trade practices that undermine U.S. supply chains and to identify specific trade actions we can bring to combat those practices.

We're also asking the Commerce Department to evaluate a Section 232 action on neodymium magnets -- which are essential to motors and a range of defense and industrial applications -- to identify tools to reduce our foreign dependency. This would demonstrate the type of targeted but tough action we expect the trade strike force to deliver.

I want to thank members of the Cabinet and their staff who contributed to these reports and actions. The initiative represents an immense amount of work, and we know we have much more in the weeks and months ahead. We'll be working to implement all of the recommendations summarized in the report, and carrying forward the work to a second phase directed by EO 14017, which is already underway and consists of broad studies of the supply chain risks of six key industrial base sectors. Those industrial base sector supply chain reports will be due next February, on the year mark of Executive Order 14017 [14017].

It's been an honor for all of us to work on this initiative, and I'm sure we'll be talking about it with you regularly as our work goes forward.

Thank you, and we look forward to a couple of questions.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead, Phil.

Q Thanks, Jen. I think probably for Sameera, can I flesh out a little bit the Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force? Obviously, you guys believe what's happening right now is transitory. But these mismatches exist; they're creating near-term problems. Do you expect this task force to be coming up with ideas and proposals in real time? Are they reporting at a specific clip? Kind of, how do you expect this to work to try and address these things that are problems right now?

MS. FAZILI: Yep. Well, one, I want everyone to remember and recognize that these are, kind of, good problems to be having. At this time last year, we had bare grocery shelves and we had people going hungry. And thanks to the President's American Rescue Plan, we have people finally able to be out there moving again, visiting families this summer, and going out to eat.

So, these are -- these are good problems to be having and to be working -- working on right now. We're thankful for that and the success of our COVID vaccination strategy.

But I think what you just saw us do right now is a 100-day sprint around four products. And when we say we're going to take sprints and take actions, we mean a sprint and we mean action. And so, here, our Cabinet Secretaries, who are in the lead, you'll see in the days and weeks ahead, they're going to be bringing together all stakeholders to really diagnose the problems, understand what's going on out there in these markets, and see what actions can be taken to close those vulnerabilities.

We recognize that, in some instances, those actions are going to be actions that the private sector, other stakeholder groups, they need to be the ones taking action. The answer is not always government taking the action here. But we are -- we have learned in our work with the semiconductor, kind of, producers and users that when you bring people together, you help them increase trust, increase transparency, and stimulate a lot of learning that sparks action.

MS. PSAKI: April.

Q This is for Sameera and Peter. Sameera, you used the word "weakened." And as we're talking about supplies, I'm looking at the link with inflation. What should the American consumer be looking for now as we've come up with this report and the weaknesses that you've talked about as it relates to inflation?

And then, Peter, for you: You used the words, "vulnerability." With putting "weakened" and "vulnerability" together, there's some kind of economic parallel with this. Where are we economically in this nation? What is our status? We are staving off, or have been trying to stave off depression. Where are we economically? Are we still in recession -- a deep recession? Where are we? If you can answer both of those questions.

MS. FAZILI: Look, I think where we are economically is the U.S. is clearly the engine of global growth right now. Our economy has reignited, and the rest of the world is being buoyed by our successes here.

So the economy is fundamentally in a position of strength, but this President has consistently said that what we need to do is take this moment to build back better.

So when we talk about weaknesses and vulnerabilities in this report, we've identified structural, long-term problems that have built up over time in our economy, and that is why this President has been out there calling for Congress to take action on his American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan -- because what we need now is a transformational investment to make sure we can actually grow from the bottom up and the middle out.

Peter, do you want to --

Q What about inflation?

MS. FAZILI: Peter.

Q What about the issue of inflation, though, that's (inaudible)?

MS. FAZILI: Oh, you know, on these supply chain bottlenecks that we're seeing, these -- some of these -- these price dislocations, these temporary increases in delivery time -- we fully expect these bottlenecks to be temporary in nature and to resolve themselves over the next few weeks. Like, if -- again, these are good problems to be having. Demand came back

much quicker than even companies expected. I think the success of our vaccination campaign surprised many people, and so they weren't prepared for demand to rebound in this way. But we still expect this to be transitory in nature. We're going to keep an eye on it, but we think it should resolve in the next few months.

Q And the status -- and the status of where we are economically? Recession, staving off depression, deep recession -- where are we?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, I think -- I think Sameera addressed that. I just want to --

Q No, she said -- okay, strength.

MS. FAZILI: Strength.

Q Okay, good.

MS. PSAKI: Josh.

Q Can I ask a little bit more about the semiconductor portion of this?

MS. FAZILI: I mean -- and I'll point you to, on Friday, the OECD report. We're, like, the one advanced economy that, I think, our growth projections are above where we were at the pandemic. Was it 6.9? So --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Josh.

Q On semiconductors: How do you plan to balance funding or support for foreign manufacturers -- allies, partners -- and domestic manufacturers? Is there going to be a preference given to domestic, or is there a risk that this could, you know, support foreign manufacturers in a way that actually undercuts the domestic industry? How, if at all, do you plan on balancing that?

MR. HARRELL: So, I think we are taking an all-of-the-above strategy to semiconductor manufacturing and expanding semiconductor manufacturing, both here in the United States and abroad.

As you know, the President has called for Congress to appropriate at least \$50 billion to strengthen semiconductor manufacturing here in the United States, including both leading-edge semiconductors and also some of the more mature semiconductors where we're seeing current shortages for automotive manufacturing and industrial applications.

Generally speaking, consistent with the proposal in Congress, we would expect to encourage both foreign and American companies to invest here in the United States. And I think we're already seeing some announcements of that where we've seen announcements from Intel, from Samsung, from GlobalFoundries, from a whole range of both foreign and American companies to expand capacity here.

But it isn't just from an overall strategy; that money is going to be about attracting capacity here in the United States. But from our overall strategy, it's not only about expanding capacity here in the United States, it's also about working with allies and partners. Yesterday, for example, Bosch, the major European automotive supplier, opened a new automotive semiconductor factory in Germany. That's going to help alleviate some of the global shortages we're seeing.

So while that money is going to lead to greater production here in the United States, and we're expecting to see a major increase in production over the next couple of years, this is also an area where we see opportunities to work with allies and partners.

Q So you would treat an investment in the U.S., in a semiconductor plant, equally, whether the investor was a foreign company or an American one?

MR. HARRELL: So we expect that the incentives will be available on a competitive basis to both foreign and American companies. I'm not here to get into the specifics of exactly how the program will be implemented, if Congress, in fact, passes -- passes it.

Q And, finally, can you talk a bit about the trade strike force? What are they tasked with doing or able to do that USTR doesn't do already?

MR. HARRELL: So I think the trade strike force is a vehicle to leverage a number of our existing trade tools, but to really focus them on supply chain vulnerabilities. You know, we have -- as we looked across the four products that we are releasing reports on today, we saw example after example where an unfair foreign competitor action had led to the hollowing out of a supply chain for a key U.S. product.

And these are all often very specific things those foreign governments are doing. So what this is going to do is harness and focus the government agencies involved in trade enforcement on how do we use our trade tools to strengthen -- to combat unfair trade practices that impact supply chains and to strengthen U.S. supply chains. And I think the neodymium magnet -- 232 -- we're asking Commerce to evaluate is an example of that.

Through our reports, we identified a very specific product where there's a very specific supply chain vulnerability, and we're getting the task force to look at that.

MS. PSAKI: Brian.

Q Yeah, I guess, the Disruption Task Force -- are you all going to be looking at ransomware attacks? And how will you deal with it internationally?

MS. FAZILI: On ransomware?

Q Yes.

MS. FAZILI: The Disruption Task Force is focused on semiconductors, lumber and construction -- or homebuilding and construction materials; it's not going to focus on ransomware and cybersecurity. We have a whole --

Q So how will you deal with that?

MS. FAZILI: -- other process in place, led by our National Security Council, that addresses cybersecurity risks and issues.

Q And, internationally, you'll deal with that how?

MR. HARRELL: So I think you saw, the other day, Deputy National Security Advisor Neuberger talk about some of the steps that the administration is taking to address ransomware. She is leading a process to identify and close vulnerabilities that we face from ransomware.

One of the sets of issues we have been looking at in our supply chain review, both on these four products and in our year-long industrial base, is cybersecurity risks to our supply chains. Clearly, cybersecurity risks can disrupt supply chains. But Ms. Neuberger is leading the, sort of, focus response to the ransomware issue.

Q So that'll be two siloed -- two different things? Or are they working together (inaudible)?

MS. FAZILI: I would not say it's siloed. We work very closely. I think Peter and I being up here shows you how closely the National Economic Council and National Security Council work together on issues where it makes sense for us to come together. And so, on cybersecurity, you have seen us behind the scenes working together to figure out how we can leverage

our tools and our convening power to have a full government response repeatedly.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, last one. Right in the middle. Go ahead.

Q Will the administration unbundle -- work on unbundling large contracts to ensure that Black-owned companies can compete for them?

MS. FAZILI: So, we are very focused on trying to make sure that our Build Back Better agenda -- sorry, it's hard to see -- is it okay if I stand here --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

MS. FAZILI: -- to be able to look -- yeah. I relate. I relate.

No, we are -- we are really focused on making sure that as we talk about diversifying supplier bases here in these reports, that we are not just talking about small businesses but we're talking about disadvantaged businesses as well, and minority-owned businesses. And so, you've seen in our American Jobs Plan that we put proposals in there related to small business and strengthening small business. And we know that an important piece of that is leveraging federal procurement and power of the government to support those businesses. So --

MS. PSAKI: Christian has been very eager in the back. Go ahead, Christian. Last actual one.

Q You talked about the Export-Import Bank and some of the financing that is going to be done to shore up industrial manufacturing here in United States. Under the previous administration, though, China was one of the top destinations of U.S. export-import financing. An overwhelming majority of that money actually went to state-owned enterprises. Is the administration looking at anything in terms of financing that goes to some of these industries overseas? Shouldn't, you know, the priority be making certain that money stays here?

MR. HARRELL: So that's actually exactly the proposal we're asking the Export-Import Bank's board to evaluate: is a new window that would foster direct EXIM Bank financing for the construction and manufacturing in infrastructure here in the United States.

Obviously, they have a longstanding set of programs that finance the export of products made in the United States to foreign buyers. But, actually, it's exactly what we're asking them to look at is ways to expand the financing for construction and investment here in the U.S.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you both so much for joining us. Appreciate it. Always welcome.

MR. HARRELL: Thank you.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: We love to talk about supply chains in here.

Okay, just two more items for all of you at the top. Yesterday, in Guatemala City, following a bilateral meeting with the Guatemalan President, the Vice President announced a new effort to partner with Guatemala around security, economic development, and anti-corruption.

Today, in Mexico, the Vice President will hold a bilateral meeting with President Obrador. They'll discuss our economic relationship, security cooperation, and stemming migration. The Vice President and President Obrador will witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the United States and Mexico to establish a strategic partnership to

cooperate on development programs in the region. And the Vice President will also meet with labor leaders, women entrepreneurs, and U.S. embassy staff before she returns to the United States.

One last item for all of you. We have more good news on the global fight against COVID-19. Today, the Mastercard Foundation and Mastercard pledged to make a \$1.3 billion contribution to help make critical progress in providing vaccines to people across Africa, in partnership with the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is a significant commitment to acquire COVID-19 vaccines for at least 50 million people, and to build long-term manufacturing and equitable distribution capacity, which will further enable efforts to provide vaccines and strengthen the continent's ability to prepare for future pandemics.

This is a welcome addition to our announcement last week that approximately 5 million of our first tranche of COVID-19 vaccines will be shared with African countries, in coordination with the African Union.

Q Which vaccines?

MS. PSAKI: Which vaccines? They're providing funding -- a contribution of funding to ensure that these vaccines are provided to Africa. I don't have the --

Q So it's up to them whichever vaccines they take?

MS. PSAKI: It's, again, funding to the Africa CDC -- version of the CDC. So it will be distributed through there.

With that, Darlene, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thank you. Have the President and Senator Capito had their conversation yet? And what can you tell us about it, if they have?

MS. PSAKI: They have not had a conversation yet, but they will have a conversation this afternoon. And the President looks forward to continuing the discussion with the senator. He appreciates her good-faith engagement over the last few weeks. I would reiterate, as was noted in the statement we put out last week, that while the President came down by quite a bit in his proposal -- from his initial proposal -- on the American Jobs Plan, the latest offer that we had seen from Senator Capito's group did not meet the essential needs of our country to restore roads and bridges, prepare us for a clean energy future, and create jobs.

So today they'll have a discussion about what more there is to discuss, I guess, and what the path looks like for it.

I will also note that the President will also speak with other senators this afternoon -- still finalizing who those will be, and we'll have readouts of that as well -- who have been engaged in discussions about a bipartisan infrastructure proposal -- engaged with each other. So he'll have those discussions as well. I expect we'll have a readout, as I noted.

We're encouraged by these discussions and see them as an additional viable path forward. And he'll ask members of his Jobs Cabinet -- or he's already asked them, I should say, to remain engaged in the days ahead, the period of time when he's on his foreign trip -- although, of course, he'll remain engaged from there as well -- with all members who are interested in working together on making a historic investment in infrastructure.

And just third piece I would note, Darlene, as we're kind of -- since you asked about the President engagement -- he's also going to stay closely engaged with Democratic leadership about the path forward, especially in light of the markup on the Surface Transportation bill happening tomorrow in the House and the interest by Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and other leaders in Congress on moving forward -- and certainly an interest in doing that.

Finally, last thing I would note is the expected passage later today of the U.S. Innovation and Competitiveness Act in the Senate this afternoon, which is a down payment on the President's proposed investment in R&D to make us more

competitive, as well as the important work with Senator -- that Senator Wyden has undertaken on clean energy tax credits, a priority the President shares.

So I would just note, as I've stated many times before in here, there are a number of paths for moving the President's bold ideas forward. We're moving on all of them full speed ahead.

Q And one more question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Since the President is the head of the Democratic Party, would he support legislation that is now on the governor's desk in Nevada that would move Nevada to first place in the presidential primary process, up from third place?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand the interest, but I'm not going to weigh in on the order of a presidential primary contests from here.

Go ahead, Mary.

Q On the infrastructure talks, Senator Capito has said she is not going to be coming to this conversation armed with a new offer. As you note, the President has rejected the Republicans' latest counteroffer. It doesn't seem that he's willing to come down any further. So, are we at an impasse here?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly don't see it that way. He's looking forward to discussing the path forward with Senator Capito. He sees her as an important and viable partner as we look to how we're going to get his bold ideas signed into law.

And again, I'd note that there's also Democrats and Republicans -- as you have seen and many of you have reported on -- who are discussing what -- how they can work together on what a path forward would look like, where there might be more investment in clean energy jobs, and might be a higher number than what we've seen by the proposals to date.

So, again, there are a lot of paths forward. And he looks forward to discussing what they look like with Senator Capito and others this afternoon.

Q Is the President, though, willing to offer any other concessions in these negotiations, or is it safe to say that you view the ball as being in the Republicans' court here?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think this is -- as any negotiation is, it's about both sides looking to see how much they can come to the other side, and how much you have to give. The President has come down by about a trillion dollars; that's quite a bit. Obviously, we'd like to see more. But there are a number of opportunities and paths to have these discussions, moving forward.

Q And I want to -- just broadly, if you could explain a little bit more how the President has been preparing for this big trip tomorrow. How much time has he been spending in briefings? Just, sort of, how has he been getting ready for this upcoming trip?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I will say that he's been getting ready for 50 years. He has been on the world stage. He's known a number of these leaders for decades, including President Putin and including a number of the leaders he'll see at NATO and he'll see at the G7.

Now, this is an important opportunity for him to see them in person, and there's nothing like face-to-face engagement in diplomacy. And for him, somebody who, as you've seen -- the fact that he's welcomed in Democrats and Republicans to the Oval Office, that's just an indication of how much he feels that format is effective.

So, he's been engaging with his team, talking about what bilateral conversations he'll be having; where there are opportunities; where there are moments to voice the United States' concern, where necessary. But again, he's -- he's got quite a -- several decades of experience to build on here. So, you know, he'll be relying on that in the -- in -- during his trip.

Go ahead, Phil.

Q Secretary Granholm, on Sunday, said that it was frustrating that a pathway for a bipartisan deal hadn't come to fruition yet. Does the President share that frustration at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say the President has a benefit of 36 years in the Senate, where he has seen that the sausage-making is messy. It takes time. There are ups and downs on the roller coaster. We're right in the middle of the sausage-making right now.

And the President's view is that it's a good sign that there are several viable paths forward, that we are having good-faith conversations, of course, with Democrats and our Democratic colleagues and partners, but also with a number of Republicans. That's a good sign.

At the same time, the House is moving forward with marking up key components of the American Jobs Plan. So, the fact is this train is moving on several tracks. That's how we know these larger packages, larger proposals often move forward. And we're encouraged by the variety of options.

Q And along the lines of sausage making, given the scale of the President's ambitions with his proposals he's put on the table, is the real reason that he's still in bipartisan negotiations right now because moderate Democrats are saying, "We need to stay in bipartisan negotiations right now"? Or does he think something can come of them?

MS. PSAKI: The President wouldn't be spending his time engaging in hours of discussions with Republicans if he didn't think something could come from it. Now, we can't predict what the final outcome is, and we're keeping -- his only lines in the sand -- as you know, Phil -- are inaction and raising taxes on Americans making less than \$400,000 a year.

We know there is -- there are a lot of Democrats who are eager to move forward, as are we. But we think there are a lot of paths forward where we can -- where it's worth continuing to pursue bipartisan discussion.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. About the Vice President's trip: Why is it then that when the Vice President is asked if she has plans to visit the border, she says, "We've been to the border," even though she has not, as Vice President?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as the Vice President, she does speak for the actions of the people in the administration she certainly helps oversee. I expect that sometime she may go to the border, Peter. But as you know, what her focus has been, what the assignment is specifically, is to work with leaders in the Northern Triangle. She's on a trip doing exactly that, exactly what the President asked her to do.

Q And, as we understand it though, her main focus is to try to address the root causes of migration. Did somebody decide here that it would not be helpful for her to go to the border and talk to people who just migrated here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think that at some point she may go to the border. We'll see. But she's in the Northern Triangle now to have discussions with leaders, with community leaders, with civil society leaders, with the embassy about how we can work together. And obviously she's made a couple of announcements already -- probably more to come before she comes back to the United States.

Q And she described though -- you said she might go to the border -- she described a trip to the border yesterday as a "grand gesture." Why?

MS. PSAKI: Look, Peter, again, I think her focus of this trip is on meeting with leaders, having a discussion about how to address corruption, how to address the root causes, how to work together to address humanitarian challenges in these countries. That's exactly what she's doing on the ground, and I'm sure she'll report back to the President when she returns.

Go ahead.

Q I'm going to follow up with the border in a second, but let me ask you, if I can: On infrastructure, you laid out some of the conversations that the President is having including, sort of, his message to some of the Democrats on Capitol Hill right now to, sort of, get a little better detail there. Would the President support -- does he want Democrats to more actively pursue the process of reconciliation as an option?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Peter, I would say that the Democrats are already moving forward on marking up components of the bill. And Democratic leadership has been clear that they want to move forward on infrastructure and making a historic investment in infrastructure. There'll be a discussion about the mechanics of that, you know, over the course of the coming days. And we'll have more to read out once those discussions have been had.

Q So, again, in terms of, like, the timeframe for those decisions to be made, obviously the message to Democrats is, "Keep going" and "We might need you"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think, to be clear: The President is always going to continue to pursue opportunity to work with Republicans, regardless of what mechanics are moving forward in the House. He's going to keep pursuing those opportunities. And we fully expect that there will be several pathways that are moving on different channels as we look to how we're going to get this American Jobs Plan passed.

Q As it relates to the border right now, we heard from the Vice President yesterday where her message was very simple and blunt. She said to those migrants who would be considering coming -- she said, "Do not come."

Obviously, there's some progressive Democrats, among other critics, who've been frustrated by that -- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez perhaps, most prominently saying, "It was disappointing to see." She said, among other things, that "seeking asylum at any U.S. border is a 100 percent legal method of arrival." What does the White House say to those progressive Democrats, among others, who were frustrated by the message the White House is delivering?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, of course it is. And one of our focuses and the priorities of the President and the Vice President is to improve asylum processing at the border, to work with a range of Democrats -- and, hopefully, Republicans -- because, in history, it's been a bipartisan effort to get immigration reform passed, to make -- ensure there's a more viable pathway to citizenship and a better processing at the border.

What the Vice President was simply conveying is that there's more work to be done, that we don't have these systems in place yet, it's still a dangerous journey, as we've said many times from here and from many forums before, and we need more time to get the work done to ensure that asylum processing is where it should be.

Q And last question about the Senate report -- bipartisan Senate report as relates to what happened on January 6th. Obviously, it addressed the security planning and response failures. We know that that's held up on Capitol Hill right now. Your reaction to that? And what, if anything, more the White House can do as it relates to those security failures in terms of planning and the like?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me just reiterate that of course the events of January 6th were an assault on our democracy and the rule of law. And the President has been outspoken in calling for a full and independent investigation to what transpired.

As it relates to the report, our team is currently reviewing the report and its findings to inform our ongoing efforts to ensure something like that could never happen again and what role, of course, the federal government can play. There are

many roles, as you know, that the report seems to surface on what officials on Capitol Hill could do. And we want to assess how we can be a good partner in this effort moving forward.

I would also note that on his first full day in office, he asked his team to launch a review on how we can improve the federal government's response to the threat of domestic terrorism, something he also touched on when he was in Tulsa last week. And we'll be releasing that broader strategy soon, as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The FDA has still not cleared the 60 million AstraZeneca doses that are part of the President's commitment to share 80 million doses overseas by the end of June. Is there any concern that the administration will not get that approval from the FDA in time? And if that were the case, will the U.S. then make up for those 60 million doses with other available vaccines in order to meet the President's deadline of the end of June?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we, as you know, can't predict or expedite the timeline here. It's the FDA who will make that decision about when those doses will be approved, if and when they will be approved.

We do remain committed to ensuring that we meet our commitment of 80 million doses -- getting those out to the global community by the end of June -- which is, again, five times more than any other country and 13 percent of our own supply. It's only June 8th, so we have quite a bit of time. But we remain committed to that. And obviously if the FDA approves AstraZeneca doses, then that will be a component of that supply.

Q And just, as the pooler, a question on behalf of our colleagues at The Canadian Press, as well as Global News. On the timeline for reopening the U.S.-Canada border: Canada has said it will look to take a phased approach. Does the White House see an announcement happening in concert, or is the U.S. prepared to ease those restrictions on its own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we would make a decision about the Canada border based on the guidance of our health and medical experts. And I'm sure that when that decision is made, we would communicate through diplomatic channels. But I don't have anything to predict about the timeline.

Go ahead, Mara.

Q Thank you. You've mentioned how long the President has spent in the Senate. He's talked himself about how timing and sequencing things are really key to presidential leadership. Does he have an objection to starting with H.R.4 instead of H.R.1? In other words, why not do the John Lewis Act first?

MS. PSAKI: I think he is quite open to what Democratic leadership feels is the viable path forward, and we'll work closely with them in coordination.

Q But there's a difference of opinion on that -- on what would be the best one to go forward. Democratic leadership is (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: We're not going to be -- we're not going to be the arbiters of that, but we will discuss with them.

Q You're leaving that to them.

MS. PSAKI: We will discuss with them as we -- as we look ahead what the right path forward is.

Q Okay, and my second question, just on infrastructure: In terms of the people he's speaking to this afternoon, will one of them be Mitt Romney?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- we will give readouts of who he's spoken with once we've completed those calls. But I don't have

anything to preview for you at this moment.

Q Has he ever spoken to Mitt Romney?

MS. PSAKI: Has he ever spoken time in his life?

Q Yeah, since he's been President. No, since he's been President.

MS. PSAKI: You know, it's a good question. He's spoken with a number of Republicans. As you know, we don't read them all out. I don't have anything to read out for you, but he has, obviously, in different circumstances, has had (inaudible).

Q In terms of these different paths and different groups, this group that he's going to talk to --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- this afternoon, is this the first time that he's starting to, kind of, reach out to them? He's been really focusing on Capitol up until now.

MS. PSAKI: That's right. We've been engaged with a range of Democrats and Republicans, including members who have been in conversation through this group at a staff level. He's obviously had discussions with a number of them about how he moves his ideas forward. So I wouldn't make it as firm as a first time. But certainly discussing this as a viable path forward at his level, at this point in the process, you know, would be an indication of how we see this as a viable path.

Go ahead, (inaudible).

Q Yeah, just to follow up on the question on voting rights, you said yesterday that we will stay lockstep with the Democratic leadership on that path forward.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And what Pelosi said in her letter today is that the H.R.4 is not going to be ready until the fall. So are you -- and to focus -- just to focus effort on the Senate passing H.R.1. So are you okay with that kind of timeframe, if that -- even if that means that basically this issue languishes until the fall?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we don't see it as languishing. Obviously, the President has asked the Vice President to lead this effort. And I'll give you a bit of an update that, in addition to, of course, engaging with federal efforts on the federal level to move legislation forward, she's also going to use the power of the White House to convene key stakeholders. And she'll be hosting several events next week when she returns from her trips -- just to give you an indication of how quickly and how focused we will be on these efforts. And she'll fight for our key bills and also to register voters under the President's historic executive order, as well as advocate for Democratic principles.

So, I will say, we're going to work, of course, with Democratic leadership on both -- on both, even with their disagreements about the -- the -- what the order of events should be here. But we're not going to wait for that. We're going to use the White House as a convener. We're going to use the bully pulpit. Obviously, when the President was in Tulsa just last week, he talked about voting rights very passionately and forcefully.

I'll also note that we're also continuing to work to implement the executive order that the President signed into law early on in his administration, and that executive order uses every authority available to make voting easier, more accessible, and more fair. It directs agencies to expand access to voter registration and election information, assist states under the National Voter Registration Act, improves and modernizes Vote.gov, increases federal employees' access to voting, analyzes barriers to voting for people with disabilities, increases voting access for duty -- active-duty military and other voters overseas.

So I would just note that we are not relying on just one option here. Of course, federal legislation is something he will continue to press for, but we'll use the bully pulpit, we'll use our convening power, we'll continue to press through on implementing this executive action as well.

Q On a separate issue -- there was a report this morning about, basically, IRS records showing that very wealthy Americans have evaded paying income tax, almost altogether in certain circumstances. One, do you have any reaction just to that as a factual matter? And, two, are you concerned about that just from a leak standpoint?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me take the second part first because I think that's important. Any unauthorized disclosure of confidential government information by a person with access is illegal, and we take this very seriously.

The IRS commissioner said today that they are taking all appropriate measures, including referring the matter to investigators. And Treasury and the IRS are referring the matter to the Office of the Inspector General -- the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, the FBI, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, all of whom have independent authority to investigate.

So, obviously we take it very seriously. I'm not going to comment on specific unauthorized disclosures of confidential government information.

I can tell you that, broadly speaking, we know that there is more to be done to ensure that corporations, individuals who are at the highest income are paying more of their fair share, hence it's in the President's proposals, his budget, and part of how he's proposing to pay for his ideas.

April, go ahead. And, sorry, I'll come back to you. Go ahead.

Q I want to -- I want to follow back up on voting rights -- on matters of voting rights.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q This President has based his administration on equity and equality. And now the issue of voting rights is in our face. We are voting without the full protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act because of Shelby v. Holder, but it's also unraveling because of states. And the person that seems to be holding it up is Joe Manchin.

Is the President planning to specifically speak with him about voters -- not including it with infrastructure or anything -- is he planning on speaking with him specifically on voting rights, particularly after this morning's virtual meeting with civil rights leaders who say the conversation will continue?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that it was encouraging to see Senator Manchin meeting with civil rights groups today. The meeting shows that both are serious and recognize the importance of the issue. We certainly know the seriousness that many civil rights groups take with voting rights and the importance of moving this forward. And as indicated in both of their readouts, as you said, April, they will continue the discussion.

I would certainly expect that when the President has a conversation with Senator Manchin the next time, they'll talk about voting rights. And -- but often when he speaks with members, he talks about a range of issues -- some where you work together; some where you disagree.

Q So, understanding the history of how presidents decide to lean in, he's got Vice President Harris putting this in her portfolio. But when will the President begin to lean? And is there a moment where he has to, himself, lean in on this? Because if it doesn't happen before the next elections, it looks like it could be a done deal. Voting rights are (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, April, you were with the President in Tulsa last week. Right?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: You heard how passionately he spoke about voting rights, how central this is to how he views his presidency, his leadership, the future of our democracy. I mean, that was central to the message he delivered in a speech that was widely covered, that was reflecting on a moment in history that hasn't requi- -- it hasn't been given the attention that it certainly deserves.

I certainly would not say we're waiting. As I noted, we're going to continue to press for federal action, for action to move forward on a bill that the President would love to sign into law.

We certainly know we can't do that with a magic wand. That's not how democracy works for good reason. But the President also signed this executive action early on -- a very expansive and powerful executive action -- because he wanted to -- did not want to delay a moment in ensuring that we were taking more steps to assist states, to improve and modernize Vote.gov, to increase federal employees' access to voting, to analyze barriers to voting for a range of people. And that was an action he took early on. We're continuing to implement now.

And I'll also note that the Vice President asking his Vice President -- his partner -- to play a role in leading this -- something that she also asked for, just to be clear -- asked to do -- it sends a message about what a priority this is to the President. They have regular lunches. They engage -- she's the first in the room and the last in the room.

And she's going to not hesitate either -- not delay either, I should say. When she comes back from her trip, she'll be convening people and she will be elevating these issues as well from her platform.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Weijia.

Q Thank you, Jen. The Family Reunification Task Force has reported that of the about 3,900 children who were separated from their families, it does not have a confirmed record of reunification for 2,127 children. Can you explain what that means that they don't have a record of reunification? Does the administration know where these children are?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first -- as you know, Weijia, from covering this -- and I know another -- a number of others have -- one of the challenges that they walked into -- or we walked into -- is the lack of data. And that -- we knew that would take some time to ensure that we were handling the data and handling the reunification process as carefully as possible.

I would note that, through the support of NGOs, 1,779 children were reunified with their parents in the United States under past court orders. Over the last 30 days, through the task force and NGO coordination, seven additional children were reunited with their fami- -- parents, bringing the total number of reunified children to 1,786.

In terms of where we go from here, I mean, I would certainly point you to the task force for what their terminology means. We know there's a challenge with data, a challenge with matching that to what we have access to. But beyond that, I would certainly point you to Department of Homeland Security.

Q So you don't know if the administration is aware of where these children are?

MS. PSAKI: That's not what I said. What I said was the Department of Homeland Security oversees the task force, and I would certainly point you to them to give you more of a clear definition of exactly what they mean by "mismatched data" so you have all the information you're looking for.

Q Thank you. And one more --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q -- on the Justice Department. President Biden has accused his predecessor of using it as his own personal law firm. Is he disappointed that the DOJ is siding with Trump in his claim that he can't be sued for defamation for remarks that he made about an alleged rape case?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that the President strongly believes in the independence of the Department of Justice. We were not consulted -- the White House was not consulted, I should say more specifically -- by the Department of Justice on the decision to file this brief or its contents.

Q So does he believe that that independence still exists, even though the DOJ is defending the former President? The firewall between --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure what you mean by your question.

Q Does he believe that the DOJ defending the former President in this case still maintains that independence between the executive branch and the DOJ?

MS. PSAKI: I think what I was referring to is allowing for the Department of Justice to make decisions and announcements about ongoing, you know, court filings and legal actions. So independence as it relates to how the -- this President views and approaches the Department of Justice.

Q But does it upset him?

MS. PSAKI: Does it -- I think the President has been pretty clear, as Weijia started her comment conveying, about his view about the pres- -- his view about his predecessor's comments, about his predecessor's language, and about his predecessor's approach, and his engagement in that regard.

Q So what can he do? What can he do about it?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I have anything more to speak to you on, Brian -- on active litigation.

Go ahead, Josh.

Q Can I ask -- there was a series of web outages this morning --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that were linked to a company called Fastly. Is there any indication that it's anything other than just failure with that company? And specifically, is it a potential national security issue? Have you look into whether there's a potential external group behind it?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, Fastly, I know, put out a statement about it. I don't have anything more from the federal government on the leak -- on the outage.

Q And then pivoting to the G7, the President has talked about the need to push the G7 to boost vaccine --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- availability overall. Can you speak to what he's considering? Prime Minister Johnson, for instance, has talked about the need to vaccinate the world in its entirety by the end of 2022. Other European leaders are not going quite so far. Does the President have a view on what specific target the G7 should take?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I expect we'll have more in the coming days, Josh, so stay tuned. Jake did say he expected that you all will hear more at the G7. I don't want to get ahead of that too much.

But what I would say is that the United States is -- we're headed into the G7 in a position of strength, with 64 percent of our adult population vaccinated; in a position to donate more doses to the world than any other country around the world. But we certainly know this needs to be a global effort, and it will be a discussion at the G7, and we'll have more to say in the coming days.

Go ahead.

Q Just one more on infrastructure. Given the -- you know, what Senator Capito said today to reporters -- kind of throwing cold water on progress between her and the President on talks -- would you say the administration has become more willing to pursue reconciliation to pass the infrastructure package than maybe a week ago or two weeks ago?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that there are always -- there's always been a range of paths to get the President's bold ideas passed into law. He's having a conversation with Senator Capito this afternoon, as well as individual conversations with other members who have been working in a bipa- -- bipartisan manner, to see what the path forward looks like. And he's also closely in touch with Democratic leadership.

So, I'm not here to rule out options, but I'm not here to rule in new options either. We'll have -- we'll have more to say after he has these calls later this afternoon.

Q Okay, one more. The White House said over the weekend it was unaware of the DOJ gag order on the New York Times. Can you assure us that there are no other gag orders on other news organization related to some of these investigations?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Department of Justice has made clear that was their third and final notification that they were offering. And that's the information they also shared with us. But they've shared it publicly.

Q And so there would -- to your understanding, there's no other gag orders?

MS. PSAKI: They made clear -- they indicated that this was their last effort -- their last notification that they needed to offer.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. So I have a question that's a little infrastructure, a little climate. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse was tweeting yesterday, saying that he was anxious about the future climate-related legislation. And he said, "Climate has fallen out of the infrastructure discussion, as it took its bipartisanship detour. It may not return."

Then he went on to say, "I don't see the preparatory work for a close Senate climate vote taking place in the administration." Has the White House reached out to the senator? And also, does he have cause for concern on the future of climate-based legislation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I promise you we are certainly in touch with his team, and perhaps even on an individual basis as well, but I don't have anything to read out for you. But I can just tell you that we are in close touch with nearly every member of Congress who is working on these legislation moving forward.

I will say that -- what I would point out to you is that one of the -- one of the pieces we conveyed when -- when we put out a statement last week about how the President could not accept the offer that was put out by Senator Capito and her group, even though those conversations are happening in good faith, was the fact that it didn't do enough to invest in our clean

energy future.

And there are areas of effort that are moving forward. I mentioned Senator Wyden's effort to move forward on clean energy tax credits.

The President views this bill as a jobs bill. He also believes it's a clean energy jobs bill and it has an opportunity to invest in industries of the future. So, certainly, it is close to his heart. It remains an area he's committed to and one he will continue to fight for as we have these discussions moving forward.

Q And then I just had another on the Vice President visiting the border or not visiting the border. Republicans and conservatives are, you know, going crazy on Twitter, sending pictures --

MS. PSAKI: They're worked up.

Q -- sending videos --

MS. PSAKI: I've seen it.

Q -- of her interview with Lester Holt, you know, saying, "I'm not..." -- you know, "I've not been to Europe, either."

Does the President think there is a scenario in which she should visit the border? And also, the mounting criticism from conservatives, does that -- would that ever factor into a decision to send her down there? I mean, don't they have a point that if she has this task in front of her, should she not see the -- the end cause as well as the root cause of migration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, as I said to Peter: At some point, she may go to the border. I don't have any trips to preview for you or predict or a timeline for that.

But what I would reiterate is that her assignment was to work with countries and leaders in the Northern Triangle to address root causes, address corruption, ensure we're working together to address humanitarian concerns.

I will say, we're not taking advice from former President Trump or most of the Republicans who are criticizing us on this, given they were all sitting there while we created this problem we walked into, both at the border and with the movement of migration that has been growing over the last year. So, we're not taking our guidance and advice from them. But if it is constructive and it moves the ball forward for her to visit the border, she certainly may do that.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, I have two questions on infrastructure. You said the White House is moving ahead on all three paths on infrastructure, including the third path, which was listening to other lawmakers who have ideas -- I believe that's how you characterized it.

I'm just trying to clarify -- and this was asked a little bit earlier: I mean, are you referring to the bi- -- bipartisan group that consists of Senators Manchin, Sinema, Romney, and Portman? And if current talks with Senator Capito and her group don't progress, is there a point when you stop negotiating with that group in favor of this other group of Republicans and Democrats? Is that how you'd see it working?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say we'll leave it to them to determine what groups they may or may not want to join. But they're not -- it's not a closed group. We would welcome anyone who wants to join that group and be a part of these discussions moving forward. And we'll --

Q Members of the press?

MS. PSAKI: -- see where it heads. Members of the press, I'll leave it to them to determine. I think you have to be an elected member of the Senate. So, unless that's your pathway moving forward.

Q But you are engaging with them though already?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Okay.

And then my second question is: What specific proposals did the White House agree to bring down or eliminate in its latest infrastructure counteroffer that reduced the cost from \$1.7 trillion to \$1 trillion in new spending? Does funding -- specifically, does funding for caregiving remain in the president's latest offer? And if it does, I mean, is it still the \$400 billion price tag?

MS. PSAKI: Caregiving remains a huge priority -- investing in caregiving -- to the President. I'm not going to outline any more specific details, other than to convey that it's an area that continues to fight for, to advocate for, and one that he'd like to be signed into law as part of a package moving forward.

Q But does that mean it's not part of what you're negotiating right now with Republicans?

MS. PSAKI: No, that's not what I said. I'm not -- I don't have any more details to outline for you.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you.

Q Yes, Jen -- sorry.

MS. PSAKI: We'll go -- sorry, we'll go to you next.

Q The chief of Russia's space agency is threatening to pull out of the International Space Station unless the United States lift sanctions against two companies that are related to the space station. What's the White House response to that?

MS. PSAKI: That's a really interesting question and I didn't know much about it before you asked this question, so I'll probably have to talk to our national security team. I will say that working together on issues of space and issues related to space is one area where we have worked together, historically, with the Russians on. And I'd have to dig more into what those sanctions are for. I'm not aware of a consideration of that, but I'll check with our national security team.

Go ahead, Yamiche.

Q Thanks so much, Jen. A follow-up to Weijia's question: In four months, the Family Reunification Task Force has reunited about 36 families. I'm wondering what the White House makes -- what the President makes of the ACLU saying it hopes the government increases that pace? Does the President want to see this go faster? Are there any explanations for maybe why it needs to go slower?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly do, as I think any member of the Family Reunification Task Force would want to as well. And one of the challenges has been what we walked into, which was a lack of data or tracking for a number of these kids that were separated from their parents when they came across the border over the last few years. That's a huge data challenge.

We're not going to reconnect them with families where it's not properly verified -- right? -- because we know there's a history over the last several years of, you know, kids being connected with pa- -- with individuals who had malintent.

So, that's a factor, Yamiche. We wish -- of course, everybody wants it to go faster. Everybody wants -- in this administration, everybody wants these kids to be reunified with their family members and with verified family members. But, you know, we're working with a challenging issue related to data that we knew would be the case from the beginning.

Q Do you think that pace is going to be the pace? Or do you think it will get quicker?

MS. PSAKI: I would certainly point you to them -- the members of the task force and the Department of Homeland Security, who are much more in depth about where the status is, where the challenges are, and what the holdups are. And we can certainly invite one of them to come and speak to you at the appropriate time as well.

Q And then I wanted to ask about -- I know there's the COVID task force, but, in some ways, when you look at southern states, they are lagging, particularly, when it comes to vaccination rates. I wonder if the President has any sort of plan specifically targeted to southern states and whether or not that will impact whether or not he moves back to 70 percent goal that he set up for July 4th?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Yamiche, you are right that there are different age groups, there are different demographic groups, there are different geographic groups in the country where we haven't seen the pace as fast as others. So, while it's very high -- the vaccination rate -- at this point among seniors, and even pretty high -- over 70 percent -- for people 40 and older -- still young, I will note -- it is -- it is not where it needs to be in people under 40 and certain states around the country.

What we're trying to do and what we just launched this past weekend is this massive, one-month campaign to incentivize -- right? -- people getting vaccinated. We're working with the private sector. We're going to barbershops. We're working with, you know, donuts and beer and all sorts of incentives to get young people and people vaccinated who have been either hesitant, resistant, or just didn't want to take the step to get vaccinated.

We're going to continue charging through the finish line to -- in pursuit of our 70 percent goal. We've seen 13 states meet that goal. It's ultimately up to some -- some -- these states and some individuals to get vaccinated to meet it in a state-by-state basis.

Q And one last question: There are some progressives who are calling Joe Manchin -- Senator Manchin -- "the new Mitch McConnell," saying he's an obstructionist, saying that he's standing in the way of the Biden agenda. I wonder what the President makes of that. Is he worried about progressives alienating Senator Manchin? Or does he agree with some of the things that they're saying about standing in the way of his agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think we're not going to -- we're going to leave the name-calling to others. The President considers Senator Manchin a friend. He disagrees with him on voting rights and -- and the -- the bill that the senator has expressed he won't support.

The President will continue to advocate for the importance of that moving forward and the reasons why that it's a -- it's important and vital for our democracy. But, you know, we'll continue to seek ways we can work with Senator Manchin even in -- while we have areas of disagreement.

Q I just wonder if you think it's -- the name-calling -- is it alienating the senator? Is it worrisome that you're hearing Democrats say that about Senator Manchin, calling him "the new Mitch McConnell"? Is that -- is that problematic?

MS. PSAKI: I can't speak to -- to Senator Manchin's personal -- the personal impact on Senator Manchin. He's obviously proud of his independent streak. He's spoken to that, including in an op-ed piece this weekend.

I also -- we also understand the passion that many feel for voting rights; for the importance of making voting easier, more accessible. We share that passion. So, we understand that manifests itself in lots of ways. But, I point you to Senator

Manchin if he s -- if he has feelings hurt. I suspect he has a stronger backbone than that.

But thank you everyone so much. Look forward to -- I guess I won't see you for a while. Those of you who are coming on the trip, we'll see you on the trip.

Q See you there.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

2:19 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan En Route Suffolk, England
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 9, 2021 5:30 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 9, 2021

Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Suffolk, England

6:56 P.M. BST

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Okay. Hi, everyone. We are on our way, almost arriving on the President's first foreign trip. We have a very special guest for our gaggle today. Our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, will take some questions, and then once you're done with that, I'm happy to take some as well. But you may have mostly for him.

Q Jake, do you want to talk a little bit about the President's plan for boosting the global vaccine supply?

MR. SULLIVAN: I do not want to get ahead of the President, who will be speaking to this issue tomorrow. And we'll be able to talk about additional steps the United States is taking to help donate more doses to poor countries around the world and also to leverage what the United States is doing to help get the world's democracies to increase their commitment to supplying vaccines to the developing world to help end this pandemic once and for all. But that announcement that he will make, he will -- I will let him make.

And then the G7, we'll make a combined announcement on this issue, and it won't simply be about vaccines -- though vaccines will be a part of it -- but it will be a comprehensive plan to help end this pandemic as rapidly as possible.

Q What is the incentive for doing this? Is this about countering China and Russia? The President has talked about their vaccine diplomacy. Why is he trying to rally Western democracies, in particular, on this issue?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'd say three things about this:

First, the President is focused on helping to vaccinate the world because he believes it is the right thing to do; it's what Americans do in times of need. When we have the capacity, then we have the will, and we step up and we deliver. And he said in his joint session that we were the arsenal of democracy in World War Two, and we're going to be the arsenal of vaccines over the course of the next period to end this pandemic.

Second, it's the smart thing to do, because if variants continue to proliferate and get worse, ultimately one could break through. And he wants to make sure we end the pandemic before that happens.

And then, third, he does want to show -- rallying the rest of the world's democracies -- that democracies are the countries that can best deliver solutions for people everywhere. And that goes for COVID-19, it goes for climate change, it goes for economic recovery, and it goes for the basic human rights and human dignity of all people.

Q Can you talk about the working groups that are being launched to reopen travel within the G7?

MR. SULLIVAN: We've established two working groups of experts -- public health experts: one with the United Kingdom and one with the European Union. The point of these working groups is to share data and set out both milestones and criteria to enable a reopening of travel between our two countries as swiftly as possible, consistent with public health guidance.

Q Should we expect any announcement on that front, during the trip?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't think the working groups will have finished their work by the time the trip is through. So we're not currently anticipating any specific announcements because we're being guided by science; we're being guided by what the public health experts tell us is the right condition and the right timeframe for reopening.

Q Do you expect that the EU's refusal of the vaccine patent waiver to be a point of contention between the President and the other leaders? Is the President going to push them to waive -- patent waivers?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't anticipate contention on the issue of vaccines. I anticipate convergence, because we're all converging around the idea that we need to boost vaccine supply in a number of ways: sharing more of our own doses -- and we'll have more to say on that; helping get more manufacturing capacity around the world -- we'll have more to say on that; and, of course, doing what's necessary across the chain of custody from when the vaccine is produced to when it gets in someone's arms in the rural developing world, and we'll have more to say on that.

So, I don't foresee any clash or contest between the U.S. and our democratic partners on this issue. I see a unity of effort and a unity of commitment. And I think the results are going to end up speaking for themselves.

Q How prominent is the conversation with Putin going to be on Syria humanitarian aid passage and keeping that route to Idlib open?

And, second, on that: With the decision to end the sanctions waiver for the American oil company that was operating there, that Russia very much against, was that sort of a fig leaf or playing out something for Putin to sort of smooth the talks on that?

MR. SULLIVAN: Syria will be on the agenda, and our position on the humanitarian access issue is well understood. We believe there has to be cross-border humanitarian access to save lives. And so that certainly will be something that the two presidents discuss.

I'm not going to get into the details on it at this point because we want to give space for those conversations to play out in the run-up to Geneva and then between the two presidents. And I've got nothing more for you today on the oil field issue

in eastern Syria.

Q Jake, can you talk about strategic stability being a key part of the discussion? How are you defining that? Is it in the traditional nuclear arms control definition? Is it the mix of arms control/cyber vulnerabilities for the (inaudible)? Is it something broader involving the way the Russians are acting on their borders? What's your concept?

MR. SULLIVAN: We believe the starting point for strategic stability talks should be the very complex set of nuclear arms issues that face our two countries. We've extended New START for five years. But what comes after that, how do we deal with the fact that the INF Treaty is no more, how do we deal with our concerns about Russia's new nuclear systems, and --

Q (Inaudible) deployed you mean, but that Putin keeps showing.

MR. SULLIVAN: (Inaudible) development.

Q Yeah.

MR. SULLIVAN: And these are issues that we have raised publicly and we've raised privately with the Russians. That's the starting point. Whether additional elements get added to strategic stability talks in the realm of space or cyber or other areas, that's something to be determined as we go forward.

Q Jake, there's been an uptick in ransomware attacks recently. Is that going to be a point of discussion when the President meets with President Putin?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, 100 percent.

Q What can you do about it? I mean, is retaliation on the table, off the table?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, our basic view on this is that all ransomware attacks are crimes. They should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and every responsible nation should take action against the criminals who are conducting them and should not harbor them in any way.

Ransomware attacks against critical infrastructure are of an even higher order of magnitude of concern for us, whether that's about a pipeline or meat supply or a hospital system or other areas of critical infrastructure. The President will talk to President Putin about our concerns on this front.

We do not judge that the Russian government has been behind these recent ransomware attacks, but we do judge that actors in Russia have. And we believe that Russia can take and must take steps to deal with it.

And I'm not going to be in the business of telegraphing our punches publicly or issuing threats publicly; I'm just going to say that we believe Russia has a responsibility. And, of course, any country that doesn't act, then the United States will have to consider what its options are, following that.

Q What do you think is causing the uptick? Why do you think now? Why do you think there's been an uptick in attacks now?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, first of all, let's be clear that this is not strictly a U.S.-Russia issue. Ireland has faced the -- a catastrophic attack on its healthcare system. The JBS attack started in a computer system; it came from Russia, hit first a computer system in Mexico, affected Australia and Canada, as well as the United States.

So, this is a global problem and it's being driven by a variety of factors, including increasing technical capability, and also, unfortunately, including the fact that many elements of the private sector globally have not brought their cybersecurity standards up to snuff.

And one of our messages has been -- to the private sector in the United States and globally -- that it is -- it's very important to lock your house, to make sure that it is more difficult for these criminals to get inside and hold them hostage or disrupt their operations.

Q Do you think the President will discuss the Nord Stream pipeline with the German chancellor and/or the Russian president? Will it come up? Do you expect them to raise it?

MR. SULLIVAN: I expect Nord Stream 2 will come up in conversations with the Germans. Again, I don't want to negotiate publicly on this issue. They understand well our concerns. But we do want to talk to them about what the implications of this pipeline are for energy security in Europe and for Ukraine.

Q Jake, what is the message that President Biden will deliver to Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Brexit and the Northern Ireland -- the Good Friday Agreement?

MR. SULLIVAN: President Biden has been crystal clear about his rock-solid belief in the Good Friday Agreement as the foundation for peaceful coexistence in Northern Ireland. That agreement must be protected, and any steps that imperil or undermine it will not be welcomed by the United States.

Q Is Johnson taking steps to imperil it?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not going to characterize that at this point. I'm only going to say that President Biden is going to make statements in principle on this front. He's not issuing threats or ultimatums; he's going to simply convey his deep-seated belief that we need to stand behind and protect this protocol.

Q What else does he want to talk to Boris Johnson about?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, he'll be talking to Boris Johnson about COVID-19; about climate change, as the UK is hosting COP26 in Glasgow later this year; about their joint commitment to developing an infrastructure financing mechanism for the developing world that is climate friendly, high standards, and transparent. He'll talk to him about Afghanistan and our collective desire to maintain a strong embassy security -- or embassy presence in Afghanistan after the troop drawdown. And, of course, there's a whole global set of issues, from the Indo-Pacific to the Middle East, that the two leaders will cover.

And then, finally -- you'll see this when they meet tomorrow -- there'll be a refresher of the Atlantic Charter, which is now 80 years old. So there will be an updated statement of principles between the U.S. and the UK as free societies and free peoples speaking out about what we believe in in this 21st century.

Q Jake, the President has talked about personal relationships in driving foreign policy. He had this meeting 10 years ago with Vladimir Putin. What did he learn from that meeting, and what is he bringing from that meeting? And has he been reflecting on it at all in the preparation for this upcoming meeting?

MR. SULLIVAN: Bottom line: He believes you need to be clear, direct, and straightforward in every aspect of the engagement with Vladimir Putin, and that's what he intends to do.

Q Did he ever consider having a joint press conference with him?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm sorry?

Q Did he -- did the President ever consider having a joint press conference with Putin, or was it out of the question from the start?

MR. SULLIVAN: I will defer to my press colleagues about the individual modalities of the press-related issues. But he

does want to have an opportunity after that meeting to read it out and speak about his impressions and what he sees as the way forward.

Q Can you tell us what your views are on the 232 tariffs that remain in place? Do you expect them to come in and -- like, do you think that those 232 tariffs are a national security issue? That was the guise or umbrella under which they were imposed in the first place.

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, you know, in a real spirit of constructive engagement, the U.S. and the EU have agreed to a pause in the escalation of tariffs in response to the 232. That has given time and space for a negotiation to hopefully produce an outcome that meaningfully addresses the problem of Chinese overcapacity. And we regard that as a serious challenge that affects both Europe and the United States and must be dealt with effectively.

Q Do you believe there's an outcome possible on this trip, or is that a longer-term discussion?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think that's going to take some time to work out, which is why that stand-down on the tariffs was so important -- because it gives us the time and space for us to be able to (inaudible).

Q But you're not rolling back tariffs? You're not rolling back tariffs?

MR. SULLIVAN: (Shakes head no.)

Q Okay.

Q Can you speak a little bit about Iran and what the President will ask President Putin, in terms of supporting the JCPOA?

MR. SULLIVAN: Russia is a member of the P5+1. The American negotiating team is working with the Russian negotiating team in Vienna. They have worked together in a productive and constructive way, to a large extent. And so this will be an opportunity for the two presidents to be able to consult on where we think we are in those talks and what needs to be done to get them across the line.

Q Jake, on Iran -- just continuing on that same line: The Secretary has frequently said we need something longer and stronger, and so forth. Do you have any reason to believe that after -- if you get the agreement that is now basically in blue, that the Iranians have any interest in going to something that is longer and stronger? And what is that evidence?

MR. SULLIVAN: We don't underestimate the difficulty of any nuclear negotiation with the Iranians, since we've been through them. But we do believe that there is scope for follow-on negotiations to deal with what -- to build on the JCPOA once we are back in it. And we believe the Iranians will ultimately be prepared to engage in those negotiations. There are things for them to gain, because there are many aspects of our sanctions that are -- are not necessarily part of the original JCPOA. And, of course, we retain all of the right and capacity to take additional steps if they're not prepared to negotiate in good faith.

Q You've talked before about the ransomware side. But, you know, a few months ago, if this meeting was happening, it would have been pretty much all about SolarWinds and state-sponsored actions. So is that now behind you, having done the sanctions and whatever unseen activities? And what's the President's message on that? What kind of guardrails might use that (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: We have had the opportunity to engage with the Russians, through several channels, on the SolarWinds issue, both before and after we imposed costs in response to it. But that doesn't mean that issue is behind us, of course. The issue of state-sponsored cyberattacks of that scope and scale remains a matter of grave concern to the United States. It will be a topic of conversation between the presidents.

And us talking ransomware is not going to come to the exclusion of us talking about the cyber threat in multiple other domains.

Q (Inaudible) him to some understanding with Putin, to some understanding of what's off limits. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm going to leave that to the two presidents to discuss for now. You know, sort of, depending on how that conversation goes at the highest level and where we come out, we will be in a better position to be able to talk about our expectations, as well as our capacities at that point. But I don't want to front-run that today.

Q Has there been any developments on Airbus during this time at all? The Airbus dispute -- the Boeing Airbus dispute.

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not going to say one way or the other on that. All I will note is that the negotiations are ongoing, that we also there bought space with the mutual stand-down on tariffs as well that runs out much sooner than the 232. And so, I think there has been good progress in those negotiations, but I'm making no promises about what might happen over the course of the (inaudible).

Q Jumping ahead to the NATO meeting, does the President feel the need to restate U.S. support for Article 5?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, of course.

Q Will he do that in Brussels?

MR. SULLIVAN: He feels the need to restate support for Article 5 as often as he is able to do so, because for him, it's an article of faith -- for President Joe Biden and for the United States of America. And so he will proclaim that loudly and proudly, as he just did with the Secretary General when he was in town a couple of days ago.

But, you know, he's not just going to speak about principle; he's going to speak about the practicalities of what's required to make Article 5 real, including the work that needs to be done between now and 2030 on every aspect of transatlantic defense and security.

Q Jake, in the last G7, there was not a communiqué because of disagreements between President Trump and the other leaders. Can we expect a communiqué at this G7?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't want to jinx it, but yes, I think you can expect a communiqué at this G7. And -- you know. But you never know. I hope so.

MS. PSAKI: All right, I'm going to let Jake go back.

Q Thanks, Jake.

Q If you can speak a little bit more about the format of the bilaterals between President Biden and Putin, that would be great.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I mean, what I can tell you is we're still discussing, so we don't have a final conclusion yet. That what I can confirm for you is that you will have the opportunity to ask questions of President Biden. And we certainly hope that you'll also have the opportunity to ask questions of President Putin. What that format looks like, we'll know in the next couple days.

Q And so it's still being negotiated with the Russians?

MS. PSAKI: Still being -- still being discussed.

Q And it's still two bilats -- a small and an extended one?

MS. PSAKI: That's right.

Q Talk about infrastructure a little bit. We saw the statement. Has the President now decided to go it only with Democrats to pass the bill?

MS. PSAKI: So I talked to the President about this, this morning, and his view is that there are multiple paths forward. He feels it's encouraging to see multiple proposals put out there, both from Republicans in the House and the Problem Solvers Caucus, as well as a bipartisan group that's working on a proposal. Both will have increased numbers over what we've seen and been negotiating to date. Those are all positive steps.

At the same time, Steve, we're also -- the Senate is also moving forward with a budget process. That, by the way, is how government should work. It's an opportunity to move, through that vehicle, a bunch of his bold economic ideas, as well as corporate tax reform -- something that, of course, will pay for a number of his proposals but also something that will make us more competitive and he thinks is long overdue.

Q The President, with Senator Capito, pivoted to talking about a 15 percent minimum corporate tax as opposed to a 28 percent corporate tax rate. Of course, they're not mutually exclusive, but is he resetting at all, now that he's pivoting to the bipartisan group?

MS. PSAKI: He has always felt that corporate tax reform and raising the corporate rate to 28 percent -- which he proposed and is in his budget, as you know -- is something that is good for -- good for our competition, good for our economy, good for workers in this country, and also will help pay for proposals.

As you also know, the 15 percent minimum tax was an additional proposal that he put forward in the American Jobs Plan and also is in his budget. But it is a proposal that would not violate the red line the Republicans have put forward on the 2017 tax cuts. So, that, which would help pay for proposals, as well as the IRS going after individuals to ensure they're paying for -- they're paying their fair share and they're paying what they owe -- are payfors that do not violate the 2017 taxes. And that's why he reelevated those.

Q Do you think those corporate tax changes are more or less likely with this bipartisan group of senators than they were with Senator Capito's group? Are they more on the table or less on the table?

MS. PSAKI: We'll certainly see. But our view and the President's view is that they should be on the table for all of them because they do not violate their red line; because -- unless they feel that these corporations shouldn't pay any taxes at all. We're just suggesting they should pay 15 percent, which isn't even what the tax rate he's proposing for most corporations around the country.

Q Did the President spend any time on the flight over, or even in the short time between when he woke up this morning, getting to talk to people and do some of this reach-out that he said he's going to be doing on infrastructure, while (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure even any of his close friends would like a call from him at 6:00 a.m. (Laughter.) But he will certainly be engaged on this trip with his domestic agenda, including having conversations with Democrats and Republicans back at home.

On this trip, he was primarily focused on having discussions with his national security team about the foreign trip -- his first foreign trip overseas -- but he will be having those conversations. We'll keep you abreast of those. He's also asked his Jobs Cabinet to run point and be closely engaged with all of these members of both parties who are interested in being part of the infrastructure negotiations moving forward.

Q And I know you guys -- I know he can walk and chew gum, or whatever metaphor you want to use, but is there any disappoint, just not having that done before getting started with this also very important agenda item?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that what we see are a number of signs of progress. One, the Senate just passed a China competition bill just yesterday. We're eager for the House to move forward on that; that's a positive step forward.

While we're on this plane -- on this flight, Congressman DeFazio is helping oversee the markup of the Surface Transportation bill that has a great deal of overlap with the American Jobs Plan. And in addition to the Senate moving forward on a budget process that can be a vehicle for his economic ideas and corporate tax reform, we've also seen multiple options of proposals come forward in a bipartisan manner.

He's quite familiar with the fact that this process can take -- it takes some patience at times; that there are going to be moments where we're near death, and then it comes back. That's always how policymaking, lawmaking, bill making happens.

And -- but he's been encouraged by the progress, encouraged by the interest by not just Republicans and Democrats in the country, but also in Congress, on working together to get an infrastructure bill passed.

Q Can you say what Jake meant by a "refresher" of the transatlantic charter? Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. It will be something that we will put out. It will update the charter that, as he noted, is several decades old -- I believe is what he said. And we'll put that out publicly and it will -- you know, it will confirm and be clear -- and will be consistent with what our challenges are today and opportunities today. So we'll put that out publicly.

Q Can you talk to us about what can we expect with the bilat with President Erdoğan?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, this is a relationship, obviously a NATO partner, where there are areas where we feel it's important to continue to constructively work together where there's opportunity, and also areas where we have strong disagreement. And it's an opportunity to have that face-to-face diplomacy, which the President felt was important to do as a priority bilateral meeting during his first trip overseas.

Q So what are the specific issues? Like, Syria or --

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure they will discuss issues of regional security; issues, of course, that are impacting the global community, including the economy, including COVID-19. And we'll have more, I'm sure, as we get closer to the bilateral meeting.

Q Is he going to have bilats with other leaders at the G7, or, like, pull-asides individually?

MS. PSAKI: He will certainly have pull-asides. I will look back at the schedule and what we've confirmed publicly. As you all know, from covering these international summits, there are -- the schedules are quite packed, but there is an opportunity often to have, kind of, pull-aside conversations, and he'll look for the opportunity to do that on the ground as well.

Q There's rumors that he's going to be having a pull-aside with the Belarusian opposition leader. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: I have not seen -- I am not aware of that plan.

Q On infrastructure -- back to infrastructure: Leader Schumer suggested that the bill could possibly pass partially through reconciliation, partially through bipartisan. Is that something that the administration is open to?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. I mean, the point is it's moving on several paths. So even as we negotiate an infrastructure bill -- right? -- or portions of the American Jobs Plan, it's already moving forward on several fronts.

And then there are components of the Amer- -- of the President's proposals, including the extension of the Child Tax Credit, making pre-K universal, making community college free, that are not a part of the negotiations now, so they would be natural components that would be added into a budget process.

Q So, Jen, a couple of weeks ago, we heard the President agreeing to the statement that President Putin is a killer. Do you think that's going to make things awkward coming into the summit?

MS. PSAKI: The President has known President Putin for a long time. He has never held back in voicing his concerns or issues where their behavior is not aligned with democratic values, and he will certainly be straightforward in doing that in this meeting as well.

But this is not about friendship. It's not about trust. It's about what's in the interest of the United States. And, in our view, that is moving toward a more stable and predictable relationship.

Q Jen, on the China bill, you now have to get to the House. What's the strategy there? It looks like that may be a tougher climb than the Senate.

MS. PSAKI: That -- that may be the case. Look, the President was certainly encouraged by the fact that it passed the Senate. We've seen concerns expressed publicly by some members of the House, including some high up. And we're going to take a look at what the legislation looks like, hear their concerns. We'll be engaged, of course, in discussing how we can move this forward, you know, from a staff level.

Q Do you have a schedule for that, or not?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a schedule or a timeline to predict.

Q So, the global minimum tax -- some of the Republicans came out against it this week. Does that complicate the plan at all?

MS. PSAKI: On the world stage?

Q Yes. No -- yes.

MS. PSAKI: No, our view is that this is in the interest of America's competition of our economy, of the global economy to have that global minimum tax, and felt it was a very positive sign that there was agreement among finance ministers at the G7. So we are encouraged by that, and, you know, it's a positive sign.

Q (Inaudible) the EU and U.S. have a -- their draft statement, as of now, includes a reference to the origins -- the investigation into the origins of the coronavirus. Why is the U.S. seeking, sort of, support from European allies on this issue of getting to the bottom of where that virus came from?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that even as we pursue our own 90-day review, and -- where we are going to tap into every resource we have available in the U.S. government, we also recognize that in order to send a clear message to China and to the WHO, of course, who've been a constructive partner, that it's important that they are transparent, that they release all the available data, that we move forward on the second stage of this investigation. Doing that from a united front and doing that in partnership with our European partners is a vital part of this process. So, it's an indication of that.

Q Will there be a similar line in the G7 communiqué?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to predict for you on that quite yet. You'll know soon enough.

Q Can you comment again on the vaccine patent waiver? The U.S. has just joined the G20 -- I'm sorry, the APEC -- to support the patent waivers.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Will the President be pushing this issue with European leaders who prefer to do compulsory licensing instead?

MS. PSAKI: There is an ongoing process that our ambassador -- our USTR ambassador is running point on. It's a long process, as you know -- several months to negotiate what the best format will look like. Whether it's coming up -- going to come up in conversations, I'm sure we can -- that will be reflected in readouts. But I would suspect we will leave it at the level of the U.S. ambassador.

Q So the President doesn't plan to put his diplomatic weight behind a patent waiver?

MS. PSAKI: The President has certainly spoken about his support on the waiver. He believes it's import- -- an important component of addressing the global threat of COVID. And he will continue to play a constructive role. But I don't have anything to preview for you or predict in terms of how it will come up in these conversations.

All right, thanks, everyone.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Have a good landing.

7:25 P.M. BST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan En Route Brussels, Belgium
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 13, 2021 6:04 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 13, 2021

Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Brussels, Belgium

8:05 P.M. BST

MS. PSAKI: Thank you for joining us on Air Force One, on our trip to Brussels. And we have joining us our National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who will give us a preview of NATO, take some questions, and I'm also happy to take some once he's done.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks, everybody. President Biden is heading to Brussels for his first NATO Summit with the overriding objective of sending a clear message to Allies and adversaries alike that Article 5 is a sacred guarantee; that the United States regards NATO as the foundation for our security -- not just in the Euro Atlantic, but worldwide -- and that we will be there for our Allies. We will have their backs just as they've had our backs.

He'll cover a range of issues during the session with the leaders, including, of course, the immediate issue of the drawdown in Afghanistan, where we're proceeding on an in-together, out-together basis, and coordinating very closely with our Allies as we draw down our remaining forces.

He will also consult on ensuring security for an embassy presence that can continue to provide support to the Afghan National Security Forces and to the Afghan government, as well as humanitarian and civilian assistance to the Afghan people, especially to its women and girls.

He will discuss cyber as an increasingly important dimension of NATO's work. NATO will finalize a national cyber -- or, I'm

sorry, not a "national" -- will finalize a cyber defense strategy for the first time in seven years, which will upgrade the defense, political, and intelligence dimensions of cyber across the Alliance. That will not be a public document, but he will have the chance to consult with Allies on it. And in the communiqué that will be released, there will be a strong commitment to NATO's emphasis on cyber deterrence and collective defense, as well as Article 5 applying on a case-by-case basis to cyberattacks of significance.

Of course, he will discuss the emerging challenges posed by China, not just in the Indo-Pacific but elsewhere, in terms of technology and cybersecurity and information warfare and in other regards, as well.

And China will feature in the communiqué really in a more robust way than we've ever seen before.

Q Can you repeat that? Sorry. Just didn't hear the last line.

MR. SULLIVAN: China will feature in the communiqué in a more robust way than we've ever seen before.

What we will see coming out of this is a commitment by leaders to a new Strategic Concept process that will result in the release of a new Strategic Concept at a NATO Summit next year, in 2022. The last Strategic Concept was done in 2010, and, among other things, referred to Russia as a "constructive partner," and really didn't talk about China at all. So it's time for an update to that Strategic Concept for NATO. And he will consult with Allies and partners at the summit about this.

There will also be a Climate Action Plan. The Secretary General, with the support of the President and others, wants NATO to be the premier international security organization working on the intersection between climate and security. And, obviously, the climate dimension of everything -- all of our militaries do and all of our security systems do -- is growing and intensifying. And NATO will be front and center in all of that.

And then, of course, there's the consultation on Russia. He'll have the opportunity to speak to all of the Allies about what he intends to talk to Putin about. He'll do that behind closed doors. So, they get both to hear from him about his intentions with respect to the summit, and he gets to hear from them as well, so that he will go into Geneva with the full support and solidarity of all of our NATO Allies.

He will meet on the sidelines of the summit with the Baltic presidents, who are a powerful example of democratic governance on NATO's eastern flank. And he will speak with them about a range of issues, including the challenge and threat posed by Russia about issues related to cyber and emerging technology, on which they are leaders; about China and the growing challenges it poses as well; and, of course, about the recent air piracy in Belarus.

And he will also meet with President Erdoğan of Turkey, where they will cover the range of issues in our bilateral relationship, as well as a number of important regional issues, from Syria, to Libya, to the eastern Mediterranean. They will also have the chance to consult on the big powers -- China and Russia -- as well.

So I think I will -- I will leave it at that. I guess I would just close by saying that if you think about the G7 as really centering on the most significant nonmilitary challenges of our time, and President Biden coming out of the G7 Summit with the democracies united behind an affirmative agenda to deal with those challenges, he heads into NATO really to focus on the security and military dimension of this. But that security and military dimension itself is changing, and cyber and emerging technology will play an important role in that.

And so by the time we're done tomorrow, in Brussels, when you combine the G7 and NATO, it's just a really powerful platform upon which America can conduct its foreign policy in the years ahead.

So let me stop there.

Q Talk about China a little bit. What role should NATO have in countering China?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think there are three things that I particularly focus on. One is that NATO has a role in information sharing about the nature of the security challenges that China poses. It imposes challenges to individual Allies in both common and distinct ways. And so, a broader, common picture of that challenge will be very important.

Second, of course, is that, increasingly, in the area particularly of emerging technology, China is growing much more sophisticated in its warfighting capabilities and methods, including in the nuclear sphere. And so, NATO has to play a role in developing interoperable capabilities to be able to deal with a challenge from China that is going beyond the region and extending much more broadly.

And then, thirdly, NATO is, first and foremost, the center for security and military coordination and collective defense, but it is also a forum for democratic values. It is an alliance of democracies.

And so, NATO speaking out powerfully about the common purpose and common strength of democracies is an important part of a collective effort to be able to meet the China challenge over the decades ahead.

Q Jake, on the -- at the G7, did he hear anything about the origins of COVID? Any intel shared with him that he didn't know before? Did any of the Allies have anything new to share with him about that?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, they all pledged to -- not only does the communiqué talk about a WHO-led phase two investigation that should take place in China and get to the bottom of things in China, including the original data that was withheld in the first study, but all of the countries also pledged that they would have their national systems try to share analysis and information in the weeks and months ahead, both with that international investigation and with each other.

So I think there was a common sense that we've all got to dig deeper ourselves, as well as supporting this international effort, and then pool our knowledge so we can get the best, most clear, most evidence-based picture of what actually happened with the outbreak of COVID.

Q So there wasn't consensus on whether it was lab-based or hu- --

MR. SULLIVAN: No.

Q So no one -- no one really knows?

MR. SULLIVAN: No.

Q Jake, on cyber, two things. Can you talk a little more about what invoking Article 5 might look like, in terms of a cyber incident?

And then also, the President was asked today about this idea that was floated from the Kremlin about trading cyber hackers. Are there hackers in America who have been doing -- committing cyber crimes in Russia that we should be -- walk us through that really means.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, what the President was responding to in the affirmative was not the specific proposal of the exchange of cyber criminals. He was not saying, "I'm going to exchange cyber criminals." What he was saying was that if Vladimir Putin wants to come and say, "I'm prepared to make sure that cyber criminals are held accountable," Joe Biden is perfectly willing to show up and say cyber criminals will be held accountable in America, because they already are. That is something that we do -- is when we know that someone is committing a cyber crime, whether against a domestic target or a foreign target, we take action against them.

And so to the extent what Vladimir Putin wants is a common commitment that no country -- neither Russia nor the United States nor anyone else -- will harbor [sic] -- will harbor cyber criminals, whether ransomware attackers or otherwise, Joe Biden is all in for that.

He's not saying he's going to be exchanging cyber criminals with Russia. There's no cyber criminals who have committed crimes in Russia that he's looking at and thinking, "I'm going to exchange them." I think that was overread or misread in the press coming out of --

Q That's not what he said, right? I mean, he did -- he did talk about specifically exchanging --

MR. SULLIVAN: If you go back and look at the transcript, I think you will actually see he didn't talk about exchanging cyber criminals.

Q What did he mean then?

Q Like, "prisoner swap" -- he didn't say that.

MR. SULLIVAN: What's that?

Q He didn't say "prisoner swap."

MR. SULLIVAN: He didn't say "prisoner swap." What he was talking about was accountability and the idea that responsible countries should hold -- should be held accountable to not harboring cyber criminals, and to bringing cyber criminals to justice. He's prepared to do that in the United States. He'd like to see Vladimir Putin do that.

This is not about exchanges or swaps, or anything like that.

Q On Northern Ireland --

MR. SULLIVAN: Oh, sorry, just on cyber, really fast, and Article 5: This would be on a case-by-case basis. And the notion is that if someone gets hit by a massive cyberattack, and they need technical or intelligence support from another Ally to be able to deal with it, they could invoke Article 5 to be able to get that. So --

Q And that's being proposed tomorrow?

MR. SULLIVAN: That's the concept. That's -- that will be in the communiqué coming out of (inaudible).

Q Jake, on China, when you're bringing this up with NATO, in the past it's mostly been focused about Russia, or in more recent past, Macron has talked about concerns about the United States focus is turning to the east, and not locally. How do you bring the Europeans along more? I mean, even in -- even in the G7, in the communiqué, with forced labor, in that paragraph -- correct me if I'm wrong -- it does not have China in it, but it is mentioned in the communiqué. So how do you bring them along in these next steps, in the NATO --

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I think forced labor is a great example of how we are all converging around a common strategy, and that strategy is ultimately about action.

And so the communiqué doesn't just say "forced labor" generically, it says "forced labor" with specific reference to solar, garments, and agriculture. And so where is the world solar made? What are the main products coming out of Xinjiang? You have cotton, you have garments, et cetera.

So the basic notion in the communiqué was: Call out Xinjiang in terms of its human rights abuses and then establish a neutral principle that all democracies can stand behind. We are going to take concrete action and countermeasures against forced labor in these areas. And when you actually apply that in practice, that will have an impact on Xinjiang.

So, from Joe Biden's perspective, the idea here is not to score rhetorical points. The idea is to get agreement around a

common set of principles and a common strategy. And if you go through the communiqué and look at the areas where they got that convergence, they are all the central pillars of how we believe we should be dealing with the challenge of China: supply chain resilience, technology standards, an infrastructure alternative, as well as robust, specific, explicit language on human rights and on China's non-market practices.

So that's how we think about G7 and why we actually think this communiqué is a significant move forward from where the G7 has ever been before, and reflects a growing convergence that wasn't there a few years ago.

But it's also how we're going to approach NATO. You're not going to see, like, paragraphs and paragraphs about China in the communiqué. And the language is not going to be inflammatory. It's going to be clear, straightforward, and direct. And also, we're not going to try to over-crank the extent to which tomorrow is about China by any stretch. Tomorrow is about collective security and defense, and climate will be on the agenda; cyber will be on the agenda; Russia will be on the agenda; terrorism will be on the agenda; and this Afghanistan drawdown will be a significant issue.

But, yes, China will be there in a way it hasn't before. And I think President Biden's view is: Explain how we see things in a transparent and clear way. Don't try to push towards confrontation or conflict, but be prepared to try to rally allies and partners towards what is going to be tough competition in the years ahead. And that's true in the security domain as it is in the economic and technological domains.

Q Jake, on Northern Ireland -- sorry -- did the President say anything in his conversations with Prime Minister Johnson about whether a U.S.-UK trade deal would be at risk if he doesn't protect the Good Friday Agreement? Did he ask Boris Johnson not to renege on Brexit -- on the Brexit pact? Or can you share a little bit about what the President told Boris Johnson about --

MR. SULLIVAN: All I'm going to say: They did discuss this issue. They had a candid discussion of it in private. The President naturally, and with, you know, deep sincerity, encouraged the Prime Minister to protect the Good Friday Agreement and the progress made under it. The specifics beyond that, I'm not going to get into.

Q On Afghanistan, does he intend to touch on the Kabul issue and particularly the security at the airport --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q -- maybe with Mr. Erdoğan?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q (Inaudible) come up with a solutions (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: He will discuss embassy presence with a broad range of allied embassies, and he will discuss security arrangements, specifically including with President Erdoğan. And I'm not going to go into further details because those discussions are, you know, best to take place privately and with some degree of sensitivity.

Q Jake, the event -- I'm sorry, you didn't ask a question.

Q Can you take us inside the conversations at the G7 as much as you can, about China? I mean, how much convincing did it take to get everybody on board on the China language? And what was the, sort of, inside-the-room pitch that the President made to other world leaders on this? And did it look any different than what he said in public?

MR. SULLIVAN: I guess the way that I would look at this is: This is not -- it's been framed up a bit as "Joe Biden walked in to convince everybody else on China." And I think that's not quite accurate. Each country has its set of concerns that it emphasizes vis-à-vis China. And what the President sought to do was bring all of that together into a common picture of what we need to do collectively as democracies to respond.

So, there isn't a -- you know, whether it's Germany or it's Italy, or it's France, or it's the UK or Canada, to -- on different issues, they have different levels of conviction about the depth of the challenge. But when you add it all up, actually, the whole became greater than the sum of its parts, because there is a broad view that China represents a significant challenge to the world's democracies on a number of different dimensions, and that we need a common agenda that is mostly affirmative but also has elements where we are going to stand up and counter and compete. And words like "counter" and "compete" were words coming out of the mouths of every leader in the room, not just Joe Biden.

So it wasn't like he had to sit there and make a legal case to try to bring people around. I think the role that he felt he could play was to take the different perspectives and try to stitch them together into a coherent and common whole.

And, honestly, from the transition -- when there were fundamental questions about whether we were going to be deeply at odds with our European partners over China, and when the European Union signed on to the investment agreement with China -- to today, when we released this communiqué and, at the end of this, you have seen, as I said before, a significant convergence on these issues, including to the point where that investment agreement is actually currently suspended.

So, you know, we believe where we're sitting today is not the end of the story, but it is a good platform upon which to build.

Q Can I ask you about the next chapter of that story? I mean, it seemed to go well at the G7. You know, everybody was friendly. You know, you didn't have the tensions that you had in the -- a few years ago. What's the next step? I mean, how do you take that and go next to -- whether it's policy or concrete, how do you take what symbolism (inaudible) those relationships and move forward?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah. I mean, ultimately, actions speak louder than words, and the proof will be in the pudding for all of us, including the United States.

So I would say the metrics over the course of the next year are, number one: Can we actually get Build Back Better World off the ground with meaningful financing behind it and a real impetus? I believe the answer to that question is, yes, there's real energy and enthusiasm behind it, but we got to do it. Can we turn the commitments on forced labor and ending overseas financing of coal into genuine outcomes by the end of this year or into early next year on forced labor? I believe the answer is yes, but we're going to have to prove it. We're going to have to prove it on actually delivering these vaccines and on the broader, comprehensive COVID agenda.

So what we have is a good program of work. It's a program of work that reflects a common strategy. That is an affirmative strategy, but also has an element of ensuring we compete with a position of -- from a position of strength with China. And now we've got to actually execute on it.

So one year from today, at the next G7 -- I'm not sure where that is. Do you know where the next G7 is?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know where the next one is. We'll have to get back to you on that.

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, we'll have to get back to you.

We actually now have a metric against which to judge ourselves. And I'm not going to hide from that. If we haven't achieved it, I'll move the goalposts next year. Okay? But for now -- (laughs) -- no, that's a joke.

Q What does "meaningful financing" look like for B3W? I mean, you said hundreds of millions of dollars, but there's -- sorry, hundreds of billions of dollars, but there's a \$41 trillion infrastructure gap. So that's a pretty big gap in your own --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah. I mean -- but that's like saying BRI is a drop in the bucket because it's between 500 and a trillion.

It's true that there is infinite demand. But the fact is that, you know, we need to look at what are immediately bankable

projects; where is there absorptive capacity; how do we get this money out the door in a way that actually is going to produce the physical or digital or health infrastructure.

So I think, in the first few years, the idea that we'd be mobilizing this amount of money and proving out concept and building momentum will take us a long way. And that \$40 trillion goes out -- first goes out to 2035. And, second, we're not going to stand here and pretend like we're going to fill the entire \$40 trillion gap. We're going to try and make a real dent in it between now and 15 years from now.

Q Jake, can you clarify what the President said when he talked about there being a dilemma for Russia as it relates to Libya? Presumably he was referring to Syria. Is there more clarity?

MR. SULLIVAN: Syria.

Q He meant Syria, then?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, he did.

Q And then, there was reporting today about how when these G7 leaders work together, that there were concerns that China may be spying on these conversations. Can you talk about, like, what that reveals about the concerns that still exist (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think that was a garble, to be honest with you.

Q That was a what?

Q A garble?

MR. SULLIVAN: Who said -- who said that? That was the thing about --

Q The cell signal around the room where the leaders was meeting was blocked at times.

Q Was blocked to protect those conversations.

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I think -- honestly think this was a garble. I think it was -- like many beautiful coastal spots in America, Cornwall has spotty cell service, which I experienced considerably. I don't -- like, I do not believe or know -- I wasn't in that session, so I can't say for sure.

Q It was in multiple sessions that cell service was blocked.

MR. SULLIVAN: Oh, no, I was in -- I was in multiple sessions, and I was on my phone. So --

Q We got jammed. We felt like we were being jammed at one point. Yeah.

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't think this is correct. I will check on it for you guys to be sure. I'm not trying to hide the ball here. But I was in four of the six sessions and on my phone on all of them. So, I don't know about cell service being blocked.

Q Did you see the statement from the Chinese --

MR. SULLIVAN: You look skeptical, but I'm telling you, I was sitting there --

Q Because even one of your briefers told us on -- one of the senior administration officials said that the cell -- that

Internet was blocked during the meetings. But you're saying --

MS. PSAKI: I don't think that was actually the exact phrasing. I mean, he didn't have access at times to Internet, and is having a hard time getting access to his computer and his notes.

MR. SULLIVAN: I genuinely don't think Internet was blocked, but I don't know. If it was, it was only for the sessions I wasn't in, because I will show you the receipts of all the emails I sent. In fact --

Q The point was: We're asking what it reflects on the Chinese relationship.

MR. SULLIVAN: When I was -- I would frequently have to look up and make sure the President wasn't looking back at me while I was on my phone during. (Laughter.) Anyway, that's off the record. Just kidding. I don't know (inaudible).

Q Did you see the statement from the Chinese Embassy in London saying that China would not pay attention to a group of small countries?

MR. SULLIVAN: Which group of small countries is that?

Q Talking about the G7?

MR. SULLIVAN: (Laughs.) That is sad. So, if their claim is that all of the other world's largest economies count as small countries, then they have a massive problem of perspective.

Q Is this -- is (inaudible) at G7, NATO -- can you connect it to the priority of being foreign policy for the middle class?

MR. SULLIVAN: NATO?

Q Well, both -- the G7 and NATO.

MR. SULLIVAN: I mean, G7 --

Q (Inaudible) very strong priority (inaudible).

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah -- so, G7, at its core, is about sustainable, equitable economic recovery that will deliver for the American middle class. The global minimum tax is -- was one of our top priorities in terms of delivering for the American people. The dollars that will put in our fist to be able to invest back in workers and communities are substantial. So that's one big outcome in that regard.

Even something like Build Back Better World actually interacts in a really interesting way with the American Jobs Plan, because as we invest in and develop clean energy technologies or water infrastructure that we're building out in the United States, investing this money overseas through Build Back Better World will actually give export opportunities for American-made products and technologies. And we're very mindful of that and would be proud of that as a -- as a feature of Build Back Better World.

And then, all of the work on supply chain resilience so that we're never again dependent on another country in a crisis and so that we have sufficient manufacturing capacity at home for critical materials, sensitive materials -- that's going to deliver jobs and economic growth for the middle class.

So those are just three -- three examples.

Q You mentioned -- you mentioned briefly Erdoğan, but could you give us a little more sense as to what the agenda is tomorrow in that -- in that bilateral?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, so they will talk about Afghanistan and, in particular, how we ensure that our embassies can stay in a safe and secure way in Afghanistan to be able to do all the things that we want to do in providing for the Afghan government and security forces and people.

They will talk about Syria and humanitarian access, among other issues in the counterterrorism space. They will talk about the eastern Mediterranean. They will talk about Libya. They will talk about political and economic issues that are more challenging. And then they will -- that have been challenges in our relationship, including human rights-related issues.

And they will talk about the -- as I said in my opening laydown, Russia and China. You know, Russia, obviously, is both at odds with Turkey in some places and working with Turkey in others. So it'll be an interesting chance for him to compare notes with Erdoğan before seeing Putin.

Q Is he prepared to talk about their meetings (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q The S-400s -- will he bring that up as well?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, he will. The S-4- -- yeah, the air defense system in --

Q The (inaudible).

MR. SULLIVAN: -- in Turkey. Yes.

Q Okay.

Q And can you give us any idea of what he might say on the S-400s?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm following the Biden Doctrine, and I will, you know, let him have that conversation with Erdoğan.

Q On the Afghanistan interpreters who helped the U.S. military, was there any discussion amongst the Allies in any of the G7 meetings or pull-asides about what to do about --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes. He spoke with several leaders -- I guess not several. He spoke with a few leaders -- particularly like the Germans, who have troops as part of the drawdown now in Afghanistan -- about interpreters, translators, others who have supported not just us, but NATO and their countries about what we're going to collectively do to make sure that we meet the obligation we have to get them out.

So was there any conclusion on that? Is there more of a plan now than you had before going into the G7 on what to do on (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: For them, it was an opportunity at the leader level to communicate to each other and then to be able to communicate down to their systems, send a pulse through their systems. This is a massive priority for our President, as well as for the leaders of these other countries.

Q And then, on ransoms, was there debate amongst the Allies at the G7 meetings about whether or not they should say something about whether to pay ransoms? Was that a topic of discussion?

MR. SULLIVAN: Not really. Too much to talk about.

Q On Russia, today in the news conference, (inaudible) say that there is no guarantee that he can change Vladimir Putin; Vladimir Putin is Vladimir Putin. Do you come into this with -- like, can you -- can you sort of assess the level of optimism

VIACHESLAV PUTIN IS VIACHESLAV PUTIN. DO YOU COME INTO THIS WITH -- LIKE, CAN YOU -- CAN YOU SORT OF ASSESS THE LEVEL OF OPTIMISM OR CONFIDENCE THAT ANYTHING CAN BE DONE TO CHANGE THE BEHAVIOR OF THIS MAN, GIVEN THE EXPERIENCE THAT THE PRESIDENT ACKNOWLEDGED IN TERMS OF SANCTIONS NOT REALLY HAVING A REAL IMPACT ON HIS BEHAVIOR?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think there are two fundamental elements to how we think about dealing with Russia. One is: Are there areas where, in our common interest, we can work together to produce outcomes that are -- that work for the United States and for the American people?

And the other is: How do we send a clear message about those harmful activities that we will not tolerate and to which we will respond?

On the second: Of course, we can't make guarantees about what Russia will do, but we can make pledges about what America will do, which is we will respond if those harmful activities continue.

On the first: We will see where we get. There's the question of strategic stability. There's the question of Syria and humanitarian access. There are issues related to the Arctic. There are other places where it would be in our interest to find a basis to work with Russia.

Q If a country attacks us by cyber, does the United States respond by cyber? Can the United States respond by cyber?

MR. SULLIVAN: The way that I've consistently characterized our response when it -- when it came to SolarWinds and to other cyberattacks of that scope and scale is that we are prepared to take responsive actions that are seen and unseen, and I'll leave it at that.

Q Can you say anything more about U.S.-UK travel and whether -- I know that there was a working group on this, but, at the leader level, was there any discussion about opening up? And how soon might we see that?

MR. SULLIVAN: They did discuss it. You know, the President expressed his deep understanding that the UK would love to have its citizens travel to the U.S. as soon as possible. But he also communicated that this ultimately is a decision for the public health experts to make according to their guidance, and that's what the point of getting our experts together is: so that the UK experts can share all the information necessary to help hasten that decision.

Q You said the U.S. can take actions that are "seen and unseen." So in reaction to what the FBI has now said was crimes committed by cyber criminals within Russia, has the U.S. taken any unseen actions in that window of time since its response?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not going to say anything further on that except to point out that we do see a difference between SolarWinds, on the one hand, and ransomware attacks on the other hand. Ultimately, we don't judge Russia -- the Russian government -- was responsible for the ransomware attacks, but we have said it is -- it is Russia's sovereign obligation to deal with it, and we have communicated that to them. And that is a continuing dialogue between our countries.

Q When the President said that -- what President Putin said to NBC News, he said that he had no knowledge of these ransomware attacks. Do you take President Putin at his word that he would have no knowledge of this in any form?

MR. SULLIVAN: I can't -- I can't speak to that one way or the other.

Q Was a date set for Angela Merkel's visit to the White House then?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q Do we know what that is?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not --

MR. SULLIVAN: July 13.

MS. PSAKI: I think we announced it.

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: All right. It's Jerome's last trip, so --

Q Right here.

MS. PSAKI: I know he's not the President, but he's the National Security Advisor, so we have to celebrate you.

Q Seven years of White House, so, yeah.

MR. SULLIVAN: Amazing. All right. Well, hopefully, you know, we'll end it with --

Q We're thinking of maybe having drinks on Monday.

Q Yes.

MR. SULLIVAN: Let's do it.

Q Monday? That's tomorrow.

Q Yeah. It's probably a good time (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Send us the details.

MR. SULLIVAN: Right, because the very exciting U.S.-EU Summit is the next day --

MS. PSAKI: That's right.

MR. SULLIVAN: -- which I know all of you guys (inaudible).

Q All the more reason to --

Q That's why we're doing it Monday.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Thanks, Jake.

MS. PSAKI: Anything I can do for you?

Q Jen, anything on if he's inviting the Queen to the White House? It seemed like he invited the Queen.

Q Did he invite the Queen? Or was he just sort of speaking colloquially?

MS. PSAKI: I will have to talk with him about that. That wasn't a prior planned offer.

Q I understand.

You guys have now had a little bit of time to review the infrastructure package that the Republican -- that the bipartisan

group of 10 senators proposed at this point: \$1.2 trillion over eight years, I think. Do you have any comments on it right now? Is it sufficient?

And what do you say to Democrats who say that you're effectively wasting your time by continuing to do this without just pursuing your own policy goals?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I've talked to the President about this. He's staying in close touch with his senior team back at the White House.

Before he left, he asked the Jobs Cabinet and members of his senior White House team, including, of course, Ron Klain, but also Steve Ricchetti, Louisa Terrell, and others to stay closely engaged with members as they continue to discuss multiple paths forward and multiple options for getting his ideas passed into law.

We're still taking a look, still having conversations with these -- the members of this bipartisan group. I would -- on the second part of your question, though, I would say that the way we see it is that we're looking to see where we can find common ground on infrastructure and on areas where there's overlap and agreement. We are still moving forward with a budget process, which is another path and a simultaneous path to get a range of these ideas passed into law, as well as corporate tax reform.

So, in response to folks who are saying we're delaying, we're not. We're moving on both tracks at the same time.

Q And has he talked to Manchin or Romney specifically about their infrastructure proposal?

MS. PSAKI: He has asked his team to stay in close touch with members -- a range of members -- and he has been updated by them at least once a day, sometimes twice, since he started the trip.

Q But he hasn't spoken to them directly yet, that you know of?

MS. PSAKI: He has not had those -- he has not had those engagements on the trip. He's been -- he's been busy.

Q Can you pull back the curtain a little bit in advance of the Putin summit about how he is being prepared, prepped on this? Obviously, the National Security Advisor has been with him throughout, but, like, how does one prepare for these visits? Obviously, they have interactions in the past.

Q And the First Lady said he was "overprepared."

Q Said he was "overprepared." Right.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Well, what I think she meant by that -- I also know she said -- which I agree with, from having many conversations with him -- is that foreign policy, national security, you know, engaging on the world stage is an area that has been a central focus of his 50 years in public life and public office.

And so, he, of course, has engaged with President Putin before, as you well know. And, you know, he certainly knows what to expect. His view is that this is not a meeting about trust, it's not a meeting about friendship -- it's a meeting about figuring out where we can find common ground, and also being straightforward and candid about areas where we have concern.

So, really, he has actually been spending some time preparing for each of these rounds of meetings. You know, as we were just talking about the G summit -- the G -- the G7 with Jake, there was a lot that happened during that summit, from COVID, from the cyber ransomware, China.

A lot of the discussions over the -- the majority of the discussions over the last two days, on a staff level, were about the

summit and those meetings. And the majority of meetings he'll have tonight and tomorrow morning are about NATO.

So this is a very packed trip. And certainly he'll spend time preparing with his team, talking about where there are opportunities to engage on the path forward with President Putin. But I would also just reiterate he's been preparing for this moment for 50 years.

Q Are you concerned about vaccines not reaching 70 percent by July 4th? Does that say anything about divisions in America?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say: Look, at the end of the day, it is -- at this point, what the government can do is we can provide the resources, we can incentivize, we can provide the funding, the vaccine supply, and work with states and localities to do everything we can -- and in the private sector -- to incentivize people to get shots in their arms. It is ultimately up to individuals to do that.

What you've seen is that a number of states have met and surpassed that goal, right? Many have not yet. But we've started -- kicked off this one-month campaign to do everything we can to reach it. And we'll see where we get. We've got some time.

Q Jen, in Israel, the Knesset just approved the new coalition which would end Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year run, I think. Can the White House comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: We will have a statement shortly that should be out to all of you.

Q Has the President spoken to the new prime minister?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe he has yet, but he will soon. And we'll get you with the statement and a readout if that happens, whenever that happens.

Q What's the President's message to the American public about the Delta variant and how concerned they should be? I mean, he tweeted about it the other day.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you say anything more about, you know, what the administration is doing specifically to address that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, the spread of the Delta variant and the prevalence of it is one of the reasons why we are making clear to people who have not been vaccinated -- specifically people under 40; it's a big gap, as you all know, between the percentages of people over 40 versus under -- of what -- how high the risk is from the Delta variant. It spreads, it's very transmissible, and this should be another incentive for young people to get vaccinated.

So we are working to elevate that as a concern because we want people to be aware of the risks.

Great. Thanks, everyone.

Q Thank you, Jen.

8:41 P.M. BST

White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Remarks by President Biden at the U.S.-EU Summit Expanded Plenary Session
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 15, 2021 12:51 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 15, 2021

Remarks by President Biden at the U.S.-EU Summit Expanded Plenary Session

Europa Building, European Council
Brussels, Belgium

1:13 P.M. CEST

PRESIDENT BIDEN: Well, thank you. Thank you both very much. It's been one of the great pleasures getting to know you both personally and (inaudible) our official positions. And we were at the G7, and again today -- apologize kept my colleagues in the closed meeting.

But I want to -- you know, this is -- haven't been back to Brussels or the EU since 2017, and since the -- back then, also the first summit back in 2014.

But I brought the A-team with me today. And, you know, I've said, both publicly and privately, that America is back, and this is why we're here in full force.

I'm happy to have with me today the members of my Cabinet: Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken; he suffers from the problem of having worked with me for years. And also Trade Representative, Ambassador Katherine Tai, who has made some real progress already. And Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo, who was a first-rate governor and one of the brightest people that we've worked with, and agreed to come on as our Secretary of Commerce.

And one of the things that you and I were talking about - and will come as no shock to either of you: Europe is our natural partner, and the reason is we're committed to the same democratic norms and institutions, and are -- they are increasingly under attack.

And we -- I've said it before, and I apologize for repeating -- oh, I didn't mention Jake Sullivan (inaudible) National Security Advisor. I'm leaving out a lot of people here. I apologize. I'm going to get in trouble. But anyway, we'll get back to that in a minute.

But we -- you know, there's a lot that is happening. I used to always -- my friends would kid me while in the United States Senate, because I served there, for always quoting Irish poets. You think I quoted Irish poets because I'm Irish. That's not the reason. I quote them because they're the best poets in the world -- that's why. (laughter.)

But all kidding aside, there is a -- there is a stanza from a poem from an Irish poet, who (inaudible). He said, "All is changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty has been born." I think all has changed in the last 10, 12 years, and it's not because of any one person.

I think we're in the midst of terrible beauty having been born -- a great shift in technology, a great shift in the development of the world, and it's causing great anxiety in each our countries and uncertainty among many of our colleagues of what's going to be their place in the world. Are they going to be replaced by a new technology? Are they going to no longer have a job? And what are they going to do?

And that comes along at the same time that that also generates -- when an uncertainty is generated politically like that, by individuals, it also generates some folks who are less than -- how can I say it? -- some of them are like charlatans, trying to take advantage of those concerns. And we see it in Europe. We see it in the United States. We've seen it around the world. And it's phony populism.

So it seems to me that the best answer to deal with these changes is that -- to have a circumstance where our economies grow, and they grow together, and they grow still based on the value set that united us in the first place. And I think we do share just the same basic values of human dignity and human rights as my colleagues.

I'll be very colloquial with you: My dad had a transition where, in the city we lived in, coal was dying; it was no longer relevant. You know, he was not a -- my great grandfather was a coal miner; he was a mining engineer. But in northeastern Pennsylvania, when coal died -- my dad was a salesperson -- and the economy collapsed. And we moved to another part where there were jobs, in southern -- into -- down in Delaware, a very -- just across the Pennsylvania border.

And my family -- my siblings and I would hear him often use the following expression: He said, "Joe, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about your place in the community. It's about being able to look at your child in the eye and say 'Honey, it's going to be okay' and mean it." I think we sometimes forget that. It's about the dignity of the worker and them being able to hold their head high.

And so I think we have an enormous opportunity, if we think in terms of these changes -- particularly in terms of global warming -- if we think of them in terms of jobs. The kind of jobs that we're going to have to create to preserve the environment are jobs that can pay well, that are going to be (inaudible) technologies that working-class, blue-collar workers, as we say in the States, will be able to make more money, be able to do well. And -- but we have to, all of us, accommodate those changes and provide for them.

And so, I think we have a lot to deal with, from COVID-19 to whether or not we're in a position that we can generate the kind of strengthening in transatlantic trade and technological cooperation.

There are, sort of, a different set of priorities with the same objective: How do likeminded countries, sharing the same values, work together to improve the living standard for not only our people, but for the rest of the world? And I think we have the capacity to do that, and it's going to take an awful lot of hard work and determination.

And I'll conclude by saying: One of the reasons I'm optimistic is because of our younger generation, in Europe as well as the United States. The young generation -- this one -- is the best educated in American history. It is also the least prejudiced, the most open, and the most -- the most committed.

And I think that we have reason to believe that if we provide the policies that are consistent, that provide for the kind of growth and opportunity for them -- and education plays a gigantic part of that -- I think we -- I think the future is very, very bright. I think we have an opportunity to do some, really, very good things.

And with that, I should -- as my mother would say, I should "hush up" and let this discussion move forward.

1:21 P.M. CEST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: On-the-Record Press Call by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the President's Trip to Europe
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 17, 2021 4:17 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 17, 2021

On-the-Record Press Call by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the President's Trip to Europe

Via Teleconference

12:48 P.M. EDT

MS. HORNE: Thank you, Operator. Hi, everyone, and thanks for joining us on short notice. Today's call will be on the record, and our speaker will be National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

Jake, I'll turn it over to you for some opening comments, and then we're happy to take your questions.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks, Emily. And thanks, everyone, for joining. The main purpose here is to get the opportunity to answer some questions. But before we get to that, I thought I would just take a couple of minutes to review, from our perspective, the outcomes of this trip and where we go from here.

The bottom line is that Joe Biden confidently and skillfully donned the mantle of leader of the free world on this trip. The previous president had ceded that mantle, and this president has now emphatically reclaimed it. And as the foundational outcome for the trip, I think that is the most significant.

But it goes way beyond that. This was an unusually productive, substantive set of summits with real, tangible outcomes. And the combined impact of those has laid the groundwork for proving out the case that democracies can deliver for their own people and for people around the world, as the President discussed on multiple of his stops during the trip.

I'll just say a word about five significant areas of progress on this trip. The first is action on COVID. The President both made a historic and monumental commitment of 500 million -- half a billion -- Pfizer vaccines that the U.S. will provide to

the 100 lowest-income countries around the world. And this also galvanized commitments from the other G7 members, as well as helped form the core of a broader action plan to end the pandemic before the end of 2022, which we will now move forward smartly to execute on, both in terms of securing the production of the pledged doses, distributing them effectively, and dealing with all the other aspects of support that are required to end this pandemic.

The second is convergence among likeminded countries, among the world's democracies, on China. We have -- the G7 -- embraced a new infrastructure initiative, Build Back Better World -- B3W -- that will be a high-standards, transparent, climate-friendly alternative to the Belt Road Initiative.

We had NATO tackling China in its communiqué for the first time, truly taking the security challenge posed by China seriously, and also a tasking for a new strategic concept that would deal with China where the last Strategic Concept did not even mention China.

We have the U.S.-EU Trade Technology Council launched, which will address a wide range of trade and technology issues, both in terms of the affirmative agenda between the U.S. and Europe, and also taking on, in a coordinated fashion, the non-market economic practices that China has pursued over many years to the detriment of market economies in both Europe and the United States.

And, in fact, the G7 spoke to this issue of coordination and alignment on standing up to countering and pushing back on China's non-market economic practices as part of a broader economic competition.

A specific, tangible example of that on this trip was the agreement to end a 16-year-long dispute between Airbus and Boeing. And that dispute -- and that agreement involved not just a five-year suspension of tariffs but, critically, explicit alignment on the U.S. and the EU working together on inbound and outbound investment related to China's large aircraft -- large passenger aircraft industry so that the U.S. and the EU will be working together to protect jobs and protect technology in Europe and the United States against China's predatory practices.

The third major area of progress was delivering for workers and families, and this Airbus-Boeing deal, I think, is a significant example of that because, in the end, it will help secure and grow jobs in our own aviation industry by relaxing the tariffs and by protecting against predatory competition from China.

And, of course, the G7 agreement on global minimum tax will, once implemented, provide hundreds of billions of dollars over time into the U.S. FISC that can be invested in American workers and communities that currently are being lost because of the race to the bottom on corporate taxation.

The fourth area of progress was President Biden and the United States standing up for our values in an emphatic, affirmative, and positive way alongside and in chorus with our allies and partners. This included, of course, the Atlantic Charter -- the new Atlantic Charter that the U.S. and the UK -- Prime Minister Johnson and President Biden -- signed in the opening phase of the trip. It included the G7 speaking out with one collective voice on human rights abuses in Xinjiang, as well as making a series of commitments on forced labor, particularly in those sectors that are prevalent in Xinjiang.

It included Joe Biden directly challenging Putin on a range of human-rights-related issues, including the unjust detention of Aleksey Navalny, the effort to suppress Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, and then his extensive public comments yesterday about how an American president has to stand up and speak out on human rights and democracy; that it is stamped in America's DNA. And that put, I think, an exclamation point on an entire trip centered around placing values back at the core of America's foreign policy.

And then the fifth area was driving progress on cyber. From the G7 commitments around ransomware, to NATO adopting a new cyber defense policy for the first time in seven years, to the extensive conversations as part of the summit yesterday between President Biden and President Putin on critical infrastructure in particular, we feel like we have emerged from this trip with a common strategy with our allies, and as well as having laid down some clear markers with Russia, some clear expectations, and also communicated to them the capacities that we have should they choose not to take action against

criminals who are attacking our critical infrastructure from Russian soil.

Cyber also relates to this broader effort at standing up a strategic stability dialogue that will address arms control, but also touch on issues related to both cyber and space as we move forward.

Of course, there were other critical elements to this trip -- from the work that President Biden did with President Macron of France to come to an agreement around increased funding for NATO for new capabilities between now and 2030; to his meeting with President Erdoğan of Turkey on enduring presence in Afghanistan and how we ensure the security of that presence; to his meeting with President Ramaphosa of South Africa on how the United States can support vaccine manufacturing on the African continent; and much more.

But those five areas in particular, I think, are where we feel like we made meaningful progress and have set ourselves up from a position of strength to be able to deal both with the transnational challenges of our time and with competition with China and Russia on a going-forward basis.

So I said I wanted to get to your questions. I took a little time there -- probably longer than I should have. But thank you for a hearing the add on all of that.

Q Thank you. Hi, Jake. I wanted to ask about the NATO discussions on the Afghanistan withdrawal and the President's meeting with President Erdoğan. Turkey has offered to secure and operate the international airport provided it receives what its defense minister called political, financial, and logistical support.

As you also know, the Taliban has issued a statement saying it will consider any remaining foreign troops, including Turkey's, to be occupying forces and will treat them accordingly.

I wanted to ask how seriously you take the Taliban threat. And did the President have any sense of what exactly Turkey would need to fulfill this task? And what is the United States and other partners willing to give in terms of support?

And secondarily, a separate question on the bilat with Turkey: There didn't seem to be any give in Turkey's position on the S-400. What does that mean in terms of Turkey's continuing participation in NATO? Is everybody just going to coexist with Turkey operating this system? Thanks.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks, Karen. So, on your first question, President Biden and President Erdoğan had a detailed discussion of a potential Turkish mission to secure the airport once the Resolute Support Mission has ended. The President and President Erdoğan agreed that they would work together to make this happen.

President Erdoğan indicated he would need, as you said, certain forms of support to do that. And President Biden committed that that support would be forthcoming. President Erdoğan expressed satisfaction with that, and the two of them tasked their teams just to work out the final details.

But the clear commitment from the leaders was established that Turkey would play a lead role in securing Hamid Karzai International Airport, and we are now working through how to execute against that.

Obviously, we take seriously the concern that the Taliban or other elements in Afghanistan will attack the Western -- or the international presence -- diplomatic presence or security presence in and around Kabul. That's why we are putting together a detailed and effective security plan.

We do not believe that what the Taliban has said publicly should or will deter the efforts underway right now to establish that security presence, which in turn will enable international missions -- diplomatic missions to operate.

On the S-400, they discussed it. There was not a resolution of the issue. There was a commitment to continue the dialogue on the S-400. And the two teams will be following up on that coming out of the meeting.

Q Actually, Karen asked my question. But I just wondered if, Jake, you could elaborate a little bit on what plan B is if the Turks decide that it's not going to be in their interest or -- to provide the security there in the end, and how confident you are that that plan can go forward. What's plan B, though, if it doesn't?

MR. SULLIVAN: Sure. We are feeling good about where we are in terms of the planning with the Turks on this issue. But, of course, we are obviously also conducting contingency planning in the event that either Turkey can't proceed -- although we have every expectation they will -- or can only proceed in a more limited fashion.

And without going into too much detail at this point because of the sensitivity of that contingency planning, I will say that it focuses on security contractors who have extensive experience in both static and dynamic security in Afghanistan. And that is what we are looking at as the alternative.

We have scoped out what would be necessary to be able to confidently secure the airport in Kabul. And we feel that we would have an alternative, although we are very much focused right now on converting the President's commitments to each other -- President Erdoğan and President Biden -- into an action plan that sees the Turks taking the lead at HKIA.

Q Hi, Jake. Thanks for taking this call. I was wondering, since you mentioned the G7 countries aligning on China, if you can elaborate a little bit more if that sort of means now that you had the G7 meeting, aligning, clearing the decks, meeting with Putin, if that now means you can go on to a bilateral discussion with President Xi and how you're taking that on.

And if you could comment on, specifically, the human rights portion of that: What concretely will the G7 -- the other G7 countries do on forced labor supply chain issues, since you guys were the first one to take action?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, thank you. So, on the first question, the answer is that what the President said about there being no substitute for leader-level dialogue as a central part of why he held the summit with Putin yesterday also applies to China and to President Xi Jinping. He will look for opportunities to engage with President Xi going forward.

We don't have any particular plans at the moment, but I would note that both leaders are likely to be at the G20 in Italy in October. So I will leave it at that for now, because I -- you know, we're not coming off of this trip -- the last thing we're doing on Thursday is planning the next thing.

But soon enough, we will sit down to work out the right modality for the two presidents to engage. Now, it could be a phone call; it could be a meeting on the margins of an international -- another international summit; it could be something else.

So, no decisions have been made on that score. But the notion that President Biden will engage in the coming month with President Xi in some way to take stock of where we are in the relationship and to ensure that we have that kind of direct communication that we found valuable with President Putin yesterday, we're very much committed to that. It's now just a question of when and how. And we will work through that and have more to report.

On forced labor, what we -- you know, the G7 identified three sectors in particular: the garment sector; the agriculture sector, with cotton being one of the aspects of agriculture we're particularly focused on; and the polysilicon sector and solar sector.

So, what we expect is that other G7 partners will look at various forms of restrictions on goods that are proven to be produced with forced labor. The precise form of those restrictions will vary country by country; the timing on them will vary country by country. But our expectation is that we will align in a broad approach to take tangible action against or related to the supply chains emerging from forced labor jurisdiction.

Q Hi there, Jake. Thanks so much for doing this. I had a couple of questions just about, kind of, some of the more practical results of the Putin-Biden summit. I know that there was discussion of sending ambassadors back. Can you expand on that? Are there, sort of, any talks of having the United States continue to hire local staff in Moscow? Any

interest in reopening consulates?

And then a somewhat, I guess, not exactly related question: But there's talk about the UN voting and whether or not to keep the last remaining aid route into Syria open. And I'm curious if there were discussions on Syria. Did you all get any conversations about whether or not -- just essentially where Russia would vote on that particular issue?

MR. SULLIVAN: Sure, thank you. So, first, the two presidents agreed that they would return their ambassadors to capitals. So, Ambassador Sullivan will go back to Moscow; Ambassador Antonov will come back to Washington. And this is an effort to regularize the diplomatic engagement following the steps that the United States took in response to various harmful actions by Russia earlier this year. So, that has happened. That's point one.

Point two, on the question of locally employed staff in Russia, the two presidents did discuss it. President Biden made the point that we each need effectively functioning diplomatic missions in our respective capitals in order to manage this relationship, both the difficulties in the relationship and the areas where we can make practical progress.

And in that regard, he encouraged President Putin to be practical and flexible about the implementation of Russian regulations on locally employed staff. And President Putin indicated that he would take measures to ensure that our mission was properly staffed, whether it's through some -- through the provision of visas for Americans to be able to fill those roles or through some other adjustment and regulations within Russia.

So, the next step on that is that our teams will meet to follow up to try to work out details so that our mission in Moscow, in particular, but also throughout the rest of Russia, is not hamstrung. And President Putin was forward-leaning in that regard, and we will see how that translates into actual decisions here and in the weeks ahead.

On the question -- now I'm forgetting what the other -- oh, Syria.

Q On Syria, yes.

MR. SULLIVAN. Yeah, on Syria. So, they did have a discussion on Syria, and in particular, focused on the question of humanitarian access. President Biden made the point that you've got millions of hungry people, people in need, in northeast and northwest Syria. And having those humanitarian crossings administered by the United Nations, particularly the one that is currently open and slated for renewal in July, is vital to ensuring that aid gets to the people who need it.

President Putin did not make a commitment as to how the Russians were going to vote on the resolution at the United Nations in July, but it was a constructive conversation. And we believe that there is scope for the U.S. and Russia to work together on a positive outcome so that resolution gets passed, that crossing gets sustained, and that other measures to alleviate the suffering of the people of Syria are also adopted with the U.S. and Russia working together on that issue.

Q Hey, Jake. Thanks so much for doing this. The President said yesterday that we'll find out within the next six months to a year whether or not there is actually a strategic dialogue that matters with Russia. How will you measure progress towards improving U.S.-Russia relations in the coming months? And if you don't see that progress, what is the alternative?

And then a quick question as well on the comments that Congressman Kevin McCarthy made: He said that he believes the President should have used this summit to "stand up for our national interests." And he says, "Unfortunately, President Biden gave Vladimir Putin a pass." I'm wondering if you have a response to that? Thanks.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, on Representative McCarthy's comments, I think they are -- his assertion is belied by the voluminous evidence that President Biden challenged President Putin on a range of issues that the previous President, who Representative McCarthy supported strongly, gave President Putin a pass on.

He challenged him on Aleksey Navalny. He challenged him on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He challenged him on the

detained Americans -- unjustly detained Americans in Russia. He challenged him on Russia's harmful cyber activities. He challenged him on election interference.

He didn't side with Putin against the intelligence community on that -- quite the contrary. And in a number of other areas, President Biden was clear, direct, straightforward in explaining to President Putin what American expectations are, what American capabilities are.

And he indicated that there are areas where we can work together, but he also was direct in saying if Russia chooses to continue various harmful activities, harmful to the national interests of the United States, the United States would take action, would respond.

So, you heard that publicly from him yesterday, where he was clear and direct in where he was standing up and pushing back against Putin. And what you heard publicly was very much a reflection of what President Biden conveyed privately over the course of the summit. So, that's on your second question.

On your first question: There are, I think, three or four different areas where we will be able to see, in the months ahead, whether progress is possible or whether we will simply have to take action to safeguard our interests because progress hasn't occurred.

One of those areas is in the cyber domain and, in particular, on critical infrastructure. And President Biden passed a list of the 16 sectors of critical infrastructure that are enshrined in Presidential Policy Directive 21, and indicated that he was particularly focused on those sectors, in terms of Russia both refraining from state-related cyber disruptions and preventing cyber disruptions by criminals operating from Russian soil. So, that's one.

Two, whether we actually are seeing tangible progress in the strategic stability dialogue around arms control and risk reduction measures.

Three, whether we are seeing progress on regional issues, from Afghanistan to Syria to Iran.

And then, four -- going back to a previous question -- whether or not practical steps are being taken to ensure that each of our embassies can operate in a unencumbered, effective way so that we can manage this difficult relationship in both Washington and Moscow.

So, those are some of the areas in which we will be able to determine whether we made progress or not. And the President was very clear yesterday that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating"; that we're not asserting any kind of "mission accomplished"; that we felt yesterday was productive, effective in creating a pathway to progress on some of these hard issues and a clear set of next steps for our two countries to work on.

But it by no means is the end of the story; it is the start of the story. And how the story ends will unfold here over the course, as he said, of the next six months to a year.

And, you know, let me just close on this call with where I started, which is -- and it comes back a little bit to the McCarthy point -- which is, I think -- I really do not believe that it is hyperbole to say that Joe Biden returns from this trip as the clear and the consensus leader of the free world; that you've got the French president, when asked if America was back, saying, "Definitely." You've got the leaders of democracies from both Europe and Asia extremely positive about Joe Biden's personal presidential leadership and about American leadership writ large under his presidency.

And whether it's standing with friends or engaging with difficult competitors like Vladimir Putin, Joe Biden showed throughout this trip that he is striding across the world stage with confidence and purpose and a singular focus on defending American interests and values and those of our allies.

And so, you know, we just -- we really do feel good about it. It may be -- it's -- these trips, you kind of finish them and

you're like, "All right, well that's great. Now we got work to do." And there's an enormous amount of work to do, but we're all ready for it.

So, sorry to go on for so long at the end, but really appreciate it. Thanks, guys.

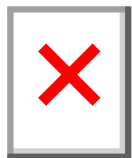
MS. HORNE: All right, thanks, everyone, so much for joining. That concludes our call. Friendly reminder: We are on the record today and there is no embargo. Have a good afternoon.

1:18 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, June 21, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 21, 2021 7:59 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, June 21, 2021
James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:06 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi everyone. Good morning -- or good afternoon. Okay. A couple of items for all of you at the top.

Today, the Biden-Harris administration has launched Child Tax Credit Awareness Day to educate the public and encourage non-filers to sign up for the largest Child Tax Credit in history.

The American Rescue Plan increased the Child Tax Credit to \$3,000 for families whose children are between 6 and 17 years old, and \$3,600 for families with children under 6 years old, and allows half of that tax credit be paid to families in advance through a monthly check or direct deposit.

So, starting July 15th, almost all families who have filed taxes in the last two years will receive this monthly payment automatically. This means most families with two young children would receive a monthly payment of \$600 starting in July.

But we want to make sure that everybody who is eligible signs up, hence we have launched a website: ChildTaxCredit.gov -- very easy to remember. And if anybody is not sure -- maybe they haven't filed taxes because they -- they don't -- they're not required to -- they can go there and learn if they're eligible for this incredible benefit.

Second, today, the United States -- in coordination with our allies and partners in Canada, the European Union, and the United Kingdom -- has taken a number of actions to impose costs on the Lukashenko regime in Belarus for a variety of egregious acts.

Last month, we said we would develop a list of targeted actions against key members of the Lukashenko regime associated with ongoing abuses of human rights and corruption, the falsification of the 2020 Election, and the forced diversion of the Ryanair flight.

Today, we are following through and holding the regime accountable. So, earlier today, the Department of State and the Department of Treasury designated 62 Belarusian individuals and 5 entities in response to continuing repression in Belarus.

Importantly, we did this alongside our partners and allies. And with these coordinated actions on both sides of the Atlantic, we are demonstrating our deep and shared concern regarding the Lukashenko regime's activities.

Finally, today, the Biden-Harris administration announced the distribution list for the remaining 55 million of the 80 million doses of America's own vaccine supply President Biden has pledged to send out globally and allocate by the end of June in service of ending the pandemic.

Already, we have sent millions of doses to the world, including 2.5 million doses that arrived in Taiwan this weekend.

And, in addition, sharing doses fr -- in addition to sharing doses from our vaccines -- own vaccines supply, the Biden-Harris administration is committed to working with U.S. manufacturers to produce more vaccine doses to share with the world.

And we've purchased, as we announced last week, half -- or the week before that -- half a billion Pfizer doses to donate to 92 low- and middle-income countries and members of the African Union. In total, the G7 agreed to provide an additional more than 1 billion doses starting in the summer of 2020 [2021].

With that, Alex, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks. I have a few. The first is on that vaccine allocation. The President promised to distribute those 80 million by the end of the month, but he's obviously falling short of that goal. So, is there any indication that the red tape in this distribution is costing lives at this point? Why is it taking so long?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we've -- we're committed to allo- -- we're committed allocating those doses; we've done exactly that. What we found to be the biggest challenge is not actually the supply -- we have plenty of doses to share with the world -- but this is a herculean logistical challenge. And we've seen that as we've begun to implement.

So, you know, as we work with countries, we need to ensure that there's -- safety and regulatory information is shared. Some supply teams need needles, syringes, and alcohol pads. Transportation needs -- teams need to ensure that there are proper temperature storage, prevent breakage, and ensure the vaccine immediately clears Customs.

So, this has not, as you all know, been done before. Sometimes it's even language barriers that occur as we're working to get these doses out to countries.

So we have announced today where these doses are going. We will continue to announce as they land on the ground and as they are being shipped. And we're looking forward to doing that as quickly as possible.

Q Sure. And on infrastructure, the latest compromise: You said, earlier today, the President needs to see more details. What details does he need to see? Was he not able to take a look at the package this weekend?

And one of the issues you've obviously raised are payfors. So, gas tax aside -- that being a nonstarter -- what payfors would the White House be open to? Specifically, some have raised potentially using leftover CARES funds or funds from the December COVID package. Would those be feasible? And do you want to see the package ultimately fully paid for?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that, you know, the President's pledge was not to raise taxes on Americans making less than \$400,000 a year. And the proposed gas tax or vehicle mileage tax would do exactly that. So that is a nonstarter for him. I'd also note, for the mathematicians in the room: That only raises \$40 billion, which is a fraction of what this proposal would cost.

The President has proposed a range of ways to pay for this package, including ways that would not violate the red lines that Republicans have put forward. One of them is ensuring the highest -- wealthiest individuals in this country pay what they're supposed to pay as it relates to taxes -- additional tax enforcement -- which would raise a great deal more by multiples of what the gas tax would raise. And it would -- it would fall on for -- predominantly wealthy Americans and just ensure they're paying the taxes they owe. So, that is an area where we feel there should be an opportunity to move forward.

And as it relates to details, of course, there needs to be ongoing discussion; there will be over the coming days, rapidly. I expect he'll have conversations this afternoon. Tomorrow, we'll read those out as those happen, provide information to all of you. And we're eager to get those continued.

Q Is the White House open to using those leftover funds to fund the ultimate bill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one, there's minimal, very small amounts that would be leftover. And many of those small amounts have already been allocated or they are to help small businesses, help keep cops and firefighters on the beat. And so we feel the best proposal that does not violate the red lines that the Republicans have put forward would be tax enforcement and some other proposals the President has already put on the table.

Q Lastly, on voting rights: Obviously, there's going to be a show vote on S.1. tomorrow that's going to fail. So, I wanted to come back to President Biden pledging to do whatever he could. He said he'd use every sort of tool at his disposal to get the bill passed.

What has he done to get that bill passed, considering this vote is going to fail? And since he has pledged that, is it time for him to start calling, again, for filibuster reform more loudly? That's a tool at his disposal he has not yet really pushed for.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me just give you a sense of how we see this and how the President sees it: It's a step forward. We don't expect there to be a magical 10 votes. I'm not suggesting that. But just two weeks ago, there were questions about whether Democrats would be aligned. We certainly hope that will be the case tomorrow.

It's important to remember that this has been a 60-year battle to make voting more accessible, more available to Americans across the country. And our effort, the President's effort to continue that fight doesn't stop tomorrow at all. This will be a fight of his presidency.

In terms of the steps he's taken, he's had conversations, obviously, with members about supporting this legislation, including Senator Manchin, as you all know, over the last couple of weeks. And he will continue to advocate.

He's also asked his Vice President -- or, agreed with his Vice President that she will be in charge of this effort moving forward. It doesn't stop. This is an important piece of it -- the federal legislation. More work to be done. But it doesn't stop with that. There's work to do in the states. There's work to do with voting groups. There's work to do to empower and engage legislatures. And that's something that will also be part of her effort.

As it relates to the filibuster: You know, I don't think you have to take it from us. That would be Congress moving forward or making a decision. If the vote is unsuccessful tomorrow, it will -- I -- we suspect it will prompt a new conversation about the path forward, and we'll see where that goes.

Go ahead.

Q Following up on infrastructure: You know, Senator Portman said over the weekend that he thought that dropping the gas tax and this fee on electric vehicles could be something that they could do, so long as the President puts forward ideas that do not include raising any taxes. Is that a potential compromise that seems feasible?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, last I checked, the proposal the President put forward in his initial proposal -- that has been a part of this discussion to increase investment in tax enforcement, ensure that people who are the wealthiest are paying what they should be paying in taxes, which would raise a significantly larger amount than the gas tax -- does exactly that and should meet his bar.

Q And, to Alex's point, do you want this bill to be fully paid for?

MS. PSAKI: The President has proposed means of fully paying for this package, including the tax enforcement components. He thinks that's a responsible thing to do. And we'll continue to have discussions with members about how we can find a path forward.

Q You mentioned continuing discussion: Should we expect another in-person meeting perhaps here at the White House this week?

MS. PSAKI: I suspect -- you can expect that, yes.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, just going into this week, how does the President view his role in these negotiations? Is he the closer? Is he the facilitator? Like what's his approach this week to try and get this across the finish line?

MS. PSAKI: I feel like there's a baseball analogy here I really want to deliver on so my husband thinks I'm cool, but I can't think of it.

Look, I think the President, having served 36 years in the Senate, he's always going to be deeply involved. He's always going to roll up his sleeves and want to know every detail of what's being discussed, every detail of the proposal and package. As I -- as I noted, in response to Mary's question, I suspect he'll have some members here over the past -- over the next couple of days to have those discussions in person.

So I don't know how you -- I will leave it to all of you to -- to characterize or give a label for that. But he's ready to roll up his sleeves, ready -- the door to the Oval Office is always open. And he'll be deeply involved and engaged in these negotiations over the coming days.

Q And some progressives have made the ask that if you're going to move forward with this bipartisan package, moderate senators commit to them to supporting the reconciliation piece of this as well -- the second track, if you will. Will the President also seek that commitment from the moderates if they do move forward on a bipartisan piece of legislation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that the President sees this as a process that is -- has multiple paths forward. And the reconciliation process -- which is already underway, being led through the budget committees in Congress -- is an important component of that.

And a number of his priorities and his proposals that he's put forward are not a part of this negotiation or are not a part of this discussion that's happening in a bipartisan manner. So he certainly would like to see that move forward, and he will make that case to others as well.

Q And then just one last quick one: Does he support the Manchin language on the voting rights issue?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you know, again, I think this is a compromise. And as that happens, as compromises happen, it means

there's a lot that you like about it -- and it may not be everything you love, but he certainly sees this as a step forward.

And -- and as Stacey Abrams said over the weekend, incremental steps forward in making voting rights more accessible, making voting more available is a good thing.

And he certainly is appreciative of the efforts by Senator Manchin and others to continue to make progress on voting rights, which he feels is a huge priority.

Go ahead.

Q Some quick follow-ups on things that have already been discussed.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q First, on infrastructure, the meeting that would be taking place at the White House this week: Do we have a day or people who would be attending on that yet?

MS. PSAKI: It's an excellent question. We will provide more details to you as soon as we have them. But I suspect it could be more than one engagement.

Q Okay. And then on voting rights: There's been a lot of concerns expressed about whether it's the Manchin proposal, the two bills that have been already floating in Congress -- that they actually don't address the key issues that are being faced right now, which is local election officials being removed, being taken -- their power being taken away from them. Is the White House going to say anything about what more needs to be done to deal with those specific issues that are happening right now?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I think that's an important point to raise. You know, even if the voting rights bill was sailing across the finish line with the support of every member of Congress, there would still be more to be done. And that's why the Vice President is going to be leading this effort. You're right that some of that is protections for officials and states. Some of that is, frankly, pushing back on the more than 40 states where there's legislation moving forward that makes it more difficult for people to exercise a fundamental right -- right, which is the right to vote.

So, again, this is not the end of our effort; this is, in some ways, the beginning. And there is going to be more work done by the President, by the Vice President, by the administration to expand access to voting rights.

Q And then one more thing, just on the financial regulation meeting --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that's happening in the Oval Office today. There were a number of issues that I didn't see on, kind of, your readout of what was going to be discussed at that meeting. You know, it could be anything from the Federal Reserve's signaling interest rate hikes to the role that meme stocks are playing in financial stability. Just anything -- I mean, are those -- are those issues going to be raised? And what more is going to be focused on at that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we'll provide a readout of the meeting when their meeting concludes. I would note that it is a routine meeting. And most Presidents meet with their financial regulators. There is, of course, a couple of items on the proactive agenda. And when it's concluded, we'll provide a readout, including the state of the country's financial institutions, work that they're all doing to promote financial stability, implementation updates around climate-related financial risk, agency actions on financial inclusion and access to credit.

That's the proactive agenda. As you know, in these meetings, different topics come up. But this is, again, in our view, a standard and routine meeting where they'll discuss -- the focus will really be on those topics.

Q Are you expecting any decisions to come out of it?

MS. PSAKI: I think it s more of an update than it is a decision.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Back on infrastructure, aside from the gas tax, now that the President has had a chance to take a look at the bipartisan plan, what does he think of it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd first say that the President is encouraged that Democrats and Republicans are continuing to discuss a path forward on rebuilding our roads, our railways, and our bridges. That s a positive sign. And this offer is nearly double what the Republican offer was just a few weeks ago. That s another positive sign in the right direction.

He s somebody who cares about the details, wants to have a discussion. And now that he s back in the United States and -- I expect he ll do that over the coming days. Also stay closely in touch with Democratic leadership about the path forward.

But certainly, he s encouraged by the fact that the number has increased, the investments have increased. Has some questions about the payfors, which I ve noted. And has a red line about the gas tax and raising taxes on individuals making less than \$400,000 a year.

Q Is a \$1 trillion plan big enough for him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don t think we see this as a -- as a one step. There is a reconciliation process. That s ongoing. And that addresses and includes a number of the President s key priorities, including making pre-K universal for kids across the country, which would increase the likelihood of graduating by more than 50 percent; making community college more accessible.

There s a lot of investments and proposals the President has put forward because he thinks they re important for our economy, for the American workforce, for our competitiveness. And a lot of those will be included in a budget process that s already moving forward.

Q So even if this plan doesn t end up being as big as he would like it to be, he believes there are other ways to -- to get those policies enacted?

MS. PSAKI: There are a lot of vehicles to move his bold ideas forward.

Q On Medicare, does the President support Bernie Sanders s proposal to include dental and vision in Medicare?

MS. PSAKI: It s a great question. I actually haven t talked to him about this, so I don t want to speak out of turn. Let me do that, and we can get you all an answer on that.

Q And then, finally, can you describe what safeguards the administration has in place to make sure that the children of top officials don t get preferential treatment in hiring?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me say, first, that we have the highest ethical standards of any administration in history. A number of ethics officials have conveyed that, and we re proud of that. We have also staffed up at an unprecedented pace, and that -- and this is the most diverse administration in American history.

So, we certainly expect that everyone will abide by those high ethics standards. That applies in how we operate; it also applies in how hiring is done.

Q Afghanistan, please.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q With the President back from his trip, with the kind of progress you've talked about that he sees on infrastructure, is he seeing this as an inflection point, in terms of urgency? Is his mindset at all different after being rather patient in his approach with outreach? How would you describe where his head is right now, concerning how quickly something can get done? Because there are a lot of people who are feeling like it's taking too long, and that perhaps he has to have a more active central public role.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd first say that, having lived through a lot of legislative battles himself, he knows that sometimes they take some time; the sausage-making takes some time. But to your point, he does not feel the time is unlimited. And he would like -- it is not weeks, in his view, in terms of moving forward and seeing if there's a bipartisan path forward.

So that is why he's eager to have these meetings and discussions over the coming days in the White House and see what it looks like, see if we can address some of the questions he has about this proposal. And certainly, he'd like to move forward sooner rather than later.

Q And on Iran, the newly elected President has indicated that he does not wish to meet with President Biden or to engage on the components of the JCPOA. What is the President's view on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't currently have diplomatic relations with Iran or any plans to meet with the lead -- at the leader level, so it's unclear that anything has actually changed on that front.

I will say that the President's view and our view is that the decisionmaker here is the Supreme Leader. That was the case before the election; is the case today; will be the case, probably, moving forward.

The Iran nuclear negotiating teams just finished their six rounds of talks. They have not yet announced the seventh round. But as is typical, they're back consulting with capitals. And we're looking forward to seeing where that goes moving forward.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Thank you, Jen. On COVID-19 origins, Jake Sullivan said this week that if China does not let investigators probing the COVID origins in, they're going to face isolation in the international community. So what is an example of something that the White House thinks China would care about being isolated from?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that, as you know from covering the trip, last week there was a great deal of calibration around -- in the global community, among the world's largest democracies, the world's most important security partners, about how we were going to work together to address the rising economic power of China and concerns where we have concerns, which -- the lack of transparency is certainly one of them.

So I think what the President and what Jake Sullivan were referring to is: The global community has taken notice, we're going to work together to exercise the necessary pressure on China to be a participant and to provide transparent data and access in this case, and China wants to have a role in the global community and global conversations. And certainly, they would take note of that.

Q And so, the White House's position would be that isolation from the international community is more of a deterrent than, say, sanctions and threatening sanctions or some other form of punishment?

MS. PSAKI: I think the point that Jake was making is that China wants to be seen as a power in the world, as a central actor in the world. And they -- they are not looking to have the global community align against them.

Q And then, on infrastructure, Bernie Sanders is pitching a reconciliation package that s up to \$6 billion. That includes some of the President s other priorities --

MS. PSAKI: Trillion.

Q I m sorry -- \$6 trillion. It s a lot more money that way. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: I m just --

Q If --

MS. PSAKI: I m just here to get you the accurate info.

Q Thank you very much. If something \$6 trillion dollars big makes it to the President s desk, would he sign it or is that too big?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we re not quite there yet. And I would also note that the President has put forward a way of paying for these proposals, including what he feels are necessary reforms to our corporate tax system and asking the individuals -- the highest-income individuals, the top 1 percent, to pay more.

And he s put a range of ideas out there on the table and proposals out there on the table. We re going to have discussions with Congress about what it looks like, what Democrats are comfortable with as well. There s a range of views in the Democratic Party as well, but we re not quite there yet.

Q And, the last one, a dozen or so states have now ended the federal unemployment benefits -- the extra unemployment benefits. A couple more states are going to do that in coming days. Does the White House think that the governors who are ending these extra enhanced unemployment benefits before they expire are doing the right thing or the wrong thing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have continued to implement -- or are continuing to advocate to implement these unemployment benefits for the remainder of their tenure, which is just a couple of months. We don t actually know, because the data doesn t exist yet, what the impact of the implementation in these states is.

Our view is that American families -- there are still millions of people out of work. They still need a little bit of extra assistance.

We also don t think that these benefits should be never-ending. Hence, they re going to expire in early September.

So we know governors are going to make their decisions. We continue to believe that, with more than 7 million people out of work, that there s still additional assistance we should give to the American public.

Why don t you go ahead. Af- -- you said "Afghanistan."

Q Thank you very much. My name is Nazira Azim Karimi. I m an Afghan freelance journalist. As you know, President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah will travel on Friday to the White House to Washington and visit with President Biden. What will be the main topic that President Biden will discuss with both of them?

And also, Taliban continues their attack in Afghanistan even today. White House has any plan to invite Taliban, too, to convince them to make a ceasefire in Afghanistan? Because Afghan people, they are really tired -- Afghan. And, emotionally, we are in a bad situation.

MS. PSAKI: Understood. Well, I know that President Ghani will be here in the United States on preplanned travel to New

York, I believe. And of course, the President looks forward to welcoming him to the White House for a meeting on Friday. And I expect their top of -- their focus of their conversation will -- to be to continue to discuss how we can work together to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorist groups who pose a threat to the U.S. homeland; how we can work together to continue to implement the humanitarian assistance, other assistance that the United States remains committed to, even as we work to draw down our troops.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just two questions. One, in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling on the NCAA and college athlete compensation, does the White House believe that there should be federal -- federal rules or some kind of federal standard governing college athlete compensation? Or is that a decision that the administration believes should be left up to states?

MS. PSAKI: It's -- I -- let me just first say, on the ruling, that our view is that, of course, NCAA student-athletes work very hard, both on the athletic field and in the classroom. I'm a retired one myself. And today's decision recognizes that, as with all Americans, their hard work should not be exploited. And the President believes that everyone who works should be compensated fairly for his or her labor.

In terms of specific regulations, it's an excellent question. This is obviously a new ruling. I'd have to talk to our policy teams about that and where we might stand.

Q And just one on COVID-19: Based on the current projections, it does not look like the President's July 4th target of getting 70 percent of the population at least one dose of the vaccine will be met.

Of course, the administration has tried to incentivize vaccinations along with corporations and other partners. What else can the White House do at this stage to try and change the trajectory of vaccination rates? And what are the concerns of missing that target in terms of the President's desire to get back to normalcy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we've made tremendous progress in our vaccination efforts to date. And the ultimate goal has been to get America back to normal, as you said. And we're looking forward to doing that even here at the ri- -- White House. As you know, we're -- we've invited 1,000 -- over 1,000 essential workers and military families to join the President on the South Lawn -- and many more -- with fireworks on the Mall.

What we've seen over the course of the past couple months, in terms of progress, is a massive reduction in the number of COVID cases by about 90 percent -- a 95 percent reduction in the number of deaths that are down. That's significant progress.

We set this bold, ambitious goal because we wanted to continue to make progress. And we're doing exactly that. We've seen 16 states meet it. What we -- what we've seen, as we've dug into the data, is that there is a big gap between individuals 25 and over, and 18 to 25. Eight- -- yes, eighteen to under twenty-five. That means that's an area we need to continue to work on.

Now, regardless, even if we sailed past -- even if we do sail past the 70 percent goal, we're still going to be vaccinating people on July 5th, on July 7th, on July 10th. That is still going to be -- continue to be part of our objective.

But as we dig into the data, we know that what we're seeing is a lower rate among young people. That's concerning, especially with the Delta variant being on the rise, as it is -- which does not discriminate by age, which still could cause death, serious illness.

I expect, in the coming days, you'll get an update from our COVID team on where we are on the data on the different categories as they dig into it. So I don't want to get ahead of them.

But we're going to continue to run through the tape. We're also going to continue to be focused on where we can raise the

rates and raise the numbers where we see there -- there's a lower uptick of vaccination.

Go ahead.

Q Jen --

Q Thanks. I think there's a fly on your head.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, thank you. (Laughter.) Oh, thank you guys. At least it's not a cicada. I swear, those things are --

Q Okay, but I do have actual questions. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: I appreciate it. I was like, "Is there breaking news?" But it's just -- yeah, there you go. Okay.

Q Yes. So, I mean, talking about the voting rights vote -- there's supposed to be a test vote tomorrow. That is expected to fail. When you look at -- right now, the prospects for voting rights is not very high to get something through Congress as things stand right now.

So what I would like to know is if you can say, specifically, what the White House plans to do if you cannot get something -- some type of federal action. I know you said that there are a lot of other things; you look at this as the beginning of the process.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q But ultimately, on an issue as fundamental as voting rights, if you cannot get federal action, what is left for the White House to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't think we accept that. All I'm -- the point I'm making is that it's also state action. It's also, frankly, action that's been happening from the Department of Justice, including increased funding and increased implementation across the country, which is something that the President and the Attorney General have both emphasized as a priority, and we've made some specific announcements about.

So, look, I think, as we look to tomorrow, what's clear and where we -- what we're measuring, I think, is: Is the Democratic Party united? We weren't, as of a couple of weeks ago. That's a step forward. If -- if and when -- and as I -- as I will acknowledge, we don't expect there to be a magical 10 or more Republican votes. They've been clear -- the Republican Party and Republicans in the Senate: They do not want to make it easier to vote. They do not want to make it more accessible for Americans to vote.

Well, where do we go from there? That is a conversation we're going to have to have with leaders in Congress, with Democrats, with a range of members who also want to see advance -- advances on voting rights. And I expect the President will engage with Senator Schumer and others on the path forward.

Q When you talk about a conversation, does -- that means a conversation on the filibuster, I would think, because, like you said, there's not the 10 votes in the Senate. And that being the case, what do you expect that conversation to look like? Are you having conversations with Senator Manchin and others about possibly making changes to the filibuster, at least when it comes to voting rights, if anything is going to get done in Congress?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say the President has -- has spoken to his support for a talking filibuster in the past, and, at times, other members have as well. It requires a majority of -- it requires 50 Democrats to support changes in the filibuster rules. I will allow you all to do your vote counting of where things stand there. I suspect it's not just one or two individuals who are opposed to that.

I will note, though, as I said earlier, that if the vote is unsuccessful, I suspect -- we suspect that may change the conversation on the Hill. We will see.

But I'm not going to get ahead of where things are. There's going to be a vote tomorrow. Democrats, we suspect and hope, will be united in making voting more accessible for people across the country, making sure we're advocating for it as a fundamental right.

This is an opportunity for Republicans to stand up and do the same. It shouldn't be a partisan issue.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Two topics for you. The first, I wanted to ask you about crime. I -- is that I wanted to understand: Is there a concern at the White House that there could be an increase in crime this summer with the -- you know, the pandemic lifting? And is that concern the reason that the President is going to weigh in this week?

MS. PSAKI: No, the reason is that there's been actually a rise in crime over the last five years, but really the last 18 months. And so, it's an opportunity for the President to speak to what he's going to do to help address that. And as we've seen around the country, it is a concern of many Americans -- Republicans but also Democrats, too -- not necessarily through a partisan lens. It was something the President felt was appropriate to speak to and tell the American people what he's doing to help address.

Q Would he be approaching this a little differently than he did, perhaps in '94, when there was another crime wave that Democrats responded to? Can you talk to how his approach might change?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get ahead of his comments or remarks later this week. But it is an area where the President feels a lot -- a great deal of the crime we're seeing is a result of gun violence. I -- you can expect he'll speak to that and his commitment to continuing to address gun violence and gun safety in the country.

And, certainly, a long time has passed since the Crime Bill in '94. He's spoken himself to differences -- things he would stand by, things he would -- might do differently. But I wouldn't see this as a response to that, as much as a conveying to the American people what he's going to do now to help address the rise in crime we've seen over the last year and a half.

Q And I just wanted to follow up on Phil's question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- from earlier about the Manchin compromise that had been floated. Just -- if you can talk specifically about his idea -- or maybe if you could speak specifically to the administration's position on allowing or requiring some form of voting ID when people go to the polls.

MS. PSAKI: I think the President is looking -- I'm not going to go through different individual pieces of the package. It's a compromise. The President -- there are components there, of course, that I think, universally among most Democrats in the country -- an extension of early voting, making Election Day a law -- we would support. This is a step forward, should be seen as an incremental step forward. We'll see what's the next step in Congress.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you. Quick one on immigration and then another topic. There's been reports -- Axios is reporting that the White House is eyeing the end of July for a potential timeline to lift Title 42 at the border. CDC is also referring to White House on this. Does the White House see that as a realistic timeline for potentially lifting Title 42? Would we be at a place where vaccines are continuing to be distributed and it would be safe enough to lift that policy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any new policy to announce. When it comes to Title 42, there's been no change. We're not, of course, going to get ahead of the CDC decision, the process involved in that -- which you just touched on a lot of those components. But we would let them pursue that process.

Q Would the White House prefer to allow the outcome of that policy be dictated by the current litigation that the ACLU is pursuing or would -- that the administration unilaterally make a decision on that policy?

MS. PSAKI: There's a policy process that's ongoing. That's unrelated to the litigation.

Q And then in terms of the President's trip later on this week to North Carolina, the White House -- the administration said early on that when it came to vaccine hesitancy, a big part of the strategy was relying on local physicians, local governments as well --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- to kind of take that on. You know, there's -- the Vice President took a trip recently, and the First Lady is taking a trip. Now the President taking a trip. Does this mark, kind of, a shift in strategy when it comes to combating vaccine hesitancy? And when it comes to that specific demographic you described -- younger people --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- what really do you do to convince those people to take vacc- -- vaccines at that point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say: No. Where we've invested our funding is in local -- empowering local, trusted voices, whether they're doctors or clergy or civic leaders. That continues to be the case.

At the same time, of course, the President and the Vice President of the United States should be out there advocating for the impact, the efficacy of the vaccine, and the impact. And as a part of our "Month of Action" here -- a month-long campaign -- it's absolutely appropriate for them to do that, in our view.

As it relates to young people, you know, I think we'll use some of the same tactics we've deployed with a range of communities -- right? -- which is trusted voices; which is ensuring, you know, if a college roommate or a college -- a former college classmate got the vaccine and now can go out and feel safe going out to restaurants and concerts. That's pretty effective, maybe even more so than the President of the United States appearing in their local newspaper. That will continue to be an area we invest.

We've also continued to make it as accessible as humanly possible. That's something we can do from the federal government. We've seen that as a barrier in the past. We've made progress. We've seen that as a barrier. We'll continue to do that as it relates to young people.

Q Jen.

MS. PSAKI: We're also incentivizing.

Q Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Yeah.

Q Sorry. Sorry about that.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, it's okay.

Q Two questions. (Laughter.) Okay, two questions. The first, on governors and governors races. Across the country, you've been -- you have a number of governors and candidates for governor who are becoming more and more explicitly anti-government in their rhetoric and rejecting the legitimacy of either the President or the federal government in general, in areas that are undoubtedly the federal government's province, such as a Texas gubernatorial candidate saying he would close the borders. You have a guy in Idaho running for governor who has actually taken up arms against federal agents.

Is the administration concerned that actual violent extremists and people espousing secessionist rhetoric are finding a home in Republican primaries and could actually be elected to office? And then I have a second question.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to label people "domestic violent extremists" officially from here. I think we have certainly seen problematic rhetoric -- rhetorics: followers of QAnon and conspiracy theories who not just -- who don't just run but are elected to office. So there's already a record of that.

We'll continue to speak out against that. But we will -- our strategy at this point is to continue to advocate for how government can work for the American people; remind people across the country that this President is going to govern for all Americans, not just one -- from one wing of a party or the other; and that, hopefully, the effectiveness of that is something that can help us play a constructive role.

Q And then a related follow-up: President Biden's predecessor is going to return to his campaign-style rallies in Ohio this coming weekend. Has anyone from the administration reached out to Governor DeWine or anyone in Ohio's government about the possibility of violence resulting from his return to the trail? And is there any concern about him going back out there and continuing to insist that the election is fraudulent and that he actually won could result in people being hurt or killed?

MS. PSAKI: Obviously, we take the rhetoric of the -- the other, the -- the "former guy," as we like to say, quite seriously, as everyone should. But I don't have any readouts or calls with Governor DeWine. I will see if there's anything from our Homeland Security team to read out.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. You mentioned that supply -- going back to the vaccine announcement -- was the main -- was not the constraint.

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Q It was logistics.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q On June 4th, Gayle Smith said that they expected the balance of 80 million -- this 55 million -- to come from the AstraZeneca shots. Those are obviously still under review. Should we infer from your comment that you now expect those 55 million to be from Pfizer and Moderna or Johnson & Johnson?

MS. PSAKI: We've always had a range of options -- as we are contingency planners here -- and we have plenty of supply to deliver on the 80 million doses. As you noted -- or as you alluded to, my former -- my answer previously, our biggest challenge is logistics -- is the fact that there's not a playbook for this. And there are challenges as it relates to getting these doses out to every country.

Certainly, obviously, once the FDA -- if the FDA -- if the FDA approves sending these AstraZeneca doses overseas, that would be a part of it. But until then, it wouldn't be, of course.

Q Do you have an estimate then on how many doses will be sent this month? Of course, the President Biden's pledge

initially was that 80 million would be sent this month, and now it will be "allocated" instead of "sent."

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on that. It's a great question. I know the COVID team is doing a briefing tomorrow, but I will see if there's more we can get back to you.

Q I will be there. And I --

MS. PSAKI: I know you will be. A loyal attendee.

Q Indeed. And going -- for the meeting this afternoon, one of -- one subject I wonder if it'll come up is cryptocurrency. Is that something the President is seeking the advice of the -- the (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: The agenda is exactly what I outlined earlier. And we will provide a readout once the meeting concludes about the topics.

Q And this is his first meeting with Jay Powell. Does he have confidence in the job Jay Powell is doing? Does he have any particular message for Powell in particular on that?

MS. PSAKI: The President's view is this is a routine meeting with financial regulators to get an update on management of the economy and a range -- and making credit accessible to people across the country.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to drill down, Jen, on the White House position on a vehicle mileage tax for electric vehicles. Can you explain the White House's position and why you'd be opposed to -- essentially, it would -- wouldn't it level set because people who fill up their cars with gasoline pay into the Highway Trust Fund with the 18.3 cent per gallon excise tax. People who drive electric vehicles drive on the same roads; they don't pay that tax. Why not?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, the President wants to grow the electric vehicle industry, wants more people to buy electric vehicles, wants to make them accessible to people across the country. That will help our climate, help create jobs in that industry as well.

And his view is that there are plenty of ways to pay for these proposals, plenty of ways that will not leave the burden on any individuals across the country making less than \$400,000 a year. That's the choice, and he feels we should -- we should have the burden on the wealthiest Americans, as opposed to any other Americans.

Q What's the long-term structural impact then on the Highway Trust Fund if, as you hope, more Americans drive electric vehicles, fewer people fill up their cars with gasoline? How do you sustain that if fewer people are paying that excise tax overtime?

MS. PSAKI: I suspect Secretary Pete has thought about this. I'm happy to talk to him about it over the long term.

But, again, the purpose of this proposal is to move to electric vehicles, as an industry -- where people are driving electric vehicles, making our climate -- making our climate healthier, but also creating jobs in this industry that he feels is an industry of the future.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. The President has been criticized for giving Putin a list of 16 critical infrastructure targets that's considered off-limits to cyberattacks. How did that idea come about? And why not tell Putin that everything inside of the United States is off-limits?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I don't think it required the President providing a list to -- for President Putin or Russia to determine what is critical infrastructure in the United States. I know that has been part of the conspiracy response to his proposal.

The President was being clear: These are areas where, you know, we will be watching and we will reserve the option of consequences. That was the message he was sending during that meeting. That's why he put forward those specific examples.

Q And why didn't he give Putin a list of targets inside of Russia that the United States would target if another cyberattack does take place in the United States?

MS. PSAKI: Because we don't preview our punches.

Q Okay. And also --

Q Does the White House --

Q One last one question.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Jen? Jen?

Q One last question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Does the President believe that a 15-week-old, unborn baby is a human being?

MS. PSAKI: Are you asking me if the President supports a woman's right to choose?

Q Does he believe --

MS. PSAKI: He does.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, another question, actually, on the summit last week with Putin. A State Department official, after the summit, said that the Havana Syndrome -- these anomalous health incidents among U.S. personnel -- had come up. It was referenced. Who referenced it to who?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more specifics from that meeting to read out for you.

Q Why would the topic come up if there's no confidence in this building or with intelligence agencies as to the perpetrator?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't -- we have not attributed, as you know. I don't have anything more specifically on this topic from the meeting.

Q The White House reaction on Fulton versus the City of -- White House reaction on the Supreme Court decision to Fulton versus the City of Philadelphia -- does the White House have a reaction on that -- on the case?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: I think we have issued a reaction to it. And I don't have anything more to it.

Go ahead.

Q Okay, and then the second question --

MS. PSAKI: I think we got to move on.

Go ahead in the --

Q Multiple people --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, right there. Yep, go ahead, right -- go ahead.

Q I wanted to follow up on the Geneva summit if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, sure.

Q What specific step -- steps is the administration taking now to implement the understandings reached by President Biden and President Putin in Geneva? I'm especially interested, as you probably understand, in the potential dialogue on cyber --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- and the strategic stability. Should we expect in-person interagency meetings on that, or are we talking about, you know, something online? Any idea about that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, so first let me say, the President did accomplish exactly what he wanted to accomplish in Geneva, which is identifying areas where the United States and Russia could work together in our mutual interest. We launched the strategic stability talks.

Part of their discussion was the fact that there will need to be a lot of follow-up on a level that is below the two leaders. So that -- some of that could be at the Secretary of State; some of that will be before -- underneath that. And those discussions will be happening or beginning in the weeks ahead. But that was the agreement between them, that there would be follow-up from their teams.

I don't have any more specific update. I expect you would get them -- those updates from the State Department and others.

Go ahead.

Q Oh, well --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. But, actually, this woman right in front of you. I was trying to point to her, and then I'll go to you next?

Q Thank you --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, no, no. No. No. right behind you. Go ahead.

Q Me?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, right there in the -- did you have a question, right there in the polka-dot shirt?

Q Yeah, I do.

Q I've got a question. (Laughter.)

Q I was just trying to -- I can't -- I can't tell.

MS. PSAKI: No, sorry.

Q On the debt ceiling --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- there's going to be a fight coming up next month and they've been known to be "epic showdowns" on debt ceiling.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q So what is the President's stance on raising the debt ceiling? And if it cannot -- no agreement can be reached, will the Treasury Department take extraordinary measures?

MS. PSAKI: The President believes that Congress will do what they've done three times during the Trump administration, which is to raise the debt ceiling. We know that that will be a central focus and discussion, probably even in here, come the fall. But he expects they will do what they've done three times over the last.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The President said repeatedly on the campaign trail that he opposes defunding the police. He's addressing rising crime across the country on Wednesday, and you mentioned this. What is the President's message to some mayors who are considering reducing police budgets or already have reduced police budgets?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say person -- the President's implementation of the ARP -- part of the funding that goes to state and local authorities is to ensure that there are police that are kept on the beat. Obviously, state and local authorities are going to determine how they spend that money, but, certainly, he included that funding because he feels it's important to communities across the country.

Q And then, can I ask one more?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q So I was wondering if you would tell us about the President's reaction -- some Senate Republicans are delaying confirmation of his OPM nominee over fears that, if confirmed, she would incorporate what they see as detrimental critical race theory into federal directives. What is the White House's response to that delay?

MS. PSAKI: The President believes that this is a qualified nominee, one the Senate should move forward expeditiously, so that we can ensure we have a full team in place across the government to continue to work with Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

Go ahead, Nadia.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just to follow up on Iran. An EU negotiator said, today, that they cleared on certain technical issues, but they still have problems on the political one. And some sources in Geneva -- in Vienna, sorry, indicate that they might reach a deal by the middle of July. Is this optimistic? What's your assessment of that? Can a deal be reached considering that re-election -- or the election, rather, of the hardline President?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I don't have a new deadline to set here. As you know because you follow this closely, they just finished their sixth round. It's natural that they would be returning to capitals -- the negotiators -- to consult with their capitals and leaders in their capitals. That's happening now.

Our view is that there is a decisionmaker here who -- and that has not changed, and it is the Supreme Leader. So, we are going to continue to work to move these diplomatic negotiations forward because it's in the interest of the United States and the interests of our national security, but I don't have a new timeline to set for you.

But that -- he's been the decisionmaker before the election, after the election, and even after an inauguration.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. You announced sanctions against Belarus today, which include visa restrictions, property assets designation, but previous reports suggested there would be economical targets, that the sanctions would be tougher. Why have you refrained from putting economic sanctions on Belarus, which would be more significant?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we just announced a huge number of sanctions, in coordination with our European partners to send a clear message that the behavior is unacceptable -- not just the diversion of the Ryanair flight, but oppression -- oppression of democracy within the country.

And that's something, again, we did in coordination with our partners, because we felt these would be the most effective means of sending that clear message.

Go ahead.

Q Why hasn't the President nominated anyone to lead the FDA at this point?

MS. PSAKI: I know there's -- this is a popular and understandable question. Certainly, he's eager to have somebody who's qualified and prepared to pl- -- to take on the role. And he's not going to expedite it until he's ready to make a decision and make an announcement.

Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is writing a document to clarify who should receive Communion. And this is targeted at politicians, people who have a high public profile. What's the President's reaction to this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Joe Biden is a strong man of faith. And as he noted just a couple of days ago, it's personal. He goes to church, as you know, nearly every weekend. He even went when we were on our overseas trip. But it's personal to him. He doesn't see it through a political prism. And we're not going to comment otherwise on the inner workings of the Catholic Church.

Q Would statements by the bishops make the President reconsider his public support for policies that, you know, increase access to abortion or allow access to abortion in the United States?

MS. PSAKI: Again, that the President's faith is personal. It's something that has helped guide him through some

challenging moments in his life. And that's how many Americans see their faith as well, not through a political prism. So I would suspect he will continue to attend church as he has for many, many years.

Q Does he realize that --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Jonathan.

Q -- his stance on abortion runs contradictory to U.S. CCB teachings?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I think we're going to move on to the next question because I've just answered that and it's personal.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. There's a gubernatorial election in New Jersey: Governor Murphy is running for reelection. He endorsed the President last time and raised money for him. Is the President going to help Governor Murphy win reelection this fall?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly he'd be eager to see him win reelection, of course, and be a -- continue to be an important partner in the state of New Jersey as we work to address -- continue to address the pandemic, get people back to work. In terms of what his specific political plans are, I will -- I don't have anything to preview for you at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, one more question about Iran -- on Ebrahim Raisi, the new President-elect. He has said that he's accusing the U.S. of breaking promises, saying, quote, "Based on the nuclear deal, you are obligated to lift the sanctions and you did not fulfill your commitment." What does the President have to say about that? And then, secondly, he's under U.S. sanctions for the 1988 political prisoner executions. So, how do you deal with him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that the new President will, of course, be held accountable for violations of human rights on his watch going forward. We strongly urge the Iranian government, regardless of who's in power, to release political prisoners, improve respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all Iranians.

You know, again, I would note -- and let me just say, on the sanctions piece, that, as we're in these discussions -- in the middle of these discussions, after the sixth round, the precise nature and sequence of the sanc- -- sanctions-related steps the United States would take -- would need to take to achieve a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA is a subject of the talks and of the discussions.

And we certainly understand, as we've seen in past rounds of these negotiations, that there will be a range of rhetoric to address political needs at home; we understand that. But our focus remains on these negotiations that we look forward to continuing to participate in.

Q Can I follow-up on that, Jen, if you don't mind?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Go ahead.

Q Thanks so much. So, even if you manage to reach a nuclear deal or a deal with the Iranians on nuclear deal reentry, Republicans in Congress could force a vote to block sanctions relief, forcing the Democrats who are still in office -- including Majority Leader Schumer, who voted against the original deal when it was negotiated. So are you confident you have the votes in Congress to relieve sanctions and reenter the nuclear deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there isn't even a deal yet, right? So I understand why you're asking that question, but it's a little bit ahead of where we are. May we have a deal where we can have that discussion.

The important case that we are going to continue to make is that Iran is not a good actor in the world on a range of issues, whether it's human rights or their engagement in the region. That continues to be the case and would be even after -- if we get to the point where we have a deal.

But what is in the interest of the United States? What's interest -- in the interests of the United States is having that return to visibility, that return to an understanding of what their capabilities are, how close they are to acquiring a nuclear weapon. We're not quite there yet.

When we get to a point, if we get to the point when there's a deal, we're happy to have the discussion about the legislative vote count.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I thought you didn't take my question, and so (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: No, go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. President Biden recently announced that the U.S. will provide corona vaccine to North Korea.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Do you know how many doses? And what kind of a vaccine are you going to provide to North Korea?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we announced that we would be providing about [half] a billion doses to the global community and the 92 countries, working through COVAX for 75 percent of it, who are the lowest- and middle-income countries in the world. That's what we've announced, but I don't have any more details than that.

Go ahead in the back.

Q I think we're at an hour.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, we'll go to this last one since I just called on him, and then we'll -- we'll wrap it up. Go ahead.

Q Yeah. Representing an audience that is quite different from this gentleman's, I'd like to repeat his question: The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *City of Philadelphia v. Fulton*, you said that the White House issued a reaction to that; I don't believe that is the case. Was the President briefed on that decision?

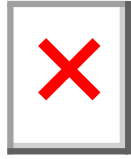
MS. PSAKI: I thought we had. If not, I will get that to you and to this gentleman over here.

Thanks, everyone, so much. We'll do this again tomorrow. Okay.

2:00 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement on National Security Advisor Sullivan's Meeting with Lieutenant General Aviv Kohavi, Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 23, 2021 8:18 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2021

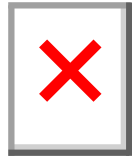
Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Lieutenant General Aviv Kohavi, Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today in Washington with Lieutenant General Aviv Kohavi, Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed President Biden's unwavering support for Israel's security and commitment to continuing to strengthen the defense partnership between the two countries. The officials discussed the challenges to security and stability in the Middle East, including the threat posed by Iran's malign activities in the region, and Mr. Sullivan affirmed the President's commitment to ensuring that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon. The officials agreed on the importance of continuing and expanding bilateral consultations on the array of strategic challenges facing the region.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Bipartisan House Members on USICA
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 24, 2021 4:07 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2021

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Bipartisan House Members on USICA

This morning, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with a bipartisan group of House members – led by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Meeks and Ranking Member McCaul – at the White House to discuss the vital importance of investing in domestic sources of strength that will allow us to grow our economy, bolster the middle class, and out-compete China and the rest of the world.

During the meeting – which also included Rep. Gallagher, Rep. Matsui, Rep. Bera, Rep. Slotkin, and Rep. Turner – National Security Advisor Sullivan discussed a range of issues, including the success of the President's recent trip to Europe in rallying democracies around a shared agenda.

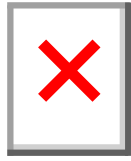
Sullivan also stressed the importance of linking our foreign policy objectives with making vital investments to grow our economy, including through passing bipartisan legislation like the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) and the National Science Foundation for the Future Act – which incorporates key components of the vision the President laid out through the American Jobs Plan, including in bolstering R&D in areas like climate technology, and strengthening advanced manufacturing, supply chain resiliency, and the American semiconductor industry.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: ICYMI: President Biden Brings Pride Back to the White House
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 28, 2021 4:29 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 28, 2021

ICYMI:

President Biden Brings Pride Back to the White House

Last week, President Biden delivered a concise, clear, and commanding message: “Pride is back at the White House.”

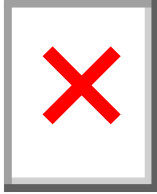
To mark Pride Month and underscore how the Biden Administration has [championed LGBTQ+ equality at home and abroad since taking office](#), President Biden and the First Lady welcomed LGBTQ+ advocates, faith leaders, state and local elected officials, and members of Congress to the East Room – near the first [Smithsonian LGBTQ+ exhibit on display at the White House](#). President Biden outlined the historic steps his Administration has taken to champion full equality for LGBTQ+ Americans, renewed his calls on the Senate to swiftly pass the Equality Act, and denounced anti-transgender bills as un-American and legislation disguised as bullying. He also commended the LGBTQ+ community for their courage and bravery pushing progress forward and recommitted to the work ahead to confront the hate, discrimination, and violence facing LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender women of color.

Additionally, President Biden signed a law designating the site of the Pulse Nightclub shooting as the “National Pulse Memorial.” He also announced the appointment of Jessica Stern as the U.S. Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons at the Department of State, a role critical to ensuring that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons abroad.

Read key stories below about President Biden’s efforts to commemorate Pride Month:

AP: [Biden celebrates Pride Month, highlighting LGBTQ rights](#)

[Josh Boak and Darlene Superville, 6/25/21]



Associated Press

“President Joe Biden celebrated Pride Month at the White House on Friday, a reflection of the growing stature of the LGBTQ community at the highest level of government. ‘Pride Month represents so much,’ Biden said. ‘It stands for courage. The courage of all those in previous generations and today who proudly live their truth. Stands for justice. Both the steps we’ve taken and the steps we need to take. And above all, Pride Month stands for love.’”

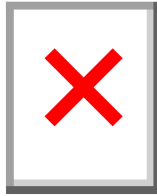
WaPo: [Biden calls anti-transgender bills among the ‘ugliest, most un-American laws’](#)

[Eugene Scott, 6/25/21]

“President Biden spoke out against the increase in anti-transgender bills in state legislatures during the first LGBT Pride Month celebration of his presidency. The president criticized Republicans for attempting to limit the rights of transgender people — especially trans youths. More than 80 anti-transgender bills have been introduced in state legislative sessions this year, according to the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights organization. ‘These are some of the ugliest, most un-American laws I’ve seen,’ Biden said Friday ... ‘Let’s be clear,’ he added. ‘This is nothing but bullying disguised as legislation.’”

USA Today: [‘We’ll remember’: Biden signs law designating Pulse nightclub site a national memorial](#)

[Michael Collins and Jeoy Garrison, 6/25/21]



Associated Press

“A nightclub that was the site of a horrific shooting in Florida became a national memorial Friday. President Joe Biden signed a law designating the Pulse nightclub in Orlando as a national memorial at a White House ceremony that included survivors of the 2016 attack. ‘A place of acceptance and joy became a place of unspeakable pain and loss. We ll never fully recover, but we ll remember,’ Biden said before signing the law designating the memorial. Pulse survivors stood around the president as pictures of the 49 killed displayed on video screens.”

CBS: Biden marks Pride Month with speech and names Pulse a national memorial

[Grace Segers and Kathryn Watson, 6/25/21]

“President Joe Biden declared ‘pride is back at the White House,’ delivering remarks in a day of events intended to mark the contributions of LGBTQ Americans. He spoke after signing H.R. 49, which designates the site of the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting as the ‘National Pulse Memorial.’ But Mr. Biden recognized that much work remains to be done to give equal rights and protections to LGBTQ Americans. The president invoked Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California, and said he was right when he said it “takes no compromise to give people their rights.’ He called on the Senate to pass the Equality Act to protect the rights of LGBTQ people.”

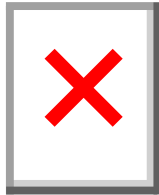
CNN: President Joe Biden to name Jessica Stern special envoy for LGBTQ rights

[Donald Judd and Kate Sullivan, 6/25/21]

“President Joe Biden named Jessica Stern as the US Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons on Friday, reinstating a position that existed under the Obama administration but was not filled by President Donald Trump. Stern currently serves as executive director of OutRight Action International, an organization aimed at ensuring human rights for LGBTQ people both domestically and abroad and joined Biden at the White House Friday for remarks commemorating Pride Month.”

PEOPLE: [Transgender Teen Introduces Biden to Mark the Return of Pride Commemorations at the White House](#)

[Virginia Chamalee, 6/25/21]



Associated Press

“Sixteen-year-old Ashton Mota introduced President Joe Biden at the White House on Friday as the administration kicked off the return of Pride commemorations. ‘My name is Ashton Mota, I use he/him pronouns, and I m honored to be here with you all today,’ Mota said. ‘I am a 16-year-old Black, Afro-Latino high school student from Lowell, Massachusetts. I also happen to be transgender.’ ... Mota went on to describe how the trans community continues to face discrimination and wakes up to ‘headline after headline about bill after bill that prevent us from joining a sports team, receiving healthcare, or even just using the bathroom. This is why passing the Equality Act is so important,’ he said.”

LGBTQ Nation: [Biden declares “Pride is back at the White House” after designating Pulse a national monument](#)

[6/25/21]

President Joe Biden (D) has signed H.R. 49, the bill designating the site of the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida as a national monument, into law. Afterward, Biden commemorated Pride Month with remarks made alongside Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, the first publicly out person confirmed to a Cabinet position ... He then highlighted his administration’s efforts to expand civil rights for LGBTQ Americans, particularly by ensuring that sexual orientation and gender identity are covered under existing anti-discrimination law. Nevertheless, Biden mentioned the fact that over half of states here still lack explicit LGBTQ anti-discrimination protections. He called on the Senate to pass the Equality Act, saying that it will also strengthen pre-existing civil rights protections for people of faith, people of color and people with disabilities.”

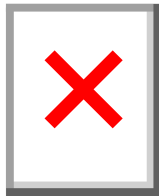
The Advocate: [An Emotional Biden Designates Pulse Nightclub a National Memorial](#)

[Neal Broverman, 6/25/21]

“Flanked by LGBTQ+ politicians, activists, and the first lady, President Joe Biden signed legislation today designating Orlando’s Pulse nightclub — the site of a 2016 mass shooting where the majority of victims were young, queer, and Latinx — as a National Memorial. ‘A place of acceptance and joy became a place of unspeakable pain and loss,’ Biden said, ‘We’ll never fully recover but we’ll remember.’ Behind Biden and the attendees were two video screens displaying images of the 49 people murdered at Pulse.”

Variety: [MSNBC’s Jonathan Capehart Has Unique Peek at White House in Pride Special](#)

[Brian Steinberg, 6/25/21]



MSNBC

The most compelling element of Jonathan Capehart’s next MSNBC special may not be the host, but rather a video tableau of White House officials who have publicly identified as being LGBTQ. ‘You really see all of these people and just think about how far the community has come, and how far the nation has come,’ says the host of MSNBC’s ‘Sunday Show,’ in an interview. ‘I had to take a step back and realize that this is not usual.’ Capehart typically holds forth on Sunday mornings for the NBCUniversal-owned cable-news outlet, but he will appear on its screen this Sunday evening at 10 p.m. in ‘Pride of the White House,’ his second special at the network. The program takes an hour-long look at what the Biden Administration is doing to advance the rights of the LGBTQ community and features taped interviews with some of its top LGBTQ officials.”

###

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Finalizing Preparations for Libyan Elections
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 29, 2021 7:55 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2021

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Finalizing Preparations for Libyan Elections

I commend the work of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) as its members meet in Geneva this week to finalize preparations for Libya to hold historic national elections on December 24, 2021. As the Berlin II conference affirmed, the United States stands together with our Libyan and international partners in full support for holding presidential and parliamentary elections on time that will enable Libyans to choose their own leaders and re-establish their sovereignty after years of civil conflict and economic upheaval. This builds on recent progress with the establishment of the interim Government of National Unity.

We are encouraged by the positive atmosphere and spirit of compromise in which the LPDF is meeting, with active United Nations facilitation, to adopt the constitutional and legislative arrangements needed for elections. We support the Libyan people as they chart a path toward a more stable, prosperous, and secure future.

###

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 30, 2021 6:36 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, expressing appreciation for the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) work to promote a ceasefire and political solution to the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Mr. Sullivan and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed discussed the urgency to provide life-saving assistance to populations in Tigray suffering from famine and acute food insecurity. Mr. Sullivan also welcomed Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid's historic visit to the UAE to open the new Israeli embassy in Abu Dhabi and consulate in Dubai.

###

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Federal Minister of Defense Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer of Germany
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 30, 2021 9:32 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Federal Minister of Defense Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer of Germany

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Federal Minister of Defense Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer of Germany. They discussed our countries' close and enduring partnership on a range of issues, including defense cooperation both bilaterally and through NATO. They welcomed the progress made at the recent NATO Summit in reinforcing Transatlantic unity and launching important work to adapt the Alliance to future challenges. Mr. Sullivan conveyed appreciation for Germany's contributions to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, and they discussed their continued support for security, economic, and humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. They also discussed shared foreign policy priorities, including China, Russia, and the Sahel.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh of Vietnam
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 1, 2021 8:46 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh of Vietnam

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh. Mr. Sullivan emphasized the United States' commitment to our comprehensive partnership with Vietnam, and discussed ways to deepen cooperation between the two countries in areas such as maritime security, the Mekong region, combatting climate change, and ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Sullivan underscored the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to ASEAN centrality and ASEAN's essential role in the Indo-Pacific architecture and pledged that the administration would continue to engage at a high-level with Vietnam and partners throughout the region. Mr. Sullivan and Deputy Prime Minister Minh also discussed the South China Sea, including the United States' support for the 2016 arbitral tribunal award. Additionally, Mr. Sullivan conveyed President Biden's concern over the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region and the urgent need for the UN Security Council to marshal support to address ongoing famine conditions.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 2, 2021 4:09 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia

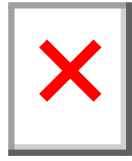
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia. Mr. Sullivan underscored the United States' support for the people of Indonesia as they fight a surge in COVID-19 cases. Mr. Sullivan noted that the United States will be donating four million Moderna vaccine doses to Indonesia, and that these doses will be shipped via COVAX as soon as possible. Additionally, they discussed U.S. plans to increase assistance for Indonesia's broader COVID-19 response efforts. Mr. Sullivan highlighted the importance the Biden-Harris administration places on Indonesia, Southeast Asia and ending the pandemic more broadly and pledged continued support and high-level engagement.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Military Plane Crash in the Philippines
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 4, 2021 2:42 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 4, 2021

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on the Military Plane Crash in the Philippines

On behalf of the United States, I offer our deep condolences to the people of the Philippines regarding the tragic plane crash in which several dozen service members were killed. Our thoughts are with those who were injured and the families of those who were lost. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our Philippine allies at this difficult time and are ready to provide all appropriate support to the Philippines' response effort.

###

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, July 6, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 6, 2021 6:00 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 6, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, July 6, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:04 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Tuesday. Happy July Fourth week. Okay, a couple of updates for you all at the top here.

After the President is briefed by his COVID-19 Response Team this afternoon, he will speak to the American people about the strong progress that the country has made in recovery because of its robust vaccination campaign, as well as the importance of every eligible American getting vaccinated, especially as the Delta variant continues to grow among unvaccinated people across the country.

By the end of the week, the United States will be nearing 160 million people fully vaccinated -- which the President will touch on today as well -- which is critically important, as fully vaccinated people are protected against the Delta variant.

He will also stress how the administration will continue its effort to work with governors, local leaders, and across the public and private sector to get more Americans vaccinated by making vaccines available in more healthcare settings and respond to hotspots.

The President will outline five areas his team is focused on to get more Americans vaccinated.

One: targeted, community-by-community, door-to-door outreach to get remaining Americans vaccinated by ensuring they have the information they need on how both safe and accessible the vaccine is.

Two: a renewed emphasis on getting the vaccines to more primary care doctors and physicians -- something that we've seen as a very successful tactic with reaching groups with lower vaccination rates in the past few months.

Three: stepped-up efforts, which is complementary to my last point, to get vaccines to pediatricians and other providers who serve younger people so that adolescents age 12 to 18 can get vaccinated as they go for back-to-school checkups or get ready for fall sports.

Four: continue expanding efforts to make the vaccine accessible for workers. Access is an area where we've seen as a challenge and one where, as we've worked to address it, we've seen increasing rates. So that includes setting up vaccination clinics at workplaces and PTO or time -- leave that employees can take off to get vaccinated.

And finally: expanding our mobile clinic efforts, meeting people where they are, and making sure we're taking the vaccine to communities.

Another COVID update: This week, both Guatemala and Vietnam will be receiving COVID vaccine doses from the Biden-Harris administration. Guatemala -- Guatemala will receive 1.5 million doses of Moderna, and Vietnam will receive 2 million doses of Moderna.

Also today, as part of the President's forthcoming executive order on competition -- stay tuned -- the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced it will engage in a series of rulemakings to increase competition in agricultural industries to boost farmers and ranchers' earnings, fight back against abuses of power by giant agribusiness corporations, and give farmers the right to repair their own equipment how they like.

The President's executive order will follow through on a campaign promise by directing USDA to issue new rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act, making it easier for farmers to bring and win claims, stopping chicken processors from exploiting and underpaying chicken farmers, and adapting anti-retaliation protections for farmers who speak out about bad practices.

Second, the EO will direct USD -- the USDA to issue new rules defining when meat can bear "Product of the USA" labels so that consumers have accurate, transparent labels that enable them to know where their food comes from and to choose to support American farmers and ranchers.

Something I learned that I found a little outrageous -- we'll see what you all think -- is that under current labeling rules, most grass-fed beef labeled "Product of USA" is actually raised and slaughtered abroad, and then imported to the U.S. for processing.

The President and the USDA believe it is unfair for domestic farmers and ranchers to have to compete with foreign companies that are misleading consumers.

Third, the EO directs USDA to develop a plan to increase opportunities for farmers to access markets and receive a fair return, including supporting alternative food distribution systems like farmer -- farmers markets, and developing standards and labels that consumers can choose to buy products that treat farmers and agricultural workers fairly.

These are just a few examples of actions USDA will take under the new executive order and in the entire federal government's mission, which will be -- help move forward through this executive order to help increase opportunities for small and independent businesses to boost their earnings and to lower prices and increase options for consumers.

I think I have one more item. Yes. A number of you had asked me on the last trip I was on if we could do a little more to preview trips farther in advance, so I'm going to try to do that today.

As you all know, tomorrow, the President will travel to Crystal Lake, Illinois, which is located in the district of

Congresswoman Lauren Underwood. There, he will visit McHenry County College, a community college that has a workforce development program and a childcare center -- programs which his Build Back Better agenda invests in and the American Families Plan -- we've talked quite a bit in here -- has proposals in.

As the President presses for the bipartisan infrastructure framework, he's also pressing ahead on a dual track for the full breadth and scope of the Build Back Better agenda, which includes his climate -- his critical climate priorities and the American Families Plan.

The President's Build Back Better agenda provides a once-in-a-generation investment in the foundations of middle-class prosperity: education, healthcare, and childcare. From making education more affordable and expanding key provisions like the Child Care Tax Credit, to providing economic security through programs like paid leave to families, the President will continue advancing his entire economic agenda to build back better.

Congresswoman Underwood, many of you may know, is a registered nurse, health policy expert, and committed advocate for expanding access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, which the Build Back Better agenda accomplishes by permanently lowering health insurance premiums for those who build coverage on their own, saving families an average of \$50 per person per month. As a result, 9 million people would save hundreds of dollars per year on their premiums, and 4 million uninsured people would gain coverage.

He'll also, of course, engage with elected officials on the ground. We'll have an update for you as the schedule is being finalized on that.

With that, Zeke, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thanks, Jen. First, with respect to the COVID speech this afternoon, the rate of new vaccinations in the U.S. has been continuously declining over the last several months as access has increased, as promotions, giveaways -- all sorts of efforts on the part of the administration and private sector was to get people -- to get vaccinated has, sort of, ramped up as well. Is there a point for the administration where, you know -- where people (inaudible) -- or simply the acknowledgement that people who have not been vaccinated are choosing not to, and then -- that the administration will stop, sort of, you know, throwing money at them or giving speeches encouraging them to get vaccinated if that's their choice?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say, Zeke, that we had always noted that, at a certain phase in the vaccination process or in our fight against COVID, when we had more supply than we had demand, which was about two months -- a month and a half ago, that we -- the numbers would go down, in terms of the number of people who were vaccinated each day and each week.

More than 2 million people per week are getting their first dose, and millions more are getting their second dose. So our focus now is on doubling down on our efforts as we continue to vaccinate millions of people across the summer months. And that includes, as we've noted in here in the past, young people under the age of 27 who are being vaccinated at a lower rate than people who are 27 and older. And we believe that we need to continue to press to get more people in the country vaccinated, even as we're seeing rates in parts of the country that are over 70 percent -- even some places over 80 percent. There's still more work to be done.

You are absolutely correct that it is ultimately up to individuals to decide if they were going -- if they are going to get vaccinated. If you are vaccinated, you are -- most of -- the vast, vast majority of people are safe from the virus. If you are not vaccinated, you are not. That is also a message that we're going to continue to clearly communicate.

But, no, these programs will continue, and we're going to continue to press forward on approaches that we have seen work in the past.

Q And switching gears to this massive cyberattack that took hold over the weekend: Is the President's view, sort of, just philosophically, that it's the role of government to protect businesses and private citizens from cyber -- aggressive cyber

actions like this -- or cyberattacks like this -- ransomware and like? Or is it an issue of personal or corporate responsibility? What's the, sort of -- is there a ratio the President needs to sort of -- it is 80 percent, you know, on the government to prevent these, and 20 percent on the companies? What's the mix?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Zeke, I would first say that the attack over the weekend underscores the need for companies and government agencies, as well, to focus on improving cybersecurity. And we've talked a bit in the past about the importance of private-sector entities hardening their own cybersecurity, putting in place best practices that have been recommended by the federal government for some time.

But we are going to continue to be partners because it's important to, of course, protect our critical infrastructure, but also protect -- do what -- play what role we can, from the federal government, to ensure that impacts on smaller businesses, on mom-and-pop shops are minimized as well.

So we have engaged over the last several months, under the leadership of a range of officials, including Anne Neuberger, in a better partnership, more effective partnership with the private sector, providing resources from the federal government, and we'll continue that.

Q And finally, there's reports that Khalid bin Salman is in town, in Washington this week, potentially to meet with Jake Sullivan. Can you confirm that meeting? And then, also, is it a confirmation that the White House believes that he had no role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can confirm that meeting. Let me see, I believe I have a little bit more information on it here. One moment for you, Zeke.

Saudi Arabia's Deputy Defense Minister will meet with -- or is meeting with, I should say -- Biden administration officials today, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. He's scheduled to meet with State and Defense Department officials as well. During the meeting, they'll discuss the longstanding partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia, regional security, and the U.S. commitment to help Saudi Arabia defend its territory as it faces attacks from Iranian-aligned groups.

As you know, we worked to declassify a report that names specific officials who we felt -- or who our intelligence community, I should say -- were involved with and knowledgeable of the horrific death of Jamal Khashoggi.

Beyond that, I can tell you that, of course, this could be a topic, but I'm not going to discuss additional details.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah. I just want to follow up on the Kaseya attack.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Have you had any communication at all with Russia about this attack? And I'm -- I want to ask a few more questions. But President Putin and President Biden met and discussed cybersecurity. Were you under the impression that Putin would do more to prevent these kind of attacks?

MS. PSAKI: So, first, let me say -- let me give you a little bit of an update. Since the meeting between President Biden and President Putin, we have undertaken expert-level talks that are continuing, and we expect to have another meeting next week focused on ransomware attacks.

And I will just reiterate a message that these officials are sending. As the President made clear to President Putin when they met, if the Russian government cannot or will not take action against criminal actors residing in Russia, we will take action or reserve the right to take action on our own.

Now, in this case, you know, their -- the intelligence community has not yet attributed the attack. The cybersecurity community agrees that REvil operates out of Russia with affiliates around the world, so we will continue to allow that assessment to continue. But in our conversations -- and we have been in touch directly -- we are continuing to convey that message clearly.

Q So you've been in touch directly with -- at what level of government have you been in touch with Russia on this specific issue?

And then, on the ransomware, the FBI has basically told companies not to pay ransomware. Are you aware whether, in this particular case, the ransom of \$70 million has been paid? And what advice are you giving to the company?

And, earlier today, the CEO said that the -- you know, that critical infrastructure was never at risk. Is that -- do you share that assessment?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me try to take each of your questions, and you can tell me if I missed one.

On ransomware, our -- well, what was your first question so I can go in the order?

Q What level -- where have you been in touch? Who have you been --

MS. PSAKI: A high level of our national security team has been in touch with a high level of Russian officials.

On your second question -- repeat it again now.

Q Ransomware being paid, has been paid.

MS. PSAKI: Our ransomware policy continues to be the same as it has been for several months, which is that we do not advise -- we advise against, in fact -- companies paying ransomware given it incentivizes bad actors to repeat this behavior. In terms of whether the company has paid ransom, I would refer you to the company.

And in terms of assessments of the impact, we certainly would -- we saw the company put out an extensive statement today about what the impacts were on our systems, and we certainly defer to them on the impacts.

Q Can I switch gears? We have a story -- so, a company -- organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Retail Federation are gearing up for a big lobbying campaign to, you know, lobby against the tax increases that you are proposing. And what they say is that increasing taxes doesn't create jobs. What do you say to that? And, you know, what are you doing to counter this pretty intense push by these lobbying organizations?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that the American people are aligned with the President's view that corporations and the wealthiest Americans can afford to pay a little bit more in order to pay for critical investments in our nation's infrastructure, but also in initiatives and programs that will help make our country more competitive and bring more women back into the workforce. And that's what the President is proposing.

I would also note that we've seen, in terms of public reports, that, of the wealthiest companies out there, a number of them didn't pay any taxes at all. And that certainly is not something that is viable, nor does the President think that is fair. And that sends a clear message that our tax system is not set up in a fair and equitable way, and that's something he feels we should address regardless.

So, that's his view in his proposal. We'll have to see how successful these lobbyists are at moving the public opinion and approval rating down from what it is currently, which is the vast majority of the American people agree with the President.

Go ahead.

Q Just one quick follow-up on ransomware, and then two other quick ones. From a response perspective, if this is attributed to REvil and they decide that it's based in Russia, is the President's view that the response will be proportional to just taking that actor offline or actually direct it at the Russian state instead for harboring? How do you guys approach that?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question, Phil. I would say that I'm not going to be able to detail more specifics from here.

But I would note that -- and I would reiterate -- that the President's view and the administration's view is that, even as it is criminal actors who are taking these actions against the United States or entities -- private-sector entities in the United States, even as -- even without the engagement of the Russian government, they still have a responsibility. That continues to be the President's view and the administration's view.

In terms of what actions we may or may not take, we'll -- I'll allow the national security team to work that through.

Q And then, can you -- just two more quick ones. What's the level of frustration in the White House that you have a vaccine, the vaccine works, it is available to a degree it has never been available before, people are not getting the vaccine, and therefore the Delta variant is emerging in certain places around the country? Like are you guys, like, banging the table? Are you upset? How do you, kind of, go through that, knowing that there is a counter-weapon here to what's happening around the country?

MS. PSAKI: You know, Phil, I think, as the federal government, we don't have the luxury of feeling frustrated or feeling upset about individuals not getting the vaccine.

What our responsibility is, is to ensure we are applying best practices -- whether that's working with doctors and pediatricians or addressing access, mobile vaccine clinics, or ensuring that people know that they can take time off of work, or even working with employers to make the vaccine accessible.

It is ultimately up to individuals, and we certainly recognize that as well. But we're going to continue to press as hard as we can to use the best -- best practices to continue to increase the vaccination rates around the country.

Q And just one more quick one: OPEC Plus. I know you guys had a statement yesterday that you guys directly engaged with the various players even though you're not a part of the negotiation.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you elaborate a little bit on what that means?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We are closely monitoring the OPEC Plus negotiations and their impact on the global economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. As you noted, Phil, we're not a party to these talks, but, over the weekend and into this week, we've had a number of high-level conversations with officials in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other relevant partners.

We're encouraged by the ongoing conversation by OPEC members to reaching an agreement -- the ongoing talks, I should say -- which will promote access to affordable and reliable energy. And certainly the impact on prices here is a -- hence, our great interest.

Go ahead

Q Thanks, Jen. I just want to follow up on Zeke's question to you on this, sort of, public-private role in response to cyberattacks.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q So we know the President signed these orders back in May -- some of which were, of course, supposed to step up enforcement on private companies, at least as -- those that work with the federal government. But it's been 55 days since he signed those orders, and, from our review, the orders from DHS haven't been put in place yet; they're still actually in the review process.

So is -- these attacks are happening still, though. Is the government working fast enough on -- even in this narrow lane where you say you can do some work?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the -- these -- the increase in ransomware attacks far pre-dated the President taking office. And it is something that, from day one, he has made a priority and has asked his team to focus on where we can have an impact, how we can better work with the private sector, and what we can do across the federal government to help address and reduce ransomware attacks on our critical infrastructure but also on a range of entities in the United States.

Tomorrow, the President will convene key leaders across the interagency, including the State Department, Department of Justice, DHS, and other intelligence community -- members of the intelligence community to discuss ransomware and our overall strategic efforts to counter it.

And what he had asked the team to do several weeks ago was to review and assess what our options are and how we can better, again, put in place partnerships with the private sector; best practices; what levers we have from the federal government, including disruption of ransomware infrastructure and actors, which we've seen some success in -- I know the Department of Justice announced some steps just a few weeks ago; building international coalition to hold countries who harbor ransom actors accountable, which is a huge factor here as well because we're not the only country impacted, of course, by ransomware attacks; expanding cryptocurrency analysis to find and pursue criminal transactions; and reviewing our own ransom policies to build cohesive and consistent approaches toward ransom payments.

So, this is a priority. He's meeting with a range of officials tomorrow, and we will continue to implement moving forward.

Q But would you say you're still in the review-and-assessment phase in this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first note that we have announced several steps that we have taken. I mean, the Department of Justice announced a step just a few weeks ago, and we are continuing to up our partnership with the private sector, which is a key part of best practices and ensuring we are reducing the impact the -- I should say, the vulnerability -- of private-sector entities. But there's more that can be done, and it warrants and requires an interagency process and discussion in order to move those policies forward.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. A quick follow-up on the ransomware.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You mentioned that, after President Biden called on Putin to hold cyber hackers accountable, there have been expert-level talks. Is there any evidence that Putin has done anything to curb cyberattacks in Russia that he's communicated with the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I -- again, I would say it's a little bit disproving a negative there because this is -- what we're talking about here is a ransomware attack -- attack from likely criminal actors. Again, it hasn't been fully attributed yet, so we're getting a little bit ahead, which I certainly understand, of where things stand.

There are these expert-level talks and negotiations and engagements. That's an important part of the next steps, an

important part of what came out of their discussion.

And beyond that, I think what the message is that the President has sent clearly and what we're sending -- continuing to send clearly is: Even with these criminal actors -- we're not saying they're coming from the government or directed from the government -- but even with those actors, they have a responsibility.

So, that's where the policy is, moving forward. I think it's difficult for me to disprove a negative.

Q Thanks. And on COVID, the five-step plan you outlined --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- still focus heavily -- focuses heavily on access. And you've already mentioned the group of people who have access to the vaccine but simply don't want it. So, is the White House tweaking its strategy to reach those people, to change their minds?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say it's about changing their minds. What we've seen over the course -- well, I guess it sort of is -- but what we've seen over the course of time is that the most reliable voices are trusted actors in communities: medical experts, doctors, people's primary care physicians.

And so we're going to continue to utilize and resource the entities where we feel there has been success and where we've seen, through data, there has been success in the past. You know, you don't just give up just because you haven't reached every single person. We're going to continue to apply where we -- what we've seen have been the best practices over the past several months.

Q And just one more on --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- COVID. If the number of cases continues to trend upward, are there any circumstances under which the White House would reimpose some of those restrictions as cases tick up? Or would that be up to the states?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the states are going to have to make evaluations and local communities are going to have to make evaluations about what's in their interests. And, as you know, there are much higher rates of vaccinations in some parts of the country over others, and we certainly support their decisions to implement any measures that they think will help their community be safe.

But I would remind you, we're at a point where we're almost at 70 percent vaccination rate for -- well, for 20 -- adults 27 and older, but almost for adults 18 and older. So, certainly, we don't see we're on track to implementing new, additional national measures.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you.

Q On ransomware, the company statement goes into a lot of detail about the kinds of victims among its client base --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and points out that they are not related to critical infrastructure. Is that simply about informing people about what's there? Or is that to separate this attack from some of the -- the outline the President presented to Vladimir Putin about, sort of, the "no-go" list of critical infrastructure that should not be interfered with from any Russian actor, be it criminal or state or whatever? Do you see that as an important talk?

state or whatever? Do you see that as an important term?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that, of course, there's a unique threat posed by cyberattacks that disrupt critical infrastructure, and there's no question about that. If there's a cyberattack that takes out an entire sector of the American economy, that would have an enormous, broad impact. And we recognize that.

I can't speak to the communication strategy of the company, of course, which I know you're not exactly asking me to do. But I will say that, regardless of whether a cyberattack impacts critical infrastructure, we take it seriously and we reserve the option of responding in a manner and mechanism of our choosing regardless.

But I think there's no question that, in terms of national security threats, if it's critical infrastructure and it's taking out the meat industry or, you know, suppliers who are supplying gasoline, that is something that is a different impact in terms of a national security threat.

Q How many ransomware attacks before the U.S. retaliates, though?

Q On COVID, is the President's briefing -- and is he likely to address the issue of those who are questioning whether a booster shot is appropriate with the Delta variant? And also, is he also contemplating a position on mask wearing for transportation, like airplanes and trains and so forth? It's still in effect, but there's been some talk that might be lifted as more vaccinations take place.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I would not anticipate -- or you should not anticipate, I should say -- that he would have any new announcements or guidance on either of those fronts today. We certainly rely on the advice of our health and medical experts if there -- if any of those should change in the future.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, --

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, Jacqui. I'll come back to you.

Q So data from Israel shows that the Pfizer vaccine is less effective against the Delta variant in preventing infection -- about 64 percent of the time. The administration keeps saying, as you just have during the briefing, that you're confident that people who are vaccinated are safe. But why is this still the assessment? And is there any concern that mask requirements were lifted too soon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that that's preliminary data. And the vast majority of data from larger assessments and larger studies shows that it is quite effective. And that is the data from mass, larger studies that we're relying on. It's preliminary. We'll look at what the final conclusions say.

Q One more. Pope Francis is still in the hospital recovering from surgery. I was just wondering: Has the President reached out to him at all? Has there been any contact? Anything the White House wanted to say?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any contact to read out for you. Certainly, the President wishes him well and a speedy recovery, of course.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to go back to COVID. There's been a lot of discussion about the Delta variant, but then there's also been some international concern about the Lambda variant. The World Health Organization deemed it a variant "of interest" back in June. Public Health England placed it under investigation due to international expansion. And then, British scientists are describing mutations that another study also says could indicate less efficacy for the vaccine.

So what do we know about Lambda? Is it spreading in the U.S.? And have vaccine manufacturers talked to the administration at all about protections against it?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, first, public health officials continue to closely track and monitor all of the variants, as we've seen pop up over time, and are reviewing the latest data when it becomes available.

I'll certainly leave it to doctors to discuss this, but early data suggests that the vaccines continue to work against the variants, including this variant, and that's why we've been focusing so much on increasing vaccinations across the country.

As with every strain, getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself and others from any other COVID strains, but we will continue to assess data as more widely available data becomes available.

Q And then, how is the spread of new variants informing travel restrictions into other countries -- from other countries to the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, as you may know, there are working groups and -- with Canada, with European -- with our European partners, and we're working to continue to assess what criteria would need to be in place in order to reopen travel.

And we know that, in many cases, families are separated. We know that's a heartbreaking challenge that a lot of people are dealing with. And a lot of people are eager to travel, be with loved ones, or even do work travel. We understand that. We're eager to do that as well.

The United States has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, and that is something we also assess as we look at countries and are making those decisions about reopening travel. But these working groups are meant to have an open line of transparent communication with these countries about what steps need to be taken.

Q And then, how are these new variants impacting back-to-school plans, with a lot of children still too young to get vaccines? How is that -- this new element sort of factoring in into all these plans?

MS. PSAKI: I would say: The good news is that there are a number of mitigation measures that have been recommended, of course, by the CDC that our Department of Education has been working to help local school districts implement. Whether they are social distancing or mask-wearing requirements, ventilation -- there's money that came from the American Rescue Plan to help fund this in areas and school districts where they didn't have the money available.

So, that is certainly what we expect, and we are looking forward to schools being reopened in the fall.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I just have a few follow-ups on the OPEC Plus talks.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Could you tell us which administration officials have been engaging with the Saudi and UAE governments on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more details about the individuals. I can see if there's more specifics to provide for you after the briefing.

Q And then on the U.S. engagement in the talks: I know that you've said the U.S. isn't a party to the talks, but have these officials engaged or encouraged a specific solution, such as keeping production levels where they are currently through the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, we are engaged directly with them to hear updates on the conversations that are happening between the OPEC members. I can see -- of course, and we are constantly monitoring the price of gas in this country, and we know the impact of oil prices around the world is having a direct impact on that.

In terms of additional specifics of the conversations, I'm just not going to have anything more to read out for you.

Q And then, lastly, is there -- just gauging the concern level here at the White House -- is there any chance that President Biden would personally get involved in contacting these governments?

MS. PSAKI: I'm certainly not predicting that at this moment in time. We have high-level officials who are talented and aptly engaged with their counterparts. And I will see if there's more specifics we can provide about who the individuals are.

Go ahead.

Q A couple things. On COVID, when we talk about vaccination rates, what is the end goal? Where does the administration decide things are done or things are as best as they can be?

MS. PSAKI: I think our health and medical experts, including Dr. Fauci, have made pretty clear that we're going to be continuing to battle the virus for some time.

Now, when you're vaccinated, you can return to many versions of normal: going to the park, going to restaurants, going to concerts. That is one of the many reasons to get vaccinated, including to protect yourself from the virus.

But our -- we're going to take it week by week, month by month. Right now, we're continuing to press to get more people vaccinated. We know that the rates of young people under the age of 27 are not where they need to be or we want them to be. So we'll continue to utilize the best practices and work in partnership with health and medical experts and meet people where they are to get the vaccine out to more communities.

Q Sort of a personal question here, but over the weekend, the President was out kind of campaign-style -- shaking hands with people, taking selfies, giving hugs, lots of personal contact. I'm just wondering: Given where COVID is in the country, is the assessment that we can go back to totally normal life, like hugging people, shaking hands with strangers, and that's all perfectly okay, given the rise of other variants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would say the CDC and our health and medical experts have provided clear guidance on this. And if you're vaccinated, then certainly you can go out there and engage with society, as the President has. And no one loves a good rope line like President Biden. So, certainly, he welcomes the opportunity to engage directly with many of the people who elected him to serve the country. If you're not vaccinated, then that is certainly a different circumstance.

Now, we also respect and want to convey -- we respect the decision by a range of individuals, whether they're immunocompromised or they have concerns about health issues in their own family or themselves, to continue to wear a mask or whatever they may choose. But we go by the guidance of our health and medical experts, and they've certainly okayed the President being out there and communicating and shaking hands and glad-handing with the American people.

Go ahead.

Q Two questions: one on oil prices --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- and one on COVID. On oil prices: You've alluded a couple of times today to the sort of impact on actual gas prices; I think it's over \$3 a gallon now. A huge amount of travel over the holiday weekend. What is the President doing for regular Americans to try to keep the gas prices down, whether it be engaging with OPEC?

But also, is the President considering releasing from the Strategic Reserve? Are there other steps that the President can take to address what is obviously a painful situation? And how much does he -- do you guys worry, on his behalf, that it will become a political issue that could be damaging to the President and this party in the coming election?

MS. PSAKI: In 18 months?

Q Well --

MS. PSAKI: Seventeen months. Okay. So, I would say first, Mike, that the President wants Americans to have access to affordable and reliable energy, including at the pump. And so that's why our team is constantly monitoring gas prices and directly communicating with OPEC parties to get to a deal and allow proposed production increases to move forward.

And the reason I've referenced it so many times is because I think there sometimes is a misunderstanding of what causes gas prices to increase, and so to convey to the American people that we're working on it and certainly the supply availability of oil has a huge impact.

I would also say that ensuring Americans don't bear a burden at the pump continues to be a top priority for the administration writ large. That's one of the core reasons why the President was opposed -- vehemently opposed -- to a gas tax and any tax on vehicle mileage, because he felt that would fall on the backs of Americans. And that was a bottom line, red line for him.

In terms of additional considerations, I just don't have anything to preview for you.

Q Okay. And then, on COVID: The one thing that you steadfastly have stayed away from is any question of mandating the virus -- I'm sorry -- the vaccine. And I guess the question is: At what point -- Zeke Emanuel, I think, has a new op-ed out talking about how there needs to be more aggressive action taken; employers are going to need to mandate that their employees take the vaccine maybe once the FDA has fully cleared some of the vaccines.

Would this admin- -- does this administration envision a point where -- even if it's not a federal mandate that every American has to take it, do you believe that we're going to have to get to a point where schools and employers and colleges and other institutions are going to have to require people to take the vaccine in order to get to that next stage, to get beyond the sort of plateau that we've reached now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've always anticipated -- and we're already seeing this happen -- that some schools, universities, private schools, others will require and mandate the vaccine. And we leave it up to them to make that decision, as well as employers.

And we know that different companies and private-sector entities, or even learning institutions, are making decisions about how to keep their communities safe.

So, I wouldn't predict a federal mandate, as I'm not suggesting you're asking, but certainly we're already seeing that take place in communities across the country.

Q Would you encourage employers and would you encourage, you know, schools, colleges, to do that as a way of getting, kind of, a real acceleration of the vaccine adoption?

MS. PSAKI: We're going to leave it up to them to make these decisions.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A question on Nikole Hannah-Jones, who passed up a position at UNC and will be teaching down the road

at Howard. She said this morning that it took protest, the threat of legal action, all this, just get to a 9-4 vote. What does Biden make of the UNC process and her decision? And is this an example of the systemic racism that he promised to heal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I have not spoken with the President about the decision on tenure by the institution in North Carolina. I will say that the students at Howard are quite lucky to have her as a professor and in their family.

But I think there's no question that there is -- continues to be systemic racism in our country. We see that in a range of sectors, including in some learning institutions. But the President -- that's why the President is continuing to make racial equity and addressing racial equity as a central priority and crisis that he would like to address and focus on as President.

Go ahead. Go ahead, right there. Sorry.

Q Oh, yeah. Thanks, Jen. On the Families Plan: Obviously, as Biden goes tomorrow to Illinois to promote his vision, the White House is still in negotiations about what is actually going to make into the package. Are there certain -- as with the infrastructure plan -- certain core priorities or red lines that he has around this package in a similar lane?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So, you're talking about the reconciliation package, right?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. So the President is -- obviously there's a lot of work that needs to happen with Congress, and we expect, over the next week, there to be a lot of behind-the-scenes bill writing, negotiations, discussions on Capitol Hill -- long nights, lots of coffee -- over the course of the next several days, given that Leader Schumer has conveyed that he would like to see both the reconciliation package and the infrastructure bill on the floor in July. And we're in July now.

In terms of the President's priorities, he has outlined his blueprint in his budget. That includes the American Families Plan. It includes key components he'll talk about when he's on the road tomorrow in Illinois. It includes an extension of the Child Tax Credit. It includes paid leave. It includes universal pre-K; making community college a reality for Americans across the country.

It also includes prioritizing and pushing for components of the American Jobs Plan that did not make it into the infrastructure -- final infrastructure bipartisan agreement. So that is key components of climate tax credits, key components that will help address our climate crisis, also a number of proposals on housing affordability and accessibility that the President would like to see in a final reconciliation process.

But we'll be closely engaged and closely discussing with members who are writing the legislation.

Q Jen, on race.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead, April.

Q Back on the issue of race and the hypersensitivity around the issue: This President ran for office on the issue of race, from Charlottesville. With that said, there is now an effort on the Hill to strengthen the nation's oldest federal civil rights law of 1866. Is he involved in that? What is his conversation about this with senators, as well as congressional leaders? Has he talked about that with them? Or what does he feel about it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're very appreciative of the efforts by a number of the leaders who are working in discussions about updating the oldest civil rights law, as you noted. But in terms of specific conversations with the President, I just don't have anything to read out for you.

Q Is this important, at this moment, especially to strengthen the nation's oldest civil rights law, as voting rights is -- I don't know what you call it -- collapsed; as policing is held up; there's a call for reparations? There's so many things that

the Congressional Black Caucus is trying to push forward with their agenda, as well as issues -- these issues seem to be more civil rights and humanitarian versus policy.

Is this President concerned at this time about that? And does he think that this will bring more attention to those issues, also in light of KKK members and white supremacists marching in Philadelphia over the weekend on Fourth of July?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, April, that -- as you know because you've covered it closely -- one of the President's key priorities -- one of the key pillars of his presidency -- is racial equity and updating and addressing what he feels are systemic issues in how we govern and in society.

And I would say -- to touch on a couple of the things that you've noted -- one, on voting rights: You know, we, I expect, will have some more announcements to make later this week about the President's and the Vice President's schedule and opportunities they will take to continue to use their platforms and the bully pulpit to advocate for, push for, take -- use every lever of government to move those -- that initiative -- or those initiatives, I should say, forward.

But, certainly, he will remain engaged closely with civil rights leaders about the range of priorities that you just discussed, as well as with leaders in Congress. Even though things are hard and things look stalled at moments, he doesn't give up. That's not who he is, neither is -- neither is that who the Vice President is. So they'll continue to press on moving all these agenda items forward.

Q Is there a concern by the Democratic base -- for the Democratic base that feels that he became president standing on these pillars, and now they are in jeopardy? Is there concern by this White House about what the Democratic base is feeling as they see voting rights stall, as they see policing stalled, as they see the issue of reparations not moving as fast as they want, and other issues?

MS. PSAKI: I would say, first, the President shares their frustration about the fact that voting rights, making voting more accessible to more people across the country is a no brainer. He agrees with the frustration that there are more -- is more we can do to put in place reforms on policing, something that he feels is long overdue and he would like to sign a bill into law. And his role as president is to continue to use his voice, his -- the bully pulpit and his platforms to advocate for moving these things forward.

Karen, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You've said a couple of times, on vaccines, that the work continues across several months --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- after the July 4th holiday. Will we hear from the President today a new date that is the next target date to get to a certain percentage of Americans vaccinated? Is there a new timeline?

MS. PSAKI: I don't expect a new goal to be set today. What I will tell you is that our work is going to continue, person by person, community by community, and we're going to meet people where they are. That's what he's going to talk about.

And he's going to continue to use resources from the federal government, empowering doctors, empowering key voices in communities, and that's what you'll hear him talk about today.

Q You also had said earlier about not changing minds -- I think it was in response to a question. We had a poll out this weekend with the Washington Post that said 3 in 10 adults say they haven't gotten the coronavirus vaccine and "definitely" or "probably will not" get one. Does the White House have a sense of a number of how many persuadable people there actually are out there? And how do you target just them if you can try and convince some of them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Karen, I'd first say, if you go back to even five or six months ago, that percentage of people who were not

planning to get the vaccine was even much higher than that. And what we've seen have an impact is: As people get vaccinated in their communities, they tell their neighbor, they tell their friend. Primary care physicians tell people who are coming to their doctor's office to get checkups. Pharmacists and communities are calling their neighbors and saying, "Come on down, we have vaccines for you." We're seeing the impact of that.

So we've seen, actually, even people who didn't -- had no intention of getting the vaccine for a range of reasons -- maybe they didn't know how to get it, maybe they didn't know where to get it, maybe they were scared of the impacts -- actually get vaccinated. And that, to us, is an encouraging sign that we can continue to press and make progress moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q So, two questions. First, is there a target for herd immunity for COVID vaccines? Is it 75 percent, 80 percent? What is that goal for the administration right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Dr. Fauci has addressed this a number of times and has conveyed that "herd immunity" is kind of an outdated term. So we had set a goal of reaching 70 percent of adults by July 4th. We reached that goal of adults 27 and older by that date. And we're continuing to press to reach it, and we will in the next couple of weeks, for adults over the age of 18.

But our work doesn't stop there, and we're going to continue to press to get 12- to 18-year-olds vaccinated, to continue to work with communities where there's lower vaccination rates. That's one of the reasons we initiated these strike forces to go into communities and work with them to determine what they need; to take a localized, specific approach that works with elected officials and communities. But I don't have a new goal to set for you.

We are -- I would remind all of you that we are -- we have reduced the death rate by 90 percent. And we've reduced the -- the COVID rate by more than 90 percent. But again, we're going to continue to press ahead, even after July 4th.

Q So the other question was: Afghan military leaders say the U.S. military left the Air Force base with no warning in the middle of night. Why did the U.S. decide to do that? And is that a sign of a lack of trust in Afghan leaders that they wouldn't give them a heads up on their departure?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the Department of Defense on that and on the specific accuracy of those comments.

Q But obviously there's a relationship that the White House has with the Afghan leaders. I mean, how did you explain that to them, and what was (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm only pointing you to the Department of Defense because they are the leaders on the ground who would have handed off to Afghan leaders on the ground.

Q Jen, in the back, please.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, we'll go -- oh, oh -- just going around. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Another one on Afghanistan, please. There's been a lot of talk, understandably, about what is the administration doing and is it doing enough for the Afghan translators.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q More broadly, with the shift that's coming now and the talk about the Taliban, you know, making a lot of advances pretty quickly, is the Biden administration concerned about, kind of, an exodus of a lot more than just translators but like a whole bunch of Afghans, some of whom might want to come here, and, more probably, a lot of whom might try and make their way to Europe? Is that something the President is discussing with European allies? Would the U.S. be opening the

doors to some of these people? Are you preparing for an exodus situation or (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that our focus, as of now, is identifying a group of SIV applicants who have served as interpreters and translators, as well as other at-risk categories who've assisted us. And as you know -- but for everybody else who hasn't paid as close attention -- our plan is to relocate this group to a location outside of Afghanistan before we complete our military drawdown by the end of August. So that's where our focus is on at this point in time.

And, of course, we are doing that in part because we know these are individuals who helped the United States, even at -- often at great risk, personal risk to themselves and their families. And we're going to work every possible contingency to make sure that we can help those who have helped us. But that's really what our focus is at this point.

Q Okay, but what about the broader concern, though, of an influx of people trying to reach Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on that. I'm happy to talk to our national security team and see if there's an assessment or concern there.

Go ahead.

Q A follow-up to the jobs report from last Friday: Axios reported this morning double-digit wage growth in four key sectors: transportation, warehousing, leisure, and hospitality. And yet, you talk to any employer in any of those sectors and they'll tell you it's very difficult to find and keep good workers for, perhaps, low-skill, low-wage jobs. Is the White House offering any advice to those employers at this point, with these wage increases of 15 to 17 percent already, and it's still difficult finding quality workers?

MS. PSAKI: It is a worker's market right now, and I can't assess industry to industry without having more details -- or I guess that would be hard for me to do anyway. But, certainly, we're seeing people feel more comfortable rejoining the jobs market. A big factor, in our view, is the vaccination rates in lots of communities across the country.

We know that employers are starting to hire, as we've seen from the jobs numbers which -- 850,000 jobs last month was a very large number, I will just note, since you gave me the opportunity.

In terms of specific industries, there are cases where they need to pay their workers more, and that will make them more competitive in hiring. But I'd have to get -- we can follow up after if there's a specific sector, and I'm happy to ask the economic team about that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The White House COVID Response Team, last week, said that they're setting up these surge -- these surge response teams to go into states and communities with low vaccination rates and rising cases. Where are they going first? What states and local communities are you in touch with?

MS. PSAKI: So, we're in touch with a range of communities. I provided an update last week that we were in touch with Missouri about possibly sending some teams there. I know we had already sent a team -- deployed a team to Colorado to collaborate with a local Department of Health in Mesa County. I can see if there's more. But we're in touch with a range of officials around the country, and we're eager to have these teams out helping communities get vaccinated and protect themselves from the virus.

Q And this is something where the state or the local community has to come to you, or are you seeing, you know, in this community it's particularly bad, you approach that community and you say, "We'd like to help"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the CDC is deploying these teams, so they work with local communities. We can see vaccination rates and where there are rising caseloads, and then work in a collaborative way with the communities to deploy the teams.

Go ahead. Go ahead, Eugene.

Q There's still no nominee for the DOJ's Antitrust -- the leader on Antitrust. It's been the longest that position has been open since George H.W. Bush, and so, I guess, just curious if there's a hold-up with that position, and if so, what is it.

MS. PSAKI: I would say this is certainly a position the President is eager to fill. As with any important position in government, he wants to have the right person in place. I don't have anything to predict for you in terms of the timeline for it.

Q And, on Afghanistan, the President promised that the United States would continue to provide civilian and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. But if the Taliban were to take over the government again, won't those individuals be withdrawn?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that we have every intention of continuing an ongoing presence [sic] -- presence in Kabul, which is continuing even after we bring our military, who are serving, home by the end of August. But we will also continue to be partners to the Afghan government. That's something that the President reiterated when he met with leaders just a week and a half ago. That we -- that includes security assistance, that includes humanitarian assistance, and that includes over-the-horizon capacity to ensure that we are working to address any threats that we face. That will continue, and we intend to have a presence on the ground in our embassy there in Kabul.

Q And it does seem like the Taliban is starting to gain more power and take over there. What's the United States government -- what is President Biden willing to do after pulling the troops out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say, if you take us back to when the President made this decision and announcement: We -- he asked his team to do a clear-eyed assessment, not to sugarcoat it, of what the impact could be, of moving -- withdrawing our troops from Afghanistan after a 20-year war -- a war that the President continues to feel does not have a military solution.

What the President is continuing to press on is a political solution and political negotiations and discussions, which we hope will reconvene soon, to move toward a political solution on the ground to bring greater peace and stability to the people of Afghanistan. That's his hope.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. So, you mentioned, two weeks ago, that vaccine sharing to the rest of the world is not a matter of supply, but overcoming the logistical challenge.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Now that you've passed the deadline of June and you've not met the target of distributing 80 million vaccine doses, what has the administration learned and will do differently? And do have a new target for the date of completing those 80 million doses?

And then just a follow-up on that: For countries that have refrigerated -- refrigeration and distribution challenges, why is the administration focusing on Pfizer and Moderna rather than Johnson & Johnson?

And then I have another question on the LGBTQ community.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, first let me say that we have allocated all 80 million doses. And I would say what we have learned through the process is that there are logistical challenges, because when you talk about working with countries, even as we convey to a country we have a million doses or 2 million doses, sometimes we have to work through legal barriers, we have

to work through regulatory barriers. There are issues as it relates to materials needed to distribute these vaccines, and there are also even transportation issues with refrigeration needed as well.

So we have -- we have noted as -- even as we've allocated all these doses, as we committed to, that part of it is countries need to be ready to receive them on the ground. And there is no past precedent for this. So there's certainly lessons that we have learned.

And as we've proceeded, we have become -- these countries have become more effective and efficient at receiving those doses. They've worked through the red tape. And that enables us to provide the doses more easily in the future.

In terms of the allocation of doses: We provide what's available. I don't have any more detail for you in terms of which vaccines. As you know, we had a larger percentage of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, so hence there are Moderna and Pfizer vaccines perhaps going to more countries around --

Q Okay. And on --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on LGBTQ, there was violence in Tbilisi, Georgia, yesterday where LGBTQ activists and also journalists were attacked. Now, the President has recently vowed to use U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance to help promote LGBT rights around the world. How does this translate to the situation in Georgia? Would there be any kind of real repercussions for situations, like in Georgia and other countries, where the rights of LGBTQ and minorities are not protected?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely, that's a priority of the President; it's a priority of the State Department and the Secretary of State. The State Department would probably have more of a specific update of direct engagement with Georgia. I don't have any policy announcements or decisions to preview for you.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. During the weekend, there was an attack targeting U.S. military base in the Deir el-Zour, in Syria. And it's not a Pentagon question, I promise you.

MS. PSAKI: That's okay. Go ahead.

Q Does the President believe that his strategy to counter the pro-Iran militias in Iraq and Syria is working, considering (inaudible) will authorize the Pentagon to -- with the second attack that we have seen in the last few weeks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Nadia, we -- he approved these strikes, one, with the full authority -- legal authority -- U.S. legal authority and international authority, because -- and in a way that was proportionate and responded to threats against our entity -- U.S. men and women serving and entities that were serving in these countries.

It did not mean we expected everything to grind to a complete halt at the time, but he still felt it was the appropriate and proportionate steps. And our objective continues to be a de-escalation of violence on the ground.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you very much.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Thank you. On cyber: President Biden and President Putin met three weeks ago, and the first expert-level meeting

about ransomware is going to happen next week. That s four weeks after their meeting.

MS. PSAKI: That s not what I said actually. I said the meetings are ongoing and there s another meeting next week on ransomware.

Q So, has there been a meeting about ransomware at the expert level since the meeting between the two presidents?

MS. PSAKI: There have been ongoing cyber and expert-level meetings. I don t have an agenda of each of them to read out for you.

Q But not specifically on ransomware?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have anything more than cyber and expert-level meetings. And we re not going to read out the agenda from all of the meetings.

Q Is President Biden frustrated that the pace seems to be slow in those negotiations following this meeting with the Russian President?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn t say he would characterize it that way. The meeting with the Russian President was just a couple of weeks ago. We ve had ongoing meetings at an expert level pretty much since that point in time. And again, there s another meeting scheduled for next week.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead, right there. Right there.

Q Me?

MS. PSAKI: Yep, go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. Another foreign policy question, if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q There was a discussion last year of arranging a P5 summit meeting. And the idea was to get the leaders of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council together at UNGA. Is President Biden interested in something like that, in any chance? Would he be willing to take part in a discussion like that, at UNGA, to discuss rules of the road in light of the current tensions between the West and the East?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have anything about the UNGA schedule to preview for you quite yet. Again, there are a range of engagements we have with a number of the P5 countries, which will certainly continue. But in terms of meeting at UNGA, I don t have anything to preview for you.

Q What about the meeting in principle as such, without (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I don t think we re quite at that point in our planning process quite yet.

Lynn, go ahead.

Q Thank you for taking my questions. Some follow up on the --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- Illinois visit. Two questions. Let me just give you both of them to make sure I get them in.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'm not going to cut you off, Lynn. I know better than that. Go ahead. (Laughter.)

Q I appreciate that. But as you know, this visit is -- it's the first presidential visit --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- of Biden to Illinois, and COVID came in just as he was about to come before the Illinois primaries.

So, Crystal Lake is really tough political turf for Democrats. In the county it's in -- McHenry -- Biden lost, Senator Durbin lost, and Representative Lauren Underwood -- who you've mentioned -- lost, though Biden did win Crystal Lake.

So, could you just explain a little bit more of how this trip to one of the redder parts of the bluest states in totality can advance the Biden policy and political agenda since there's no swayable members of Congress; they're all for you?

And then, on another very serious note: In Chicago, it's had its most violent weekend of this year: 104 shot, 19 killed. I understand Mayor Lori Lightfoot will be meeting with the President at O'Hare. I understand the administration did roll out many things to do to help combat crime in cities like Chicago. But is there something more that perhaps the President may be able to bring or discuss with Mayor Lightfoot when they meet tomorrow?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, on your first question, Lynn, I think the President was -- is eager to visit McHenry County College, which, as you know, is located in Crystal Lake, Illinois. And he ran as someone who would represent not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just independents, but all people.

So I would see this as less of a political trip, more of his -- of an opportunity to speak to all Americans about why his Build Back Better agenda and why his effort to make -- to extend the Child Tax Credit, to make community college more affordable, to make universal pre-K a reality is something that many people of all political stripes should be able to support. And that's the case he'll make tomorrow.

So he did -- last week, he did the bipartisan infrastructure deal and, kind of, did a very detailed laydown. You'll see him tomorrow do a very detailed laydown of the rest of his Build Back Better agenda and what many of you would shorthand as "the reconciliation" -- many components of the reconciliation package.

But he's also eager to see Congresswoman Underwood, given she's been such an advocate for the expansion of healthcare, making it more affordable and accessible. And that's something he will continue to advocate for in this bill.

Q Before I get to Mayor Lightfoot --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- you know that's exactly the county she -- Democrats are trying to get rid of for her in the remap. So it may not -- it may be not -- it may be moved soon, because that might not be her county in the remap.

Could you clarify -- when I checked before the briefing, I didn't think she had a speaking role in the program tomorrow. Does she by now?

MS. PSAKI: I'll have to check, Lynn. I think -- I wanted to give you all an overview of kind of why he was going there. But in terms of specific meetings in the program, I think we're still finalizing all those specific details.

Q Okay. And then, on crime in Chicago and the meeting with Mayor Lightfoot?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know that they re -- I believe you mentioned a greet at the airport.

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: So I ll have to check and see how long that is allocated for that meeting. And certainly, he is always receptive to what any elected official wants to raise and what they want to discuss.

I will note that the President continues to work to address violent crime. We ve seen rates go up over the last 18 months around the country, including in the city of Chicago. And as you know, Lynn, from covering this, we see spikes in violent crime typically during summer months, often -- unfortunately -- during holiday weekends. And we saw that over the last weekend.

But I will say that he will continue to advocate for, and the mayor may want to discuss this -- I guess we ll see -- or not -- but increases in his budget, including an additional \$300 million more for the COPS program. That is -- than what I would say was approved in the prior Trump administration budget.

So he had \$237 billion [sic] in his -- in his -- "million," sorry -- got a little high there -- million in his budget. And the President is proposing \$537 million in his budget because he wants COPS funding to go out to communities across the country.

He will also continue to work to empower ATF. He s proposed an additional \$70 million increase, over the last Trump budget, for ATF to ensure that they have the funding and resources they need to crack down on illegal guns. And I know gun violence is a huge driver of the crime in Chicago.

And finally, he s going to continue to advocate for supporting evidence-based community violence intervention programs that are proven to reduce gun violence in a range of communities. But I m sure he ll be happy to discuss components of his budget. She may have different things on her agenda when they see each other tomorrow.

Q And he s not going --

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q -- into the city proper? He s just going to go to the two stops?

MS. PSAKI: That is correct.

Thanks, everyone, so much. Have a great day.

2:06 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Saudi Vice Minister of Defense Khalid bin Salman
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 6, 2021 8:28 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 6, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Saudi Vice Minister of Defense Khalid bin Salman

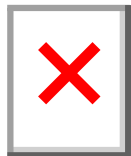
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today in Washington with Saudi Vice Minister of Defense Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to discuss the longstanding partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia, regional security, and the U.S. commitment to help Saudi Arabia defend its territory as it faces attacks from Iranian-aligned groups. They also discussed the importance of coordinating efforts to ensure a strong global economic recovery, to advance the climate agenda, and to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East. Mr. Sullivan emphasized the importance of progress in advancing human rights in the Kingdom. They agreed to stay in touch regularly over the coming months on these and other issues.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian of France
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 14, 2021 11:47 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 14, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian of France

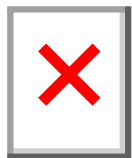
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian of France and reaffirmed the strong bilateral ties between our countries. They welcomed the outcomes of the U.S.-EU Summit and NATO Summit in June and pledged to work together to ensure the Alliance's adaptation to diverse security threats. They exchanged views on a range of shared foreign policy interests, including China, Russia, Iran, and Lebanon. They also discussed rising instability in the Sahel and their commitment to sustained counterterrorism cooperation.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on the Official Working Visit of Chancellor Merkel of Germany
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 15, 2021 5:00 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2021

**Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on the Official Working Visit of Chancellor
Merkel of Germany**

Via Teleconference

(July 14, 2021)

2:53 P.M. EDT

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. Hi, everyone, and thanks for joining this afternoon. Today's call will be embargoed until 5:00 a.m. tomorrow, July 15, and the contents will be attributed to a "senior administration official." With that, I will turn it over to our speaker, [senior administration official]. Over to you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, [senior administration official]. And hi, everybody. Thanks for joining this afternoon.

Tomorrow, as you know, German Chancellor Angela Merkel will be at the White House for an official working visit, which we very much see as one that will affirm the deep and enduring bilateral ties between our two countries. This is very much a forward-looking visit which will address our robust partnership on shared global challenges. And as we look forward, we'll be looking for ways to continue strengthening cooperation between our countries in the months and years ahead.

It's also fair to say that, over the course of her long and distinguished tenure, Chancellor Merkel has been a true friend to the United States, a strong advocate for the transatlantic partnership, for multilateral cooperation, as well as for our shared priorities. In their meeting, I expect that President Biden will convey gratitude for her leadership role in Europe and around the world as she prepares to depart the German political stage following their elections this September.

In terms of the schedule: In the morning, Vice President Harris will host Chancellor Angela Merkel for a working breakfast at the Vice President's Residence. Then in the afternoon at the White House, the President and Chancellor Merkel will have a one-on-one meeting, an expanded bilateral meeting, followed by a press conference.

And in the evening, President Biden will host Chancellor Merkel for a small dinner with a range of individuals who have long been strong supporters of Germany and the bilateral relationship, which will further demonstrate the close and continuing ties between our countries.

In terms of what is on the agenda in their bilateral meeting, as I said, this is very much a working visit and we expect them to discuss the full range of policy issues in our bilateral relationship.

They'll address the threat of climate change, including the need for progress between the Leaders' Meeting this spring and COP26 in Glasgow this fall.

I expect them to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic, including their shared desire to provide access to vaccines around the world, and to shore up global health security.

I expect that they will discuss the full range of shared security challenges, including Afghanistan, Libya, and the Sahel.

I expect the leaders also will discuss shared ways to respond to regional challenges, including addressing Russian cyberattacks and territorial aggression; countering China's rising influence, non-market economic practices, and human rights abuses, including forced labor; support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and also bolstering the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the Western Balkan countries.

And then, finally, their commitment to shoring up democracy at home and defending human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law around the world.

To make a few general points on the bilateral relationship, Germany is one of our staunchest allies. That relationship has long been built on shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and rule of law. There is also extensive cultural and economic ties between our countries.

As I think you all know, the Biden administration has an overarching goal of revitalizing the transatlantic relationship, which includes increasing cooperation with NATO and raising the level of ambition with the EU -- two goals that I think the President was able to make good progress on during his trip to Europe last month, where, of course, he had the opportunity to engage with Chancellor Merkel on the margins of the G7 in Cornwall, as well as their shared participation in the NATO Summit. And our relationship with Germany, of course, is a very important foundation for all of that.

On the economic side: Germany is our largest trading partner in Europe, and the U.S. is Germany's largest export market. We're also a major source of foreign investment in each other's economies.

On the security side, the U.S. cooperates closely with Germany in NATO to ensure the prosperity and security of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. Germany has approximately 36,000 active duty U.S. service members, with President Biden announcing earlier this year the additional deployment of 500 troops, as well as halting the planned withdrawal by the previous administration of U.S. forces from Germany.

Germany is also an essential hub for training, operations, and logistics for U.S. and Allied forces operating in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Our troops served together, of course, in Afghanistan for nearly two decades. We also cooperate in the counter-ISIS campaign, with both U.S. and German troops on the ground in Iraq as part of the NATO training mission.

And as I mentioned earlier, we also, of course, have close cultural and people-to-people ties.

Finally, I want to touch briefly on the deliverables that you can expect to see coming out on Thursday: We're expecting the two leaders to release the Washington Declaration, which will outline their common vision for cooperation to confront policy challenges.

So this document is likely to lay out the broad principles and values that are shaping our relationship and that we believe are going to be guiding principles for the relationship in the months and years ahead as we continue to confront the shared challenges that we both face in terms of our shared commitment to democratic principles, values, and institutions, and human rights; common dedication to upholding the international rules-based order and an open world without spheres of influence; our joint efforts to build strong and equitable market economies that cultivate resilience and demonstrate that democratic leadership delivers for the world; and, of course, the importance of transatlantic cooperation.

We're also working on developing other initiatives that will solidify areas of our bilateral relationship that we can continue to strengthen and develop in the years ahead, including a Futures Forum, which will bring together Germans and Americans from a wide range of sectors to be able to analyze and propose solutions to global problems going forward.

Our two governments will also look at developing an economic dialogue to further strengthen this part of our bilateral relationship, and we'll also look at launching a climate and energy partnership, which will enable us to work together to address climate change, transformational energy technologies, and support for energy transitions in emerging economies.

So, looking very much forward to the Chancellor being here tomorrow, expect a very robust discussion between the two leaders on the full range of policy priorities, and are looking forward to releasing and announcing deliverables that are very much focused on strengthening and continuing to deepen the bilateral ties between our countries as well as our peoples.

So, let me stop there and take some questions.

Q Hi. Hi, [senior administration official]. Everyone, thanks for doing this call. I'm going to try to squeeze in two if it's possible. First, on Nord Stream: Do you anticipate any breakthroughs with Chancellor Merkel or her team on the Nord Stream issue? And if not, could we anticipate any consequences with regard to the Biden administration's position on that? Or does the administration sort of bite its tongue, for lack of a better expression, and wait to work with Merkel's successor and pick up these discussions? So if you could talk about how that will work.

And then, if I could just throw in a really Wall Street Journal-ly question: The U.S. Commerce Department, last week, released a redacted report regarding the Trump administration's auto tariffs, and this was something that made Germany very, very nervous. We don't have a lot of information on that, and I'm wondering if that issue is going to come up and whether or not auto tariffs are even remotely on the table with this administration. Anything you can give us on that would be awesome. Thank you so much.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, to take your second question first, I'm not personally tracking the Commerce report, so would defer on that to my press colleagues if there's anything they want to follow up and share on, on that specific issue.

On the Nord Stream issue, as you know, we've been engaging for a while now with the German government at multiple levels on our concerns about Nord Stream 2. This has included engagement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, by the Secretary of State in their conversations with the German government.

I do expect that President Biden will raise his longstanding concerns with Chancellor Merkel during their meeting about Russia's geopolitical project and about the importance of developing concrete mechanisms to ensure that energy is not used as a coercive tool against Ukraine, our Eastern Flank allies, or any other country.

We believe that the sanctions waivers that we announced in May have given us diplomatic space to be able to work with Germany, to have these conversations, to try and find ways to address the negative impacts of the pipeline. Our teams have been discussing these concerns. I expect that they will continue discussing these concerns.

We are not anticipating any sort of formal announcement or deliverable coming out of the leaders' meetings tomorrow on Nord Stream. But like I said, the teams have been having very productive conversations on this set of issues and expect that those will continue.

Q Hi, [senior administration officials]. Thank you so much for doing this call. I wanted to, I guess, ask you on -- just a quick follow-up on Nord Stream, and then I have another question.

On Nord Stream, German officials have said they expect this to be resolved in August. You know, there have been some hints that it could come sooner than that. Can you -- since we're on background here, can you -- or maybe even just off the record -- can you say why you weren't able to figure this out before this visit? It seems like, you know, that that's usually a big goal.

And then I have a separate question.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Go ahead with your separate question.

Q Okay. So the second question has to do with another point of contention, which is the German position on the WTO waiver. There have been protests, balloons, big banners all over D.C. There's been protests in other cities. Do you -- I know that the President is a strong proponent of the waiver, but do you anticipate this factoring into the discussion? Or do you think it will just be the, sort of, like, "We agree to disagree, and let's focus on the things we have in common"?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sorry, I missed a part of what you said. I heard the balloons and the banners and the waiver. Which -- which specific waiver?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The WTO waiver for intellectual property -- right? -- that is being considered at the WTO.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Okay. Sorry, is this the -- sorry, the TRIPS waiver or is this a different --

Q Yeah. Yeah, yeah. TRIPS waiver.

(Cross-talk.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Lots of -- lots of protests, so I just wanted to ensure I was -- I was tracking the right question.

Look, I, you know -- I take your point on the Nord Stream discussions. I mean, like I said, our teams have been having very robust conversations on this. You know, I think there's -- there's a lot of aspects that we want to work through. There's things that we want to discuss in terms of the energy components of this, the impact that it has potentially on Eastern Flank allies, on Ukraine, and really believe that that the waivers that we were able to use in in this case have provided the space for this.

And so I wouldn't read too much into the timing of this. I think it's something that we've continued to have good discussions on. I think you're -- you know, the August timeframe I think people are tracking on is when the next report by the State Department is due to Congress. But I think we're not anticipating having anything to announce that at this visit in particular, but do believe that we are having very productive conversations with the German government. And we'll continue having those conversations with them in the days ahead.

On the TRIPS waiver, you know, I think the President has been very clear about his position on a waiver. He supports it, given the extraordinary circumstances that call for extraordinary measures. And we're encouraged that our announcement in May has encouraged other countries to be able to put additional proposals and ideas on the table.

I think, at the same time, we know that a waiver alone won't result in the scale and the speed that we need to make enough vaccines to end the pandemic. And that's why we're continuing to ramp up our own efforts, including with the private sector, to expand vaccine manufacturing and distribution around the world.

And I think that this broad goal is very much one that President Biden and Chancellor Merkel share in terms of their joint commitment to COVAX, the contributions that the United States, that Germany, the EU, and other countries made at the G7 -- and do expect that they will continue to have conversations about how we can ensure the widest distribution of vaccines on a very rapid timeframe to a number of countries around the world as the best and most effective way of ultimately ending the pandemic.

Q Thank you. Another Nord Stream-related question: After tomorrow, President Biden will have met with the main Nord Stream 2 proponents -- President Putin and Chancellor Merkel -- but not with the main opponents -- President Zelensky of Ukraine. I was just wondering, what is the thinking on sequencing and not meeting with Zelensky first? And Zelensky (inaudible) his White House meeting would be taking place in July after the invitation was extended. Is that meeting still planned to happen in July?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I -- so thank you for the question. You know, I think there has been a lot of engagement at different levels of the U.S. government not only with Germany, but also with Ukraine. The President did have a phone call with President Zelensky right before his trip to Europe before he met with President Putin. They were able to discuss the situation of Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine, also an opportunity to discuss Nord Stream and some of those broader issues.

So the President did actually have conversations with Zelensky before he went to Europe, before he saw Merkel on the margins of the G7, and before he met with President Putin there as well. When -- and Chancellor Merkel, it's worth flagging, has also been engaging with President Zelensky who was in Berlin earlier this week. And so we very much support the conversations that the Germans and the Ukrainians are having directly about Ukraine's concerns about Nord Stream and stuff that the Germans might be prepared to take in response to that.

When the President spoke with President Zelensky earlier this summer, he invited him to visit Washington this summer. We never specified what month that was going to take place and are still anticipating a visit by President Zelensky to the White House this summer, but don't have a date to announce at this time.

Q Hey. Hello, thank you for doing this. So I have question -- earlier you said the meeting is going to also talk about the challenges coming out from China. And China remains to be Germany's biggest trade partner in 2020. I know Biden administration has, you know, proposed about the supply chain (inaudible) by forced labor, human rights abuse, protect intellectual property. However, with that such big amount of trade partnership between China and Germany, how can President Biden convince Chancellor Merkel to work with the United States to face the challenge from China? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I thank you very much for the question. I -- like I said, I think China very much is going to be part of the agenda between the two leaders tomorrow.

It's frankly been something that we have been actively discussing with our European allies over the first six months of the administration. And I think we really saw the fruits of that diplomatic engagement during the President's trip to Europe last month, where there was signs of increasing convergence among our allies in -- and partners at the G7.

For example, President Biden, Chancellor Merkel agreed with other leaders on the importance of responding to China's non-market practices, the need to speak out against human rights abuses. The communiqué coming out of the G7 also addressed the need for action against forced labor practices.

At the NATO Summit, there was agreement, for the first time ever, on the security challenge from China, including plans to include China in the new strategic concepts that allies are going to be working on over the next year.

And then at the U.S.-EU summit, leaders launched the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, which will enable us to deal with a wide range of issues -- including emerging technologies, competition policies -- and very much expect that dealing with China's non-market practices, economic abuses, et cetera will be part of those conversations.

I think we've consistently been very clear that we need to engage China from a position of strength, which includes our alliances and partnerships. And Germany, of course, is one of our closest alliances. And frankly, we think, to your specific question on economics, that it actually makes economic sense for us to work together.

The U.S.-EU trade and investment relationship is the largest in the world. As I noted, the U.S. and German relationship is also very significant. And we think that we're going to be much more effective in terms of harnessing the power of that transatlantic relationship, that bilateral relationship to set the global rules of the road on issues that we care about.

Q Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, everyone. That concludes our call. Reminder that this is on background, attributed to an "SAO." And the contents of this call are embargoed until tomorrow morning at 5:00 a.m.

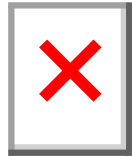
Have a good afternoon.

3:15 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 16, 2021 2:46 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 16, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey

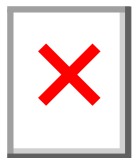
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey. Following the meeting between President Joe Biden and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on June 14, Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Kalin discussed a range of regional issues.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

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July 19, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, July 19, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:06 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Good morning -- or good afternoon. Happy Monday.

Okay, one item for all of you at the top. The United States continues its tremendous efforts to donate COVID-19 vaccines from the U.S. global supply. Today, we can announce that we have over a million Johnson & Johnson vaccines headed to Gambia, Senegal, Zambia, and Niger. We're also pleased to announce 3 million vaccines going to Guatemala tomorrow, continuing our prioritization of Latin American countries.

As these shipments demonstrate, the United States is fulfilling our promise to be an arsenal of vaccines for the world, and we're proud to be donating these doses to save lives and help those in need.

Josh, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two subjects. First, the President's remarks on why China didn't face sanctions for cyberattacks but Russia did: Could you clarify, since both countries are accused of protecting criminal hacker groups? And then, along the same lines, the U.S. imports about \$435 billion dollars in goods from China. To what degree do economic concerns play a role in how to address cyberattacks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that, today, an unprecedented group of allies and partners -- including the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and NATO -- are joining the United States in exposing

and criticizing the PRC's Ministry of State Security's malicious cyber activities. And this is the first time NATO has condemned PRC cyber activities.

So, I would note that we are actually elevating and taking steps to not only speak out publicly, but certainly take action as it relates to problematic cyber activities from China -- in a different way, but as we have from Russia as well. We are not differentiating one as, you know, out of the realm of condemnation or out of the realm of consequence from the United States.

In terms of the economic pieces, I think you're asking me -- give me a little more on your question we're trying to get at.

Q I mean, basically the U.S. economy depends a lot on Chinese imports. We only get \$16 billion worth of goods from Russia. If we were to come with major sanctions on China, is there a risk that we can be hurting our own economy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that we take cyber actions against our country and against private-sector entities quite seriously.

The Department of Justice is imposing costs and today announced criminal charges against four MSS hackers. These charges address activities concerning a multi-year campaign targeting foreign governments and entities in key sectors.

We also have, of course, through the National Security Agency, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, exposed over 50 tactics, techniques, and procedures Chinese state-sponsored cyber actors used when targeting U.S. and allied networks.

My point is we are not holding back. We are not allowing any economic circumstance or consideration to prevent us from taking actions where warranted. And also, we reserve the option to take additional actions where warranted as well. This is not the conclusion of our efforts as it relates to cyber activities with China or Russia.

Q And then, secondly, with Facebook: The President suggested that executives look in the mirror and change their practices. Does that mean the administration isn't considering any regulatory or legal moves to possibly address disinformation on social media?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't think we've taken any options off the table. That's up to Congress to determine how they want to proceed moving forward.

But let me just note that we're not in a war or a battle with Facebook; we're in a battle with the virus. And the problem we're seeing, that our Surgeon General elevated just last week, is that disinformation, traveling through a range of mediums -- some of them are a range of social media platforms, some of them are media, some of them are through the mouth of public officials -- that bad information, inaccurate information about vaccines is killing people.

That's where our concern is, and that's what we -- the President is working to express and also what the Surgeon General expressed in his report just last week.

Go ahead, Steve.

Q Now that you've levelled these charges on China, do you plan to raise them with them?

MS. PSAKI: We, of course, will continue to be in touch with Chinese officials at a high level, and that -- that will be the case in these regards as well.

Q Is the Chinese government actively doing the hacking or contracting it out?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more detail than that, Steve. Let me check and see if there's more we can provide to you

about --

Q Lastly, the Belarus opposition leader is in Washington this week. I think she's going to meet Tony Blinken today. Is the President going to meet with her?

MS. PSAKI: We are still finalizing what the details are. She will be meeting with White House officials. I wouldn't say it will be the President, but she will be meeting with White House officials when she's here. We'll have more to report on that once those details are finalized.

Go ahead, Phil.

Q Just to follow up: The statement said the Ministry of State Security was directly paying hackers, which is, I think, why it was elevated. The President kind of compared it to the Russia situation but said that maybe they're protecting them or accommodating them, which doesn't seem to be a direct link. That's what the statement said this morning. I'm just trying to square kind of where things stand in terms of how the White House views what has actually transpired.

MS. PSAKI: As it relates to the cyber activities and the attribution that was put out earlier this morning?

Q Yeah. Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that we felt it was important to be clear that -- as was clear when we made the announcement this morning, that the former attribution of the malicious cyber campaign utilizing the zero-day vulnerabilities in the Microsoft Exchange serv- -- server, which was disclosed in March 2021 -- two malicious cyber actors, affiliated with the MSS with high confidence. That was the information put out by the intelligence community or by our national security team earlier today. That is accurate.

That's why we worked also -- and it's significant, which is why I pointed this out initially -- that we worked in coordination with Eur- -- with many partners around the world -- the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and NATO -- to criticize, expose, and call out these malicious cyber activities. But that is the information that's accurate about the attribution.

Q And then, just one more on that and then one quick other one. The President said he's going to be briefed on it or -- in his remarks, when he was asked about it, he said he was going to be briefed on it. This is a pretty significant el- -- escalation of things from the U.S. and its allies. What more does the President need to be briefed on in terms of the process, going forward?

MS. PSAKI: I would say, first: The President is regularly briefed. He certainly is aware of attributions that are determined by the U.S. government, including the one announced earlier today. But this is an ongoing effort, an ongoing consideration of how to prevent these malicious actions from happening in the future to other private-sector companies -- certainly something that the President will continue to speak with his national security team about.

Q And then, just one more on the economic side. Obviously, the President kind of addressed inflation head on today. One thing that Chair Powell says -- and I know you guys are in the same place on the idea that it's transitory right now -- but Chair Powell said, in congressional testimony, "We're humble about what we understand," given the fact this -- there's no real roadmap coming out of a once-in-a-century pandemic, economically.

Is the White House economic team, when it comes to the inflation, also humble about what they understand -- that maybe they don't necessarily know what's going to happen next as it pertains to inflation?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. We take inflation very seriously. It is under the purview of the Federal Reserve. As you know, they have regular quarterly meetings where they put out that information and any considerations publicly.

Their projection continues to be that, while there's an -- a projected increase in inflation this year, it's expected to come back down to about 2.2 next year. They have not changed that, and that is aligned with a number of outside economists as well.

You're also correct that when the economy is turning back on from a global pandemic, there isn't a lot of historic precedent for that.

And certainly, we're seeing prices go back to pre-pandemic levels in some cases. We're also seeing a range of factors, including shortages in the supply chain -- from chips shortages that are impacting the auto industry, to lumber shortages that are impacting the housing industry -- that are also factors here as we're seeing price increases.

But we do look at all of that. We take it incredibly seriously. And we respect the role of the Federal Reserve as well.

Go ahead, Rachel.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions -- one on -- just to follow-up on and China and the cyberattacks. A senior administration official said that no one country acting on its own can change China's behavior. So, if the United States were to take action against China, would it do so alone, or does the administration feel like you need allies on board to take that step?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's a good question, Rachel. I think as we've approached our China strategy from the beginning and our policy as it relates to China, we've always felt that going -- working together, working in partnership with allies around the world, and also with -- in partnership with members of the federal government, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, was how we approached it from a position of strength.

So, what's significant today is that while we're all calling out these malicious cyber activities, so are a number of our key partners around the world: the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan.

These malicious cyber activities are not only impacting the United States. They're impacting a range of countries, a range of partners. And, yes, we would, of course, like to work with countries and work with our key partners around the world moving forward. And, you know, obviously we can't determine steps and consequences on their behalf, but that is certainly our objective and how we've approached our strategy to date.

Q But you're not ruling out taking action on your own if you felt like it was necessary?

MS. PSAKI: No, we're not. But we also, from the beginning, have felt that working in partnership, working in coordination is -- and working together is a stronger way to approach malicious activity -- cyber activity and others -- with -- in areas of concern around the world.

Q One quick follow-up just on infrastructure. You know, Republicans are saying that they don't want to move forward with this test vote that's scheduled for Wednesday without knowing exactly how they're going to pay for everything in that bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Senator Bill Cassidy, over the weekend, said the White House is not working with Republicans on the payfors and that he feels like they're competing with Democrats' \$3.5 trillion plan. So does the administration feel like these differences can be resolved in the next 48 hours?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I think it's important to take a step back and remember that, a month ago, a bipartisan group of senators stood outside of the White House with the President to announce an agreement on infrastructure framework. There's been a lot of progress since then -- a lot of late nights, a lot of coffee drinking -- and important legislating, bill writing that's happened.

But the American people have waited a long time. The American people are ready to see progress. And we believe it's time

for progress to happen and time for this legislation to move forward. We also work in close contact or close coordination with, of course, Leader Schumer, and we defer to him and other leaders in Congress on the timeline and the sequencing of legislation moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q On that discussion with Leader Schumer, has he talked in the last few days, at all, with any of the Republicans who are negotiating (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: The -- the President? I don't have any calls to read out for you. I can tell you that our team, senior White House officials, have been in close to- -- contact with Democrats and Republicans, members, and their offices. And, whenever it warrants, the President is always happy to pick up the phone.

Q And then, on the Guantanamo Bay announcement today: Senior officials said 10 of the remaining detainees are eligible for repatriation. Any sense yet of the targeted timelines for transferring them? And is there a broader goal within this administration of closing Guantanamo Bay? Has that timeline been set?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, our goal is to close Guantanamo Bay. I can tell you that there's 39 -- I think you know some of this, but for others who are following it -- there are 39 detainees who remain at Guantanamo Bay: 10 are eligible for transfer, 17 are eligible for a Periodic Review Board, 10 are involved in the military commissions process, and 2 detainees have been convicted.

This individual who we announced the transfer of -- the Department of Defense announced the transfer of -- had been -- had started moving through the process during the Obama-Biden administration and was on pause for some period of time over the last four years.

I don't have a timeline for you. As you know, there's a process. There are different layers of the process. But that remains our goal, and we are considering all available avenues to responsibly transfer detainees and, of course, close Guantanamo Bay.

Q We and a few other outlets have reported that the administration is now planning to send about 2,500 Afghan translators and, I believe, members of their family to Fort Lee in Virginia as they complete the steps to have their legal status in this country reviewed. Will there be other U.S. military bases in the United States also used to house them temporarily?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, any confirmation and final details of military base usage would be from the Department of Defense and the State Department, given they're implementing these programs. I expect they will have more to share with you, Ed. I just want to defer to them, given it is their programs.

I will say that when I went through the programs and how the process worked last week, one of the things I tried to note but I will -- I will elevate again here is that individuals who have completed the process -- the security review -- the vetting and security process could be relocated to the United States. That would be certainly military -- U.S. military bases, and the Department of Defense will assess how many of those and how many facilities they would need for those transfers.

Q Two real quick scheduling things.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Is he -- is the President at all scheduled to meet any time soon with members of the Texas Democratic House delegation that's here in Washington?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any meetings to preview for you at this point in time.

Q And I hesitate to ask this because I'm only (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Don't hesitate. It's okay. It's a Monday.

Q Is Tom Brady joining the Buccaneers here at the White House tomorrow? I've been asked to ask this by several (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) It's okay. I don't have the list of Buccaneers attending tomorrow in front of me. We will see if we can venture to get that for you all by the end of the day.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. And great throw yesterday --

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

Q -- at the Nationals.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Q On vaccine hesitancy: As COVID-19 cases rise, if this is becoming a "pandemic of the unvaccinated" and you guys are having a hard time getting a certain part of the population to go get the shot, would President Biden ever call former President Trump and say, "I need your help. Let's cut a PSA and tell people to go do it"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that what we've seen in our data is that the most trusted voices are local officials, doctors, medical experts, civic leaders, clergy, from time to time -- and that is where we have really invested our funding and our resources.

We've seen almost every former President play a role in putting out a PSA, making sure people understood in the country that the vaccine is safe and effective. We don't believe that requires an embroidered invitation to be a part of.

But certainly, any role of anyone who has a platform where they can provide information to the public that the vaccine is safe, it is effective, we don't see this as a political issue, we'd certainly welcome that engagement.

Q And about those Texas Democrats, since the Vice President met with these Texas Democratic lawmakers, five of them have now tested positive for COVID-19. Is there any safety concern about her spending time around the President until a certain amount of time has passed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say the -- I think the Vice President's Office put out that she was tested, and that she did -- there was no detection of COVID-19. They also put out some specific details about their proximity to the individuals who tested positive as well.

We take these precautions incredibly seriously and abide by the health -- the guidance of our health and medical experts.

Q Do officials here wish that those Texas Democrats would have been more careful and taken more precautions like wearing masks on the flight here?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I don't think I'm going to be in a position here to assess what safety precautions they may or may not have taken. Obviously, these individuals were out there trying to elevate the issue of an individual's right to vote. We -- we, of course, hope everybody abides by public health guidelines. That's what we certainly recommend.

But the Vice President -- what's important for everybody to know is that the Vice President was tested. She, of course, takes these precautions seriously, and we would follow any advice our public health officials give us.

Q And can you tell us anything else about the nature of her trip to Walter Reed yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. She was -- it was a -- it was a visit that was scheduled for several weeks, long before the visit of the Texas legislators -- a routine appointment, which she had had again scheduled several weeks ago.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q And just to button that up: She and the President have been in the same room since she had that test? There's no separation of the President and the Vice President?

MS. PSAKI: There haven't been additional precautions taken, no.

Q On China, can you help us understand why the President -- I asked a couple of questions today -- was not, sort of, in the same posture we've seen toward Russia, where he has called out Russia publicly to stop?

And from what we know based on the administration's findings, this is China paying cyber criminals to carry out -- whereas, in Russia, our understanding is Putin may have some looser relationship or perhaps some ability to direct criminal actors, but not that connection. So, we gave the President an opportunity to address the China issue today; he seemed to pull his punches and not go after China. Why?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, Kelly, that that was not the intention he was trying to project. He takes malicious cyberactivity incredibly seriously. The effort and the -- to engage and unite an unprecedented group of our allies and partners was something that was under his direction.

And he felt -- he continues to feel it's important to lead from a position of strength in close coordination with our partners and allies around the world. And he takes malicious cyberactivity -- whether it's from Russia or China; whomever the actors may be -- quite seriously. And I think our efforts to lead on this should be an indication of that.

Q On COVID, does the administration think it is appropriate, at this time, to try to do more tracking on breakthrough cases since there are more reports of that, and that's not something the CDC has been following, except when it's hospitalizations? Should more data collection take place?

MS. PSAKI: It's a great question. I'll have to talk to my health -- our health and medical experts about the benefits of that tracking, and how they see that as a public health priority.

I will note that what we've continued to see is that the individuals -- 99.5 percent of people who are being hospitalized and dying of COVID are not vaccinated. The individuals who -- who are -- who have been -- who have gotten COVID, I should say -- a number of these individuals we've been talking about from a public manner have been getting mild cases, have not been hospitalized.

That's, of course, no one's preference to get any form, but they have been asymptomatic and that is showing that the vaccine is actually working.

Go ahead.

Q On the virus, the President spoke this morning about the economic boom the country is undergoing.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q But stock and oil prices fell today, in part because of rising concerns about the Delta variant. Is the administration -- is the President considering reinstating mask requirements at all -- both for health, but also for economic reasons?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that we are -- we look -- our health and medical experts -- look closely at the broad swath of data across the country. And I would remind you all that almost 70 percent of adults are still vaccinated in this country. We are not in the place we were two months, three months, six months ago, as it relates to our fight with the virus.

It is still underway. We are still battling the virus. There's no question. And as the President said just on Friday, this has become a "pandemic of the unvaccinated," in that that is where we are seeing hospitalizations, where we are seeing deaths.

We certainly have seen -- we, of course, have seen the movements in the stock market. We also know that unemployment is down, economic growth is up, job creation is up, wages are up, and we can assure people we are still at war with the virus, even as we've seen progress made over the last several months.

Q One more also on COVID. I'm sure you've seen an alternate on the women's gymnastics team has tested positive while in Japan. Any specific precautions the White House is taking with the First Lady's travel to ensure her safety as she goes over there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we are aware of, of course, COVID-19 cases among a handful of athletes. We're monitoring the situation, wishing a speedy recovery to those who have tested positive.

Public health remains a central priority for the games. The government of Japan and the IOC have very strict protocols, and they are taking careful safety precautions to keep the athletes and the public safe.

Nothing has changed in terms of our plans for the U.S. delegation. Our team will be following very strict protocols -- safety and health protocols, limiting engagement with the public, and keeping our footprint as small as possible.

Our COVID team at the White House, as well as health officials at the IOC and the government of Japan all agree that the stringent protocols and health measures in place will keep -- will keep them safe. But, of course, we continue to monitor individuals (inaudible).

Q Anything specific with the First Lady's travel?

MS. PSAKI: There is nothing new. Nothing has changed as it relates to her travel or the travel of the delegation.

Go ahead.

Q Earlier today, the President said he wasn't sure whether Facebook had done enough since last week to combat misinformation. Is there anything that the White House can point to generally that perhaps indicates that companies are getting the message?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's a -- as I, kind of, started off in response to Josh, I would just go back to the point that our fight is not with one social media platform; it is with the virus. And we have a role, who -- everybody has a role in combating misinformation.

In terms of monitoring whether there have been steps that have been taken, I mean, there are things that you all can assess. There's no secret monitoring, right? You all can assess as media organizations and companies as well. Do you have access to information from these platforms as to who is receiving misinformation? I don't think that information has been released. Do you know how the algorithms are working at any of these platforms? I don't think that information has been released.

But again, this is not about one platform. This is about misinformation that we're seeing travel around, into the minds -- the inboxes, the minds, the -- of individuals, of people around the country -- inaccurate information that is preventing people from taking the step to getting vaccinated. And that is, of course, a public health concern for us.

Q One quick follow-up, just to button it down: On the Senate calendar for Wednesday --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah?

Q So, the White House has no pause at this point about going forward with the cloture vote on Wednesday?

MS. PSAKI: It is the decision of the Leader -- of Leader Schumer on the timing and schedule of the Senate votes.

I will note, again, that it has been about four weeks since the President and bipartisan members stood outside together and announced an agreement. Lots of work has happened. Lots of good work together -- bipartisan work -- has happened, but we believe it's time to move forward with -- with this vote with congressional action.

Go ahead, Anne.

Q Two quickly on Guantanamo, and then I have one other thing. Can you be a little more precise about what the President's timeline is for closure of Guantanamo? For example, does he think, as some advocates have suggested, that it should be closed in this, his first year in office? If not, does he have a deadline?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a new deadline to outline here for you today.

Q So, just closure when it can be closed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, Anne, there are several components of this process. It includes notifications and consultations with Congress. It's not something where one individual, even the President of the United States, can do it on his own.

Q And then on military commissions, 10 of the remaining 39 detainees are eligible for military commission prosecution. As you know, the chief prosecutor has retired with no announcement of a replacement ahead of the first major trial of the Biden administration under that protocol. What is the administration's plan for military commissions? And does the President continue to believe that it is an appropriate way to deal with the remaining detainees?

MS. PSAKI: I -- nothing has changed about the appropriateness of -- or his view -- our view, the President's view of the appropriateness of the commissions. I can certainly check with the Department of Defense and national security team if there's additional --

Q And lastly, there's some new Havana Syndrome cases or suspected cases. Is the administration now prepared to say that it believes Russia is responsible for this string of attacks? And what is the President doing to protect U.S. diplomats and others from these kinds of attacks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the NSC -- the National Security Council -- is coordinating a full review of intelligence reporting to ascertain whether there may be previously unreported incidents that fit a broader pattern.

At this time, we still don't know the cause of these incidents or whether they constitute an attack of some kind by a foreign actor. These are areas of active inquiry, something that our intelligence community is working on and very focused on.

Go ahead

Q I'm, thanks so much

Q JEN, THANKS SO MUCH.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The infrastructure framework: If it fails to advance on Wednesday, what's the backup plan? Is the President committed to making sure there is a bipartisan component, or will Democrats go it alone?

MS. PSAKI: We're not quite there yet. There is a lot of good work that's happened. Two days is a lifetime in Washington, so I don't think we're going to make predictions of the death of the infrastructure package.

Q Can you share some more about what possible payfors the President's team has proposed that might fall into the category of things Republicans have not already rejected and that the White House has not already rejected?

MS. PSAKI: I understand the question, certainly. I -- those conversations and discussions are having -- are being had among the bipartisan group that is finalizing this piece of legislation.

And while there was agreement, of course, on the support for the IRS step that would have just ensured that some of the wealthiest Americans paid what they owed in taxes, some have backed away from that.

There are other ways that they're discussing. We're open to alternatives -- very open to alternatives from this end, but we'll let those conversations happen privately and be supportive of them from our end.

Go ahead.

Q Another payfors question: The President was, of course, insistent that the payfors not include an increase in the gas tax, but the agreement does rely on things like public-private partnerships that typically use tolls to pay for the infrastructure.

So can you talk about the difference in user fees? Is it -- why -- why is tolling and other user fees okay, but gas taxes are not as a mechanism for being for some of this?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, his fundamental base point is that we can't raise taxes for individuals making less than \$400,000 a year. In terms of the specific tolling payfor, I'd have to get more specific details on that. But in his view, nothing violates his commitment on the \$400,000.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. The American Academy of Pediatrics today recommended that everyone wear a mask in schools this fall, regardless of their vaccination status -- that that's the only way to keep kids safe.

The CDC guidance does not go that far. It says if you are vaccinated, you can go without a mask, but locals could decide universal masking.

We've heard you say repeatedly that the President leans on his trusted medical and health advisors, but would the President like to see masking in all schools this fall?

MS. PSAKI: The President is going to rely on the recommendations of the CDC, and also local school districts will make their own decisions based on the public avail- -- publicly available health guidelines. That's always how it's worked, and I think it will continue to work that way moving forward.

Q Dr. Fauci, today, on CNN gave an interview, and he said that these different recommendations -- the Pediatric Association, the CDC, local jurisdictions -- that these types of recommendations can be confusing because they are conflicting or different in some places. What does the White House say to Americans and to parents who may be confused

coming or different in some places. What does the White House say to Americans and to parents who may be confused hearing one thing this morning from the AAP, knowing the CDC has something different. How do you sort through all of that?

MS. PSAKI: As a parent myself, it can be confusing. I think we acknowledge that. We rely, from the federal government, on the guidance of the CDC, and that's how we make recommendations on public health issues from the federal government.

There will be different decisions made by school districts, just like there will be different decisions made by local communities. We certainly understand and recognize that, but we will continue to rely on the CDC for guidelines and guidance.

Go ahead.

Q So, now that caseload numbers are rising with the Delta variant, is there something that the Biden administration wished it had done differently to avoid getting to this point, to get us to a better position by now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't know that there were many people who were predicting different impacts of different variants over time. I mean, the steps that we took -- we ensured there was enough vaccine across the country and in communities to make sure anybody who wanted to get vaccinated could get vaccinated. We've invested in local messengers to ensure that trusted voices are getting out into local communities. We've relied on tactics that we've seen work effectively, whether it's mobile units or empowering and engaging and funding doctors and medical experts to get out into local communities.

We also always knew there would be ups and downs in the fight against a virus that is evolving and changing. And that's one of the reasons that we've been calling out misinformation -- the impact of misinformation.

I mean, we've seen -- just over the last couple of days, there was a poll that showed that about 20 percent of the public thinks that microchips are embedded in vaccines. Now, we all know that's inaccurate and not true. But why does 20 percent of the public think it? Is it the one platform's fault? No. Is it the outlets' fault? No. But we all have a responsibility to make sure accurate information is out there.

So that's one -- that is our effort to make sure people know they need to be informed and be thoughtful about information they're getting and the sources of it.

Q One question on the cybersecurity issue. Obviously, the attribution to China today on the ransomware attack -- does the United States use ransomware attacks in its cyber-offensive programs?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything about our intelligence or use of cyber act- -- or actions or intelligence that I'm going to convey from here.

Go ahead.

Q Following up about misinformation --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead. I'll go to you at -- well, let me just go like that. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Does the President believe that those who mislead Congress should be prosecuted?

MS. PSAKI: Who mislead Congress?

Q Yeah. I mean, it's the Department of Justice's decision not to prosecute Wilbur Ross. Just wondering if there's a general rule of whether he feels he should be prosecuted if they mislead Congress.

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the Department of Justice on that case. I don't have any more details from here.

Go ahead.

Q A follow-up on misinformation on social media. I heard you say that all options are on the table, including maybe legal. Would that mean potential legal action against the 12 that have come of concern for misinformation?

MS. PSAKI: All I was conveying is I'm not taking -- I think the question was about legislative action, and I said that's up to Congress and I'm not here to take options off of the table. That's Congress's purview to determine how they're going to move forward.

Q (Inaudible.) And a follow-up: Does that mean if it is up to the purview of Congress that the administration or President Biden is seeing Section 230 a little differently -- reforms to Section 230 that protect social media companies for third-party information?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I think the President has been pretty clear in the past that he believes there's a responsibility of all platforms, including social media platforms, about the information that is traveling on their sites, but I don't have anything new -- nothing new about his position on that issue.

Go ahead, Francesca.

Q Thanks, Jen. Quick point of clarification on immigration first, though.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is the pathway to citizenship that the President supports in the budget bill for all undocumented immigrants? Or is it the more narrow group of TPS holders, essential workers, DREAMers, as well as farm laborers?

MS. PSAKI: We'll let Senate leaders put out the specifics in the reconciliation bill. We certainly support the -- using the reconciliation package as a -- as a platform and a forum for moving immigration protections forward, but we'll let leaders in Congress speak to what's included.

Q Okay. And on voting rights, is the White House worried that if new federal voting legislation does not pass before August 6th, which is the anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, that it won't happen before next November?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we draw that timeline conclusion, no.

Go ahead. Oh, go ahead, Asma. Go ahead. Go ahead, Asma.

Q Okay, sure. On immigration, some leading immigration advocates have suggested they do intend -- expect the Supreme Court to uphold Judge Hanen's ruling on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. At this point, does the administration have any other options to protect DACA or DREAMer kids? Or is, really, a congressional route the only route that you all see?

MS. PSAKI: I think, as the President's statement made clear, a congressional route is the way to make it permanent. And certainly, our Department of Justice has also indicated their intention to fight this effort even after the ruling on Friday as well.

Q So, any interim actions, I guess, before Congress were to act, specifically on the DACA program?

MS. PSAKI: I think, again, as the statement made clear, congressional action is the way to make it permanent. And that's

something the President has long supported and will continue to advocate for.

Go ahead.

Q Going back on voting rights real quick, I spoke with Texas State Representative Bowers this morning, who now says it's actually six members who have COVID that are in the delegation. But she said that they are worried that nothing is going to come from the administration by that August 6th -- when (inaudible) ends.

And so she's wondering: Is there any kind of movement that we can see from the President coming out by that time? I know we still don't -- you know, we don't know if it's going -- anything on the schedule, but is there anything that he's planning to say or do?

MS. PSAKI: Do you mean the passage of the Voting Rights -- of the bill? Or what would do you mean exactly?

Q On --

MS. PSAKI: Well, what are they -- are they expecting in terms of the passage of the legislation or what are --

Q Exactly. She's wor- -- they're worried that nothing is going to happen by August the 6th, and so that was a big concern when I spoke with her this morning, that there's no movement that's going to be coming from the administration.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it would require Congress passing the For the People Act for the President to sign it into law. He can't -- that's -- the action would be first on Congress, not on the President.

Q But him saying anything -- coming out and saying, "I know we've already talked about the filibuster like 50 million times..."

MS. PSAKI: Beyond the speech he gave last week?

Q Yes. That is exactly what they are --

MS. PSAKI: I think he will continue to advocate for voting rights as a fundamental right for people across the country. That is something he has -- gave a major speech on six days ago, and he will continue to look for opportunities to elevate that moving forward as well. Absolutely.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I have a follow up to Peter's question about Trump --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- and I have my own vaccine question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q In my follow up, even if the administration doesn't partner with the former President, would it consider highlighting or acknowledging, in a greater way, his role in creating the vaccines to assure the rural voters who still support President Trump and are hesitant to get the vaccine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you're -- do you have data to suggest that that's the issue that's preventing people from getting vaccinated?

Q Well, we're seeing that the communities -- the communities that have the lowest vaccination rates did seem to vote for President Trump.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. But what I'm asking you is if information related to whether or not the former President got credit is leading people not to get vaccinated, or is it information like microchips in vaccines and it causing fertility issues, causing health issues. Because you're drawing a few conclusions there that I haven't seen in data, but maybe you have that information to provide.

Q No, but I think it's just -- it's a -- I think it's an issue -- I mean, I think it's a common sense that these are people who supported him. These are people who are hesitant to get vaccinated. I don't think it takes a lot to draw the conclusion.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me -- let me be very clear. Our -- our objective is to ensure all Americans will get vaccinated. That would be -- of course, we'd love -- we'd love that. Democrats, Republicans, independents -- it's not a political issue to us. The virus does not -- (the Press Secretary swats at a fly) -- sorry -- the virus does not look at people's party affiliation. We recognize that. The President is going to govern for all people.

What I'm conveying to you is you're jumping to a few conclusions that I don't think data backs up, in terms of what the impacts are. And what we're seeing is that misinformation, traveling in a range of means -- whether it's social media platforms, some forms of media, some elected officials -- is having the biggest factor as it relates to individuals not getting vaccinated because people don't have access to accurate information.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The President is about to meet with the King of Jordan shortly. This visit comes at a pivotal time, considering what's happened in Jordan, the constant attack on U.S. forces in Syria and Iraq, and the Israeli government, to name a few. Does that mean that the White House is paying more attention now to the White -- to the Middle East? And what do you hope this visit will achieve?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we -- we have been paying quite a bit of attention, we would argue, to the Middle East on a range of issues that you've highlighted, Nadia, whether it is the attacks that we've seen on bases in parts of the Middle East, or whether it is our desire, of course, to -- to even move forward on lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

And Jordan has been a key partner for some time, long before President Biden took office, to the United States, through many Presidents, in these efforts and these endeavors.

So, during -- (the Press Secretary swats at a fly) -- sorry, this is an aggressive fly. During the meeting -- (laughter) -- during the meeting, today -- I apologize, this is a very --

Q It's D.C.

MS. PSAKI: It is.

During the meeting today, we hope this will be an opportunity to highlight the enduring and strategic partnership between the United States and Jordan -- a key security partner.

It's also an opportunity to discuss the many challenges facing the Middle East and showcase Jordan's leadership role in promoting peace and stability in the region. And certainly, we expect that everything from Middle East peace, to security in the region to be points of discussion -- to Syria -- to be points of discussion during the meeting this afternoon. We'll have a readout after the meeting concludes.

Go ahead.

Q Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q (Inaudible.) Oh, go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, I m sorry. We ll go to your next. Go ahead. Yeah.

Q Let me take you to Ethiopia.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The U.S. and the other countries have been supporting and end to the fighting in the Tigray region. And as the first step to end the fighting, the government in Ethiopia declared a unilateral ceasefire for the troops from the region. But TPLF -- the Tigray Liberation Front -- rejected the ceasefire, calling it a "sick joke." And the TPLF continues the war, especially by deploying child soldiers in this conflict. And if the war continues there, thousands and thousands people will die. What is the Biden s administration statement on TPLF's refusal to accept the ceasefire and the use of children as soldiers? Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly we take security and stability in Ethiopia quite seriously. I would point you to the State Department. I know my colleague Ned Price is briefing later this afternoon and giving you more details on what are work is, and engagement, and our view from the U.S. government.

Go ahead.

Q Is the White House seeking any meetings with social media companies when you re talking about misinformation?

MS. PSAKI: We have been in regular touch from the beginning of the administration as -- because we knew from the beginning that misinformation or disinformation and how it would travel out there into the world was going to be a challenge. So that has been something that has been ongoing since the beginning of the administration.

Q I also wanted to ask you -- someone asked earlier about Republicans backing off the idea of increasing funding for the IRS.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q When you re talking about that and the President being open to other proposals, are you talking within the framework - the bipartisan framework or the reconciliation package or both?

MS. PSAKI: The bipartisan framework. That s the deal we re kind of -- that is the discussion with Republicans. Of course, we would welcome Republican support for the reconciliation package, but we re talking about specifically the payfors on the bipartisan infrastructure framework.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you. Will the White House publicly release information on posts that it considers misinformation on vaccines that it s asked Facebook to block?

MS. PSAKI: First of all, we've not asked Facebook to block any individual posts. The way this works is that there are trending -- there are trends that are out there on social media platforms. You're aware of them. We're aware of them. Anyone in the public can be aware of them.

There's also data that we look at that many media platforms, like many of you, also look at data in terms of trends and you report on it, which is not -- to be expected, given the number of people who get their information from social media.

It's up to social media platforms to determine what their application is of their own rules and regulations. And so we just certainly raise where we have concerns about information that's inaccurate that is traveling out there in whatever platform it's traveling on.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Does the White House welcome the news that the Haitian Interim Prime Minister, Claude Joseph, is stepping aside and handing power to Ariel Henry?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have been encouraging, for several days now, Haitian political actors to work together and find a political way forward. So we've certainly seen news reports; we have not received an official notification through our embassy, but we welcome reports that Haitian political actors are working together to determine a path forward.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thank you, Jen. As you know, the leader of the Belarusian opposition, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, is in the country right now.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q She's meeting with Jake Sullivan; she's meeting with Secretary of State Blinken. Any chance that she will meet with President Biden?

MS. PSAKI: So, I think somebody asked this question a --

Q I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: -- little bit -- oh no, it's okay. It's okay. It's okay. She will be meeting with senior White House officials. There is not currently a meeting scheduled for her with the President.

Oh, go, Josh. What's happening?

Q I just wanted to thank you, Jen, but, as a point of privilege, wanted to jump in: Canada announced it's going to reopen its borders for U.S. citizens who are vaccinated on August 9th. Does the United States plan to reciprocate?

MS. PSAKI: We are continuing to review our travel restrictions. Any decisions about reopening travel will be guided by our public health and medical experts. We take this incredibly seriously, but we look and are guided by our own medical experts and not in a reci- -- we're not -- I wouldn't look at it through a reciprocal intention.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ah- -- Go ahead, in the middle. Yeah, go ahead.

Q Thank you. As you know, Senate Republicans have been calling on the President to withdraw his nominee to lead the Bureau of Land Management, Tracy Stone-Manning, over connections to this tree spiking incident in 1989. That escalated

last week with this former Forest Service investigator coming forward with an account that contradicts what she's told senators, as well as a man who was convicted in that case. Have those revelations changed the President's view on that nominee at all?

MS. PSAKI: It has not. He stands by his nominee and looks forward to her getting confirmed.

Go ahead, in the middle.

Q Thanks, Jen. I appreciate it. I just had a quick follow up on the Facebook stuff. Did anybody from the administration this weekend talk with Facebook officials, given the President's comments on Friday?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think it's important for all of you to note that we are not at war with any social media platform; we are at war with the virus --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: -- and we have been in regular touch since the beginning of the administration, as we knew that there are a range of entities, platforms, media organizations, public officials who all have a role in combating misinformation.

This is not personal. It is about fighting a virus that is still killing thousands of people. That's our objective.

Thanks, everyone. Have a great day. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

Q Jen, when will the President open up his East Room events to the full press like every other President?

MS. PSAKI: We'll look forward to seeing you soon, Brian.

1:50 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Opposition Leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 20, 2021 6:27 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2021

**Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with
Opposition Leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus**

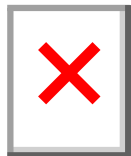
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with democratic opposition leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya of Belarus. Mr. Sullivan conveyed American support for the people of Belarus and respect for the courage and determination of the opposition, including Mrs. Tsikhanouskaya, in the struggle for democracy and human rights. The United States, together with partners and allies, will continue to hold the Lukashenka regime accountable for its actions, including through the imposition of sanctions. Mr. Sullivan reiterated the Biden Administration's demand that the Lukashenka regime allow a credible international investigation into the events of May 23, immediately release all political prisoners, and enter into a comprehensive and genuine political dialogue with the leaders of the democratic opposition and civil society groups that leads to the conduct of free and fair Presidential elections under OSCE observation.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 20, 2021 7:15 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2021

Readout by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today in Washington with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani to reaffirm the importance of the strategic partnership between the United States and Qatar. They discussed regional developments, including support for humanitarian efforts in Gaza and advancing the Afghanistan peace process. The two leaders agreed to stay in touch on the range of issues on which the United States and Qatar are cooperating.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan at
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 23, 2021 3:11 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2021

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Haiti

The Presidential Delegation to the funeral of President Moïse is safe and accounted for, and those traveling from Washington, D.C. have arrived safely back in the United States.

The United States remains deeply concerned about the situation on the ground in Haiti. We strongly urge all parties to express themselves peacefully, and call on Haiti's leaders to be clear that their supporters must refrain from violence. In this critical moment, Haiti's leaders must work together and engage in a broad and inclusive dialogue that is reflective of the will of the Haitian people. The Presidential Delegation, led by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and joined by Representative Meeks and Representative Fortenberry, met with senior Haitian officials and civil society leaders and shared this message directly.

The United States will continue to provide requested assistance, including equipment and training, to the Haitian National Police and the Government of Haiti amid ongoing security challenges. Additionally, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security are providing investigative assistance to the Haitian authorities at the request of the Government of Haiti, and will keep working closely with our international partners to support the Haitian government as it seeks to hold accountable those responsible for the assassination of President Moïse.

The United States stands with the people of Haiti in this challenging time.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Readout by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Iranian-American Journalist and Activist Masih Alinejad
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 23, 2021 5:37 PM (UTC-04:00)



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July 23, 2021

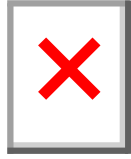
Readout by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Iranian-American Journalist and Activist Masih Alinejad

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Iranian-American journalist and activist Masih Alinejad and her husband Kambiz Foroohar. During the meeting, Mr. Sullivan expressed concern for Ms. Alinejad's family and colleagues who are detained in Iran. He affirmed the U.S. Government's strong continued support for Ms. Alinejad's work to advance universal human rights, particularly her tireless efforts on behalf of women, the Iranian people, and all those unjustly detained by the Iranian government. Mr. Sullivan noted with concern the growing practice of authoritarian regimes such as Iran targeting dissidents, activists, and journalists across international borders, including within the United States. The U.S. Government will continue to strenuously oppose these illegal actions, which violate human rights and threaten the rules-based international order.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on G7 Collaboration and Build Back Better World
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 3, 2021 12:44 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2021

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on G7 Collaboration and Build Back Better World

In June, President Biden—alongside G7 Leaders—announced Build Back Better World, a values-driven, high-standard, transparent, and catalytic infrastructure partnership led by major democracies to meet the enormous infrastructure need in the developing world. Since then, the United States and G7 partners have been undertaking efforts individually and jointly to increase the ambition and impact of our partnership. Today’s G7 Leaders [statement](#) reflects the scope of our collective efforts and coordination since Leaders met in June and our goals for future infrastructure collaboration. Our work with G7 and like-minded partners to narrow the global infrastructure gap will help tackle the climate crisis, drive job creation, support an inclusive economic recovery, advance gender equity and equality, and make investments in health and health security to recover from the current pandemic and prevent future ones.

The G7 statement today comes after the European Commission’s recent Global Gateway launch and in advance of the United States’ Build Back Better World formal launch early next year. At the direction of the President, we are undertaking a whole-of-government effort to assess how to better use the U.S. Government’s development infrastructure toolkit. This includes direct financing tools of the DFC, USAID, MCC, and USTDA as well as other tools within State, Commerce, Treasury, and the Export-Import Bank, mobilizing private capital, and leveraging international financial institutions and like-minded partners’ capabilities to advance progress across Build Back Better World’s focal areas of climate, digital technology, health and gender through transparent and high-standards infrastructure.

We recognize that robust, meaningful partnerships, long-term focus, and sustained investment will be critical to ensure that Build Back Better World, individual efforts by G7 countries and other friends, and our collective G7 partnership to deliver infrastructure that meets the needs of middle and lower-income countries. In discussing infrastructure needs with developing countries across the world, we’ve heard concerns from government officials, industry, labor and civil society about infrastructure that is low-quality, feeds corruption, leaves vulnerable countries trapped in a cycle of debt, or exacerbates environmental degradation. President Biden believes we can offer a better alternative through transparent, sustainable financing that responds to low- and middle-income countries’ needs and upholds high labor and environmental standards, while allowing societies in low- and middle-income countries to prosper and ensure American firms and American workers compete globally on every aspect of infrastructure. In the years ahead, that’s exactly what Build Back Better World will do.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, December 7, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 7, 2021 6:45 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 7, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, December 7, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:03 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hello. All right. Good afternoon. We have our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, joining us for the briefing, who will give a brief opening and then take some questions. And then we'll proceed with a briefing after that.

With that, I'll turn it over to Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks, Jen, and good to see everybody here today.

As you all know, President Biden held a secure video call today with President Putin. The call covered a range of issues, but the main topic was Ukraine.

President Biden was direct and straightforward with President Putin, as he always is. He reiterated America's support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He told President Putin directly that if Russia further invades Ukraine, the United States and our European allies would respond with strong economic measures. We would provide additional defensive materiel to the Ukrainians above and beyond that which we are already providing. And we would fortify our NATO Allies on the eastern flank with additional capabilities in response to such an escalation.

He also told President Putin there s another option: de-escalation and diplomacy.

The United States and our European allies would engage in a discussion that covers larger strategic issues, including our strategic concerns with Russia and Russia s strategic concerns.

We managed to do this at the height of the Cold War, and we developed mechanisms to help reduce instability and increase transparency.

We ve done this in the post-Cold War era through the NATO-Russia Council, the OSCE, and other mechanisms. There s no reason we can t do that forward -- going forward, provided that we are operating in a context of de-escalation rather than escalation.

The United States, as we have been for some time, is also prepared to support efforts to advance the Minsk Agreement in support of the Normandy Format. This could include a ceasefire and confidence-building measures that helps drive the process forward.

As I said before, the discussion between President Biden and President Putin was direct and straightforward. There was a lot of give-and-take. There was no finger-wagging. But the President was crystal clear about where the United States stands on all of these issues.

We believe, from the beginning of this administration, that there is no substitute for direct dialogue between leaders, and that is true in spades when it comes to the U.S.-Russia relationship. So President Biden welcomed the opportunity to engage clearly and directly with President Putin.

Indeed, as President Biden said after his meeting in Geneva in June with President Putin, “Where we have differences, I want President Putin to understand why I say what I say and why I do what I do, and how we ll respond to specific kinds of actions that harm America s interests” and indeed harm our allies’ interests. That s exactly what he did today.

After the call, he spoke with the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, and the UK to debrief them on the call and to consult on the way forward.

Our team is presently debriefing the embassies of NATO members, EU members, and key Indo-Pacific allies.

The President will be speaking shortly with the leaders of both houses of Congress and talking to them about ways in which the administration and the Congress can work together on a bipartisan basis to stand up for American interests and values and stand behind our friends and partners.

And President Biden will be speaking with President Zelenskyy on Thursday, following on yesterday s discussion between President Zelenskyy and Secretary Blinken.

In terms of next steps, the President and President Putin agreed that our teams will follow up on the issues discussed today.

The President and our Europe -- his European colleagues agreed that our teams will work together to ensure that our engagement with Russia going forward both involves and is closely coordinated with European allies and partners so that we are all on the same page.

There s a lot of work to do in the days ahead. As we pursue diplomatic channels, we will also prepare for all contingencies, just as we have been doing for weeks now, including through the preparation of specific responses to Russian escalation should they be required -- specific, robust, clear responses should they be required. That s where things stand as we speak.

And with that, I d be happy to take your questions. Yes.

Q Thank you, Jake. Could you elaborate on what you just said about fortifying allies on the eastern flank there? Is sending U.S. troops to the region on the table here?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, what I'm referring to there is in the event that there is a further invasion into Ukraine, a military escalation in Ukraine, obviously many of our partners on the eastern front, our Baltic allies -- Romania, Poland, other countries -- will be increasingly concerned about the security and territorial integrity of their countries.

They will be seeking, we expect, additional capabilities and potentially additional deployments, and the United States will be looking to respond positively to those things in the event that there is a further incursion into Ukraine.

Q So, is that something the American public should be bracing for -- the possibility of seeing American troops on the ground in that region in the coming weeks and months if Vladimir Putin goes through with this?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't know if I would say "bracing for" since we currently have rotational deployments in the Baltics. We conduct exercises on a regular basis in both Poland and Romania. The presence of American military service members in rotational fashion in these countries is not something new.

The question here is not that -- about whether or not the United States is going to send American service members to the territory of our NATO Allies; we do that as a matter of course.

The question is: What additional capabilities can we provide to ensure that they feel strong and confident in their own sovereignty and territorial integrity? It is those additional capabilities that are on the table in those countries should Russia move in Ukraine in a more decisive way.

Yes.

Q Jake, thanks so much. In the days leading up to this call, the White House and administration officials said repeatedly their assessment so far was that Putin had not made a decision over whether to invade Ukraine. So did President Biden get clarity from him on whether or not that is his intention?

MR. SULLIVAN: We still do not believe that President Putin has made a decision. What President Biden did today was lay out very clearly the consequences if he chooses to move. He also laid out an alternative path -- an alternative path that is fundamentally in keeping with the basic principles and propositions that have guided America in the Euro-Atlantic area for the past 70 years.

And, ultimately, we will see in the days ahead through actions, not through words, what course of action Russia chooses to take.

Q And one quick follow-up --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q In your statement -- sorry, Jake. One quick follow-up. In your statement of the readout of the call, you said that the United -- that President Biden told him the United States was ready to take strong economic measures and other actions if needed. What are those other measures that the United States is prepared to take?

MR. SULLIVAN: I just spelled those out in my opening remarks: both the supply and provision of additional materiel, as well as the additional deployment of assets and capabilities to --

Q Okay, so those are the other ones.

MR. SULLIVAN: -- to NATO members in the event that there's a further incursion.

Q Jake, could you tell us what are the "strong economic measures," and how are they different from the ones you put on Russia in 2014, which didn't deter Russia from taking Crimea? Why will it -- what are they? And why do you think they'll work better this time?

MR. SULLIVAN: I will look you in the eye and tell you, as President Biden looked President Putin in the eye and told him today, that things we did not do in 2014 we are prepared to do now.

Now, in terms of the specifics, we would prefer to communicate that directly to the Russians, to not negotiate in public, to not telegraph our punches. But we are laying out for the Russians in some detail the types of measures that we have in mind. We are also coordinating very closely with our European allies on that at a level of deep specificity.

We have experts from the Treasury Department, the State Department, and the National Security Council in daily contact with the key capitals and with Brussels to work through that package of measures. But I think it is not profitable for us to lay out the specifics of it standing here at this podium today.

Yes.

Q Thank you. Did President Putin ask for President Biden to commit to not allow NATO -- or Ukraine to join NATO? And did President Biden make any kinds of concessions, such as a reduced U.S. presence, or any commitment on NATO and Ukraine's membership?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not going to characterize President Putin's side of the conversation and -- or go into details in terms of what they discussed, because I think they need to have that space to be able to have a robust exchange.

But I will tell you clearly and directly he made no such commitments or concessions. He stands by the proposition that countries should be able to freely choose who they associate with.

Q And then, on the materiel that you said that you're going to send -- following up on Kaitlan's question -- how quickly can that be delivered?

MR. SULLIVAN: We have an ongoing pipeline that delivers various forms of defensive assistance to Ukraine. Indeed there was the delivery of defensive assistance to Ukraine just very recently, and that will continue.

So, it really depends on the type or form, but it should -- this should not be thought of as a circumstance in which you completely turn off the dial or turn on the dial; there is an ongoing pipeline. Whether that pipeline needs additional supplements as we go forward will depend on how circumstances evolve.

Yes?

Q Jake, thank you so much. You have said that the administration will take action if Russia does escalate militarily. Satellite images show that hundreds of Russian troops are amassing on the border with Ukraine. Isn't there already a military escalation underway? Why wait to take action?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, our view on this is that the fundamental object of the policy the United States is pursuing in lockstep with our European allies is to deter a Russian military invasion of further territory of Ukraine.

And the measures we have put on the table are designed to show the Russian government that should it choose to engage in such an invasion, there will be those consequences. That, for us, is a clear and decisive laydown.

And we also believe that there should be an alternative pathway by which we can make progress on diplomacy in the

Donbas, through the Minsk Agreement and the Normandy Format, and by which we can address NATO and American security concerns and Russian security concerns through a larger mechanism consistent with the way we've operated over the course of the past 30 years.

Q And, Jake, some Republicans are accusing President Biden of being too weak on President Putin. They cite the fact that sanctions were eased on Nord Stream 2 and the withdrawal from Afghanistan, which was widely criticized. How do you respond to that criticism that President Biden is being too weak with Mr. Putin?

MR. SULLIVAN: I make three points. The first is that Vladimir Putin, standing behind then-President Medvedev in 2008, invaded Georgia when we had 150,000 or more troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. So, the connection between our deployments in foreign wars and the calculus of Russian leaders when it comes to the post-Soviet space, there's not good evidence to support that.

Number two, when it comes to Nord Stream 2, the fact is that gas is not currently flowing through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which means that it's not operating, which means that it's not leverage for Putin. Indeed, it is leverage for the West, because if Vladimir Putin wants to see gas flow through that pipeline, he may not want to take the risk of invading Ukraine.

And then, number three, the President has shown over the course of the past eight months that he will do what he says he's going to do in response to Russian actions; so, President Putin can count on that. He said he would impose costs for Navalny, he said he would impose costs for SolarWinds; he did those things. And if Russia chooses to take these actions in Ukraine, he will do the same.

He's not doing this to saber-rattle. He's not doing it to make idle threats. He's doing it to be clear and direct with both the Russians and with our European allies about the best way forward. And we think this stands the best chance alongside a pathway to de-escalate, to avert a potential crisis with respect to an invasion of Ukraine.

Yeah.

Q Russia suggested in recent days starting talks on a new European security pact. Did Putin bring this up? And did President Biden agree to start those talks?

MR. SULLIVAN: Again, I'm not going to get into the details or characterize what President Putin said. And I will say that formal agreements or formal treaties were not on the table in the conversation today.

But the straightforward notion that the United States, flanked by our European allies and partners, would be prepared to talk to Russia about strategic issues in the European theater -- that was on the table and we are prepared to do that, as we've been prepared to do that throughout both the Cold War and post-Cold War eras.

What the right mechanism for that is, what the agenda for that is, and what comes of that -- that is all to be worked out as we see how things proceed in the coming days.

Yes.

Q The news of the buildup has been going on since late October. Why hasn't the U.S. given additional materiel to Ukraine yet? This has been escalating for weeks. Why wait?

MR. SULLIVAN: As I just pointed out in response to an earlier question, we are continuing to deliver defensive materiel assistance to Ukraine. We have done so just in the past few days.

Yes.

Q Jake, the Kremlin readout said that President Putin proposed to President Biden that both lift all restrictions on diplomatic missions that have been imposed in recent years. Can you say whether that's something President Biden is open to or whether it's something he spoke to on the call?

MR. SULLIVAN: President Biden is open to creating functioning diplomatic missions in both countries, but he didn't make any specific commitments with respect to the best pathway to do that. What he said was that, as leaders, President Biden and President Putin should direct their teams to figure out how we ensure that the embassy platform in Moscow is able to function effectively and as we believe the embassy platform here in Washington is able to operate effectively for the Russians.

Q And just to follow up on Nord Stream, have you sent any message or have any meetings with the incoming German government on this issue? Are you urging the new incoming government to essentially threaten to pull support for this pipeline if there is an incursion -- a further incursion into Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: We've had intensive discussions with both the outgoing and incoming German governments on the issue of Nord Stream 2 in the context of a potential invasion. I'm not going to characterize it beyond that, other than it is an object of great priority for the Biden administration.

Yes.

Q Would President Biden reverse his waiver on --

Q Thank you, Jake. Thanks. I'm sorry. So, the -- obviously, the summit is being watched by a number of other adversaries, including Chinese President Xi Jinping. Some observers have described a nightmare scenario where President Putin invades Ukraine and also, simultaneously, President Xi uses force to reunify Taiwan with China. Is the U.S. prepared to deal with such a scenario?

MR. SULLIVAN: The United States is going to take every action that we can take, from the point of view of both deterrence and diplomacy, to make sure that the Taiwan scenario you just described never happens and to try to avert the invasion and deter the invasion into Ukraine. That is the object of our policy right now. Those are the steps we are taking. That's what President Biden is doing in the messages that he's sending to President Putin.

And with respect to Taiwan, the sum total of the efforts we've undertaken over the course of the past eight months in the Indo-Pacific have also all been geared towards avoiding any kind of scenario where China chooses to invade.

Yes.

Q Was there any promise from the Russian side to use leverage to change Iran on its position?

MR. SULLIVAN: The President and President Putin had a good discussion on the Iran issue. It was productive. Russia and the United States actually worked well together, even in tense circumstances back in the 2014-2015 period, to produce the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. This is an area where Russia and the United States can continue to consult closely to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

Q Why did Ukrainian officials first deny that there was any troop buildup when Washington started putting out the information, and then changed their tune after the meeting with Blinken?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I'm not going to characterize the decision making of the Ukrainian government, only to say that we are in daily contact with senior officials in the Ukrainian government. I'm in nearly daily contact with my counterpart in the Ukrainian government. And we believe that we are seeing a common threat picture here.

And our message to our friends in the Ukrainian government, as our message was today to President Putin, is that the

United States supports the Minsk process, wants to see progress made towards a ceasefire, towards confidence-building measures. And that is the best way forward.

Yeah.

Q Jake, is the world safer -- is the world safe--

(Cross-talk.)

Q Hold on a minute. Is the world safer today after that conversation between the two leaders or less safe? And then I have a follow-up as to your answer.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, all I will say is that the ultimate metric for whether the world is safer or not is facts on the ground and actions taken, in this case, by Russia. Let's see.

We are prepared to deal with any contingency, as I said at the outset. And I'm not going to make predictions or characterizations. I'm only going to say that President Biden will continue to do all of the necessary prudent planning for a variety of different pathways that could unfold in the weeks ahead.

Yes.

Q Jake, there is an impression in the Middle East that this administration is going to redo the Obama deal, lifting sanctions and freeze millions of dollars to this regime that is going to be spread to the proxies like Hezbollah. Hezbollah became stronger and stronger from the money that Obama gave to this particular militia. So, is it -- this going to happen? Are you going to address the proxies of Iran this time at the table of the negotiation?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I'd make three points in response to that. Since Donald Trump made the decision to pull the United States out of the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2018, Hezbollah has continued to menace Lebanon and the region. Iran's proxies in Iraq and Syria and Yemen have continued to move forward. So, not being in the nuclear deal has hardly been a solution to the proxy.

Second, nothing about the nuclear deal stops the United States' capacity to deal with those proxies. And we are prepared to do so.

In fact, in response to attacks on American forces in Iraq, the United States has twice, under President Biden, taken action -- direct military action in response to those proxies, in addition to undertaking sanctions.

And third, ultimately, an Iran with a nuclear weapon is going to be a greater menace in partnerships with its proxies than Iran without one. And so it is our determination to ensure they never get a nuclear weapon, and diplomacy is the best way forward.

Yes.

Q Can I follow up on Iran, please? You know, the Iranians announced they are going back to negotiations on Thursday. The administration criticized them last week, and they said they were not serious -- in fact, they reversed the progress. What makes you think that -- apart from hope -- that actually they are serious this time? And how much of a time are you willing to do it?

And secondly, your counterpart -- you negotiate with your Allies and you coordinate with them -- your counterpart in the UAE is visiting Tehran as we speak. So, is this a unilateral effort from the Emirates to do it or -- to reach Tehran -- or do you think this is a coordinated effort with the United States?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'll -- I'll put this quite simply: The more Iran demonstrates a lack of seriousness at the negotiating table, the more unity there is among the P5+1 and the more they will be exposed as the isolated party in this negotiation.

So really, the ball is in Iran's court as to whether it wants to show up and demonstrate that it's going to be serious or not.

Q Looking forward to the meeting with -- or the conversation with President Zelenskyy later this week, are there any steps or compromises Ukraine might be able to make to find a way to end this peacefully?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, again, as I mentioned before, we're in constant contact with senior levels of the Ukrainian government. Secretary Blinken just spoke with President Zelenskyy yesterday.

I'm not going to characterize the specifics of their proposals, but they have come forward with constructive ideas for how to move the diplomacy forward. We're encouraging that. Those are steps they're taking. And they're asking the United States to support them in trying to get towards a ceasefire and then, ultimately, get down the track of diplomatic resolution.

We believe that that is good and positive. And I believe that President Biden and President Zelenskyy will discuss that diplomatic pathway when they speak on Thursday.

Q Can I just ask you about Nord Stream 2? You said Putin should -- you know, if he wants to risk the pipeline not being turned on. Have you made clear to allies that you will, in fact, sanction the remaining entities that are involved in that project if there is an invasion? And have you received any assurances from Germany?

When Chancellor Merkel was here, there was discussion about what to do if Russia weaponized those gas supplies. But nothing came of that, even though there were some pretty -- there was some saber-rattling by the Russians in recent months.

Have you now received assurances from Germany that they will, in fact, not proceed with that?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, in response to an earlier question, I said I wasn't going to get into the specific sanctions measures that we intend to impose, although we will be communicating those directly to our Russian counterparts and we will be working through them detail-by-detail with our European counterparts.

What I will tell you is that the subject of the future of Nord Stream 2, in the context of an invasion of Ukraine by Russia in the coming weeks, is a topic of utmost priority. It has been discussed thoroughly. I'm going to leave it at that for today.

Q Mr. Sullivan, how will the tensions between the United States and Russia can affect African countries?

And my second question is: How do you summarize this meeting? It was productive, it was good, or not?

MR. SULLIVAN: It was a useful meeting. It was useful in the sense that it allowed President Biden to lay out, in clear and direct and candid terms, where the United States stands on this issue. And to do so having coordinated closely with his allies and partners beforehand. And also to talk about a potential way forward.

Q And how --

MR. SULLIVAN: Now, on the question of African partners -- this is true the world over: The attempt to change the territories of another country by force should be vigorously opposed by every country in the world, including every country in Africa.

I'll just take one more question.

(Cross-talk.)

Q What was Putin's demeanor over the course of the two hours? Did he signal any willingness to back down?

MR. SULLIVAN: Again, I just make it a practice not to characterize the other side's position. He can speak for himself. I would say that his demeanor, like President Biden's demeanor, was direct and straightforward.

And again, as I said in my opening remarks, this was a real discussion. It was give and take. It was not speeches. It was back and forth. President Putin was deeply engaged. And I'm going to leave it at that in terms of trying to characterize where he is.

All I can tell you is: There is a task in coming out of that meeting by the two Presidents to their teams to start talking about how we might think about the diplomatic path.

The President made clear throughout that diplomacy has to come in the context of de-escalation rather than escalation. And now we will watch what unfolds in the coming days.

Thank you, guys.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Thank you, Jake. You're welcome back anytime -- I think I can speak for the group.

Okay, I just have a couple of items for all of you at the top. I wanted to just preview tomorrow: The President will be headed to Kansas City, Missouri, where he will continue highlighting how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law delivers for Missourians by rebuilding roads and bridges, upgrading public transit, replacing water infrastructure, and creating good-paying union jobs.

The trip is a part of the President and the administration's nationwide tour that demonstrates how the President is following through on his promise to forge bipartisan consensus and prove our democracy can deliver big wins for the American people.

And while he's there, he's going to be engaging with Governor Mike Parson, Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, Representative Sharice Davids and Emanuel Cleaver, and a number of other state and local elected officials.

He's going to be visiting the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, and he will discuss how the historic investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide more than \$670 million in formula funding for public transportation, making commutes easier so people can get to work and home faster.

The investments will also help -- also help Kansas City's ambitious "zero fare, zero emissions" plan to reduce pollution and increase opportunity by providing free public transit.

He'll also discuss how the investments will help repair some of the 2,190 bridges and over 7,570 miles of highway in poor condition -- with Missouri receiving \$7 billion for highways and bridges, and nearly 30 percent increase in federal funding.

And finally, he'll talk about how -- the support -- this bill will help support Kansas City's upgrades to its old and overwhelmed sewer system, which could cost the city \$1.4 billion to complete. Missouri will receive more than \$860 million to improve water infrastructure that will help deliver clean drinking water in every community.

I also wanted to note that, today, the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued a new health advisory calling for immediate action to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. No child should feel like they have to go through a mental health battle alone. Students and families should feel supported, confident, and empowered. Everyone has a role to play in protecting and promoting the mental health of our youth.

This Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health lays out a series of recommendations that individuals; families; community organizers -- community organizations -- exercise; social media companies; governments; and others can

community organizers, community organizations, excuse me, social media companies, governments, and others can take to improve mental health for children and adults.

I also wanted to note that the Vice President -- also she hosted a summit to mark -- today -- to mark the first-ever White House Maternal Health Day of Action. She issued a nationwide call to action, to both public and private sector, to help improve mental health -- maternal health outcomes in the United States.

In conjunction with the summit, the Vice President announced a new Department of Health and Human Services report showing the impact of pregnancy-related Medicaid coverage and that the Centers for Medicaid -- Medicare and Medicaid Services is proposing the establishment of Birthing Friendly Hospital Designation and guidance to states on how to cover Medicaid postpartum services for a year.

Aamer, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks. Does the White House have any reaction to a federal judge in Georgia's decision to block the administration from enforcing the COVID-19 mandate -- vaccine mandate for employees or federal contractors?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the reason that we proposed these -- these requirements is that we know they work, and we are confident in our ability legally to make these happen across the country.

As you know, the federal government -- the largest employer in the country -- we have successfully implemented these requirements in a way that has not only boosted vaccinations in the federal government with more than 92 percent of people vaccinated but also helps avoid disruptions and operations.

And our implementation sends a clear message to businesses, including federal contractors, that similar measures will protect their workforce, protect their customers, and protect our communities.

I'd also note that a number of businesses across the country have also implemented these requirements -- vaccinating or testing requirements, depending on the organization.

And the CEO of Lockheed said last week that they're at -- they are at over 95 percent on track to be compliant and are well on their way to be able to maintain operations.

So, I would just note, of course, the Department of Justice will vigorously defend this in court, but we know it works. That's why President and the administration will continue pressing forward.

Q And how is the AWS outage affecting the government? And has the White House had any -- gained any insight or understanding of cause?

MS. PSAKI: We have, of course, seen those reports, Aamer, which I know were just out earlier today. I don't have anything new to update you on, but we can check and see later this afternoon if there is.

Q And finally, on the arrest in France of the Khashoggi suspect -- I'm just wondering if the White House had any immediate reaction?

MS. PSAKI: We did see the report, but I don't have any additional comment from here.

Go ahead.

Q I just wanted to ask you about the debt ceiling. It looks like there was some movement on that. Can you tell us whether you -- whether the President has spoken with McConnell -- Senate Majority Leader McConnell on that issue? And if you feel like you've kind of gotten over that hurdle, does that open the door to other compromises and more bipartisanship?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has always felt the door is open. He's never closed it.

But I will say, we are heartened to see the progress being made today and hope for quick consideration so we can focus on the President's economic agenda, his Build Back Better Agenda that will lower costs for Americans across the country as early as next year -- childcare, eldercare, healthcare, et cetera. And this would leave space to spend time and focus on that.

We have seen Leader Schumer and Senator McConnell engage in discussions in good faith to move this forward, to prevent a default. That certainly is a good sign, and today was a positive development. We'll, of course, defer to Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi on the legislative mechanics and the path forward.

Q Since we're on the subject of Build Back Better, can you map out for us what's going to be happening over the next few weeks? Like, what is your sense of a timetable for a decision on that?

And the one issue that seems to have sort of fallen out is paid leave. I realize that, you know, there are other priorities that are in the measure, but can you just say what you will do to worry about paid leave going down that road then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the President absolutely wants paid leave to be law in the land. He proposed it in his package. We have fought for it in negotiations. We also fully recognize we need every single Democrat to support this bill in order to move it forward.

I would note for the first part of your question, Andrea, in terms of what will be happening, I would really point you to the "Dear Colleague" letter that Leader Schumer put out yesterday, which outlined in great detail what's happening behind the scenes, whether it is the ongoing discussions between Senate committees and the "Byrd-proofing" process, as we call it, to review and consider components of the Build Back Better Agenda and whether they will pass the "Byrd Bath." That is ongoing; the parliamentarian is clearly reviewing that.

I would note that, as he noted in his letter, that on Friday and Saturday, 8 of the 12 Senate committees that were given reconciliation instruction submitted their final Senate texts to the parliamentarian, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Senate Republicans.

So this is a process that is, behind the scenes, largely -- an important component of moving legislation forward.

But I would also note that Leader Schumer conveyed in this letter, and has repeatedly conveyed, his intention and objective of moving this forward in advance of Christmas. We support that, and we're encouraged by that effort and that leadership.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A few follow-ups on the call today that happened. One, when it comes to the calls that the President had last night with European allies, did he get commitments from them that they would, in conjunction and coordination with the United States, implement those economic sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: We're not going to speak for them, Kaitlan. Obviously, they can speak for what they have any intention to do. But there is agreement about the need to impose strong and significant economic consequences if Russia were to invade -- invade Ukraine.

Obviously, that may look different from country to country. And we're focused on what our objectives are. The President laid those out to -- in those calls yesterday and in a follow-up call again today, and we'll let them speak for themselves on what they have the intention of doing.

O And Jake just made clear that the President delivered some warnings to Putin today. What is, in his view, the timeline

that he's looking at if Putin does heed those warnings and does deescalate? What's the timeframe for that?

MS. PSAKI: For when Putin might deescalate?

Q How long does he think that would take? What's he -- is he looking at the next several days, the next several weeks?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give you an assessment for that. That's really up to President Putin. Our objective is to prevent Russia and President Putin from invading Ukraine. So, of course, we want them to deescalate, but that was the clear bottom line of the message.

Q And one last question, just logistics: Is the President going to attend the funeral for Bob Dole?

MS. PSAKI: He, of course, considered former Senator Bob Dole a friend, somebody he admired greatly, as you saw in the statement, but I will let them announce any specifics of the plans for the funeral.

Go ahead.

Q Just quickly, on the call. Jake said that -- characterized it as "useful." Says there's "more work to do." But big picture: Is there a sense that, as one of the results of this call, that tensions are now lessened as a -- like, sort of what is -- what's the sense of tension?

MS. PSAKI: The way we see our relationship with Russia is that the President and leaders in this administration are going to be direct and clear where we have concerns, as the President was on this call. There are also areas where, in the same call, we are going to discuss how we can work together.

Our objective, a large portion of this call, as Jake Sullivan just outlined, was on Ukraine and our concerns about the military buildup on the border and our concerns about the bellicose rhetoric.

But the proof is in the pudding and the eating -- I can't even remember exactly the President's statement on that or his saying he likes to say.

But, really, our objective and our focus is not on the tone; it is on what their actions are. And we would like, of course, to see them deescalate and, most importantly, not to invade. If they do, part of this call was to convey clearly there will be consequences and significant ones.

Go ahead.

Q What would be a sign to the President that Putin got the message today? Would it be for him to start to pull troops back? And when?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to assess that or provide an assessment of that from here. We will know if Russia and President Putin decides to invade Ukraine. I don't think that will be a secret. And so we will certainly be watching that.

Our preference is, of course, for that not to happen. And for -- and the President made clear that there is an off-ramp here and that we want to have a diplomatic path -- we have a diplomatic path forward to have these discussions. But I think that will be clear. I don't think it will be a secret. That is what we're working to prevent.

Q Is the administration starting to put plans in place in case Americans in Ukraine need to be evacuated quickly?

MS. PSAKI: I know there was some reporting about this. Of course, the military does contingency planning for a range of potential scenarios in order to keep the U.S. personnel safe. And when a security situation warrants it, the State Department issues travel notices and security warnings to U.S. citizens. That's how the process broadly works, but it's not

the standard process for the United States government to evacuate U.S. citizens. Typically, when -- if a security situation deteriorates, the State Department issues a travel warning or a travel advisory. Obviously, our embassy would provide consular service. We're not even at that point right now.

Q Are there any lessons that were learned during the mass evacuation in Afghanistan that are already being -- you know, being heeded this time around as you begin contingency planning?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's really important for people not to compare the two. I mean, you -- of course, you can ask any question you want. But Afghanistan was a war zone; we were at war for 20 years. What we're talking about here is a situation we are trying to work to de-escalate and move towards a diplomatic path. But it is not a comparable situation, in our view.

And also, I would say that it is not standard, as you all know from our discussions about Ethiopia, for the U.S. government to plan for -- I mean, we plan for everything -- but to evacuate on military planes American citizens. There is a lengthy process that we undergo, typically, around the world.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Jake talked a little bit about conversations with Germany regarding Nord Stream 2. Can you at all characterize the process of arriving at some sort of an agreement about what might happen involving Nord Stream 2 if Russia is to move forward? And does the administration have any regrets at this point about not -- about waiving sanctions against North Stream 2 back this spring?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first note that -- and Jake broadly referenced this -- but back in July, there was a joint statement of the United States and Germany on support for Ukraine energy security and our climate goals. And what it conveyed in there is, quote -- that it made -- in the joint statement -- would -- we would take -- there would be action taken if, quote, Russia attempts "to use energy as a weapon or commit further aggressive acts against Ukraine." Obviously, invading Ukraine would be an aggressive act.

And part of these discussions are what the contingency planning would look like if they were to take that step. That is one of the lessons, and I think Mara asked this very good question yesterday and today about, "What are the lessons you learned from 2014?"

What you can look at, for people who covered this back then, is that there's an enormous amount of preparation, contingency planning, tracking of social media and the use of disinformation tools. A lot of that is done because we did learn some lessons post twenty -- in 2014, leading up to it.

I think what's important to also note is that I know there's a lot of members on the Hill -- not a lot, some -- who are vocal, who are conveying that Nord Stream 2 is the answer here. And what -- the point Jake was making -- or additional steps on Nord Stream 2 -- is that that is actually -- would actually not be an effective deterrent, that that is not effectively going to change the behavior of President Putin.

So, yes, Germany, in our joint statement, made these commitments. There are a range of economic tools and options we have, our European partners have, should they decide to invade. Obviously, our preference is that we not get to that point.

Q And then referencing -- because you brought up the members on the Hill who often talk about Nord Stream 2 -- and Jake's July statement -- these members say that Russia has taken action, that -- you know, using gas as a geopolitical weapon. They point to, you know, coercing and manipulating countries in Europe over the course of the summer; you know, taking advantage of the energy crisis, for instance, just a couple months ago. And Biden and Merkel promised sanctions if those events were to transpire. Does the White House believe that what we've seen up until now is not Russia using gas as a geopolitical weapon?

MS. PSAKI: I think what we're talking about here and what we're trying to achieve here is a deterrence of actions that would be detrimental and, of course, hurt the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Ukraine. And what I was referencing is the fact that there are some who are suggesting that this would deter, and our assessment is that it would not.

Now, again, we've been having conversations with a range of partners, including our important partners in Germany. And, yes, there is a reference, as I referenced, in July to this joint statement. But again, you know, I would really -- I don't have anything new on Nord Stream 2 at this point in time. I just think it's important to understand what would be a deterrent and what would not be.

Q Real quick on crime and another topic. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot appeared to pass some blame onto retailers for these smash-and-grabs, saying that she's disappointed that these stores are not putting security officers in place, having working cameras, and chaining up high-end bags.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez -- congresswoman -- said earlier this week also that she doubted allegations of organized retail thefts. She believed it was a Walgreens in California that cited it, but the data didn't back it up. Does the President believe that organized retail theft is really happening? And should it be on the stores themselves to take action to prevent it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't agree. And I think our actions and the work that we have had in working with the Justice Department, the FBI, and federal law enforcement show that we take -- we've seen some of these extremely video -- extremely disturbing videos showing retail thefts in both major retailers -- as well as state and local leaders, like Governor Newsom, have identified this as a serious concern.

We agree. That's the reason why we have sent additional support from the FBI, providing additional assistance. It's one of the reasons why we have also been -- the President and members of our administration have been longtime advocates for supporting and funding the COPS program, something where the President proposed almost \$300 million in additional assistance through his budget from what it was last year, and why we have also provided money to get -- provided assistance -- provided financial assistance to get money to hire 50 more police officers through the COPS program that the President has championed in places like San Francisco and an additional 20 officers in Los Angeles.

So, I think his record speaks for itself on this. We are going to continue to advocate for supporting programs like the COPS program, ensuring that our law enforcement are good partners as we're working to address these retail thefts across the country.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Jen, thank you. I have a foreign policy and a domestic.

MS. PSAKI: Great. Okay.

Q I'll start with the foreign policy. It's a big-picture question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q The withdrawal from Afghanistan over the summer was widely criticized. There are increasing tensions with China and Taiwan, and now you have Russian troops amassing on the border with Ukraine. Candidate Biden campaigned on a pledge to restore America's credibility on the world stage on his foreign policy experience. Is he living up to that pledge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Kristen, he also campaigned on a promise to bring an end to a 20-year war that should have ended 10 years ago and to bring our troops home, and not to send another son, grandson, granddaughter, or daughter into a war that the Afghans aren't willing to fight themselves.

He also pledged to stand up for democracy and pledged to stand up for countries like Ukraine and their territorial integrity.

And that's something that he is standing up for and vocally doing now, and raising concerns he has about the bellicose rhetoric and the military buildup.

And he also pledged to stand up for human rights. And you saw the decision we made yesterday that's -- not made yesterday, but the announcement, I should say, made yesterday about the decision to not send a diplomatic presence to the Olympics, because he believes it needs to be more than words; it needs to be actions. And I think he is certainly delivering on his values and how he proposed he would be leading in the world.

Q Domestic question, Jen. Jon Tester just told NBC News that he plans to support the provision to essentially nix the Biden administration's vaccine mandate for big businesses -- so he, along with Joe Manchin. What is your response to that fact that some Democrats are joining on to that? And should it make its way through the House -- obviously, facing an uphill battle there -- would the President veto that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the President has a great relationship with Senator Tester, one with Senator Manchin. And he has always had constructive and open dialogue with both of them.

I think it's important to remind everyone what this OSHA rule is all about. One, it's based on a 50-year-old law, and we are confident in our ability to implement it. It's about not just requiring vaccination, but -- unvaccinated people to get vaccinated -- but the alternative of testing: so, testing once a week.

And I think our view and the view of many Americans is that if people aren't vaccinated, having them test once a week is quite reasonable as we're thinking about how to protect our workplaces, how to protect stores and retail locations as people are out shopping for Christmas and the holidays, how to protect our children in schools and public places. And we also know that more than hundred leading public health experts have endorsed this rule.

It's also building on what we've already seen businesses do on their own. Sixty percent of businesses across the country are implementing this requirement because they know they work, they know people will feel confident being in their workplaces, and they know that they will provide a more stable work environment.

So, we certainly hope the Senate -- Congress -- will stand up to the anti-vaccine and testing crowd, and we're going to continue to work to implement these.

If it comes to the President's desk, he will veto it. And we've got a new variant, and cases are rising. The President has been clear we'll use every tool to protect the American people, and we hope others will join us in that effort.

Go ahead.

Q Given the stakes with regard to Ukraine, are there any plans here for the President to address the American people on the issue?

MS. PSAKI: We -- the President does speak to the American people nearly every day. But we will certainly keep you updated if there's something more formal to announce.

Q But specifically on Ukraine, I mean, you're talking about the possibility of serious consequences -- I mean, economic and otherwise. Is this something the President intends to talk to the public about?

MS. PSAKI: I understand, Steve. I'm sure the President will certainly be communicating with all of you and the public about this and many other issues in the days to come. I don't have anything to preview for you at this point in time.

Q Quick follow-up: Late last week, you told us the President took a COVID test for at least three days. Have those tests continued?

MS. PSAKI: He did take another test on Sunday. He tested negative.

Q Jen, just --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Alex.

Q What is the reason for the call with President Zelenskyy happening on Thursday as opposed to, say, today or tomorrow?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President also had a call with Eur- -- his European partners today. He is traveling tomorrow. So, I think it was just a matter of getting it on the schedule.

Q What's his message going to be that we don't already know or is not already public? I mean, what's his message to him going to be?

MS. PSAKI: The President will convey, as we've conveyed publicly and as he has conveyed publicly, that he strongly supports the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine, that we will continue to be a strong supporter through a range of assistance. We have provided, I believe, \$400 million in assistance since the beginning of this year, \$60 million as a follow-up to President Zelenskyy's visit here earlier this fall. And that we will continue to be close partners and work in close coordination with them in the weeks and months ahead.

Q A number of Democratic senators are expressing some frustration over Guantanamo Bay -- the detention center there, the prison -- and why it's not -- more progress isn't made in shutting it down, something the President has said he wants to do. How come it's taking so long? And what commitment does he have to seeing that come to fruition?

MS. PSAKI: He absolutely remains committed to shutting down Guantanamo Bay -- something he has stated many times in the past as Vice President, running for office, et cetera. I'm sure I can get you an update from the Department of Defense on the number of detainees who are still there. That's something that is under constant review, but we can get that to you after the briefing as well.

Go ahead.

Q Can I just ask -- the readout referred to these countermeasures coming in the event of, quote, "military escalation." How do you define "military escalation"? Is it Russian troops setting foot further into Ukraine or would other things count?

MS. PSAKI: What would the oth- -- tell me -- tell me more.

Q Putin has a history of, you know, sowing, you know, discontent or unrest in regions -- you know, supporting indirectly or with, you know, deniability separatist movements or that kind of thing.

MS. PSAKI: And we've -- we've already seen this. We've already seen this happening -- right? -- over the course in --

Q Well, this is what the case has been in the Donbas, right? And he could, for instance, maybe follow up with troops into the Donbas in a way that he hasn't before or similar sort of first-step measures that aren't a full military incursion. Would the U.S. and its allies consider that a violation and start triggering some of these countermeasures, counterpunches that you're threatening here?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand why you're asking. I'm just not going to parse the different scenarios. I think we have been clear -- Jake Sullivan was clear, the President was clear with President Putin that -- that if they invade Ukraine, we have a range of economic options to take, and they will be significant and they will be severe.

But I'm not going to parse what every different element might look like. Those are conversations we would have --

continue to have with our European partners, with Congress.

And beyond that, I'm not going to parse further from here.

Q But the line is invading Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I think Jake Sullivan spoke to this pretty clearly just a few minutes ago.

Q And can you give us an update on the remaining Fed nominees? He's got a few left to make.

MS. PSAKI: He does.

Q Any this month?

MS. PSAKI: We hope to have those soon. And we continue to hope to have those out to you this month. Yes.

Q Thank you kindly. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, absolutely. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Following up on the announcement of not sending a American delegation to Beijing --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- for the Winter Games. You were just saying this is an example of action that the President would take. Would the President support the IOC moving the games from Beijing altogether?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I have not heard that's an option under consideration. I can just speak to what the decisions are we're making here from the U.S. government, which we spoke to yesterday.

Q He believes, though, that the Olympic Games should be played in Beijing?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of a consideration of them being moved.

Q And also, is the President right now engaging with Democrats in Congress on the current debate over lifting state and local tax cap for those who make over \$400,000?

MS. PSAKI: The SALT deduction?

Q Correct.

MS. PSAKI: That is something -- as you know, there is some support for in Congress. It's not something the President proposed, but it is something that certainly is part of the discussion as some of these members who support it, they've raised -- which won't surprise you -- they've also raised it publicly with members of our team.

So, it is part of the discussions and negotiations that are ongoing at a senior staff level.

Q Does the President oppose it -- SALT?

MS. PSAKI: He didn't propose it initially, but we are working to get this bill done.

Q But does he oppose it?

MS. PSAKI: Again, he didn't propose it initially. We're working to get this bill done and across the finish line, but it was not his proposal.

Our objective continues to be to lower costs for the American people across the country on childcare, on eldercare, on healthcare. This bill will do exactly that: create universal -- a universal healthcare system -- I mean, a universal pre-K system that has never existed in the past.

There are components that there is support for that are still part of the discussions, but I think you can note the President didn't propose that initially.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks, Jen. Yesterday, you seemed to dismiss the idea of sending COVID-19 tests to all Americans, but other countries have taken similar aggressive steps to make free test -- testing free, available to all citizens.

Singapore, for example, sent six test kits to all citizens in September.

In the UK, any citizen can order a pack of several testing kits all at once.

Is the White House's position on this simply a cost analysis or are there other reasons why the administration doesn't think that sending tests -- COVID-19 tests to all Americans is a good strategy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me -- let me give you an overarching, comprehensive understanding of how we're approaching this to give you a sense -- and I appreciate the question.

So, our objective is to continue to scale up our testing program to meet demand and ensure the people who want tests are getting tests.

And there are a range of ways people want tests. Some people want to do it in their homes, certainly, and we've seen an increase in demand for that in recent months, and we've quadrupled our capacity in that regards. We'll keep building.

Some people want to go to their -- their primary care physician.

Some people want to go to a community health center or a rural health center.

Some people want to have their kids tested at school -- an option that many public schools have made available -- and private schools, I guess, as well have made available.

So what we're -- our focus is on is ensuring that everyone in America has access to free testing, whether at a doctor's office, pharmacy, community testing site, or, now, at home.

And there's a couple steps we've taken. From the beginning, we haven't always -- there's obviously a lot of interest in testing now, for good reason. And one, in February, we wrote new guidance to make insurers cover asym- -- asymptomatic PCR and point-of-care tests critical to helping the majority of Americans who have private insurance not worry about burdensome test costs.

So, what that means is: Before that, if you went to get a PCR test -- as we know, which is a test that can certainly track very closely whether you have components of the virus -- you had to pay for it. Our -- our private insurer -- we now ensured, many months ago, that was not the case.

As I noted, we quadrupled the number of free pharmacy testing sites with a priority on vulnerable communities in addition

to state and local community sites. So today, there are 20,000 sites across the country with free quality tests. That means you can walk into the pharmacy, get a free test, get it done, ensure you're taking that step. That's the preference for some.

We've also secured funding from the Rescue Plan, invested it in hardest-hit areas -- \$10 billion for schools -- to conduct testing, nearly \$1 billion for rural clinics and hospitals.

And toward the summer, we also planned for the school year, ensuring school districts had the resources to set up a testing program to ensure kids stayed in school.

We also doubled down our work to get testing to congregate settings that were more vulnerable and where demand was higher.

As Delta hit in the summer and demand increased for testing, we immediately jumped into action. And as we've seen at-home tests have become more in demand, we've taken steps on that front to make them free.

So, if you have private insurance, we're making sure you'll get reimbursed by your insurer for at-home tests if that's your preference, if that's what you would like to do. And we made sure that the tests you get from your healthcare provider -- like PCR tests -- are covered with no copays.

I also would note that we also announced last week we're sending 50 million free tests, starting this month, to convenient locations like health centers and community sites.

So, overarching, our objective here is to make them accessible, to make sure that people who want to get tested can get tested in any means they choose to do, and to make sure they're free for everyone in America.

Q And I understand all these efforts, but why is -- wouldn't it be a good idea to just send them to all American homes? It seems like that would make it more readily available to just, you know, have it sitting -- knowing that one is just sitting in your kitchen somewhere. You know, why isn't that a way that would be an effective strategy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our assessment is that the best way to make these tests readily available and accessible to people is to make them available -- meet people where they are and make them available at places where people go -- community health centers, rural health centers, pharmacies, doctors' offices, schools -- and also have a component where people can have tests for free at their home.

But we -- our approach is not to send everyone in the country a test just to send -- to have millions of tests go unused where we know others can make use of them.

So we've made an assessment about how to make them free and available to Americans across the country. That's absolutely our objective, and we'll continue to build on it.

Q And you did seem to reference cost yesterday. So, is that a concern with just how -- logistically, financially -- how hard that would be to get to all American households?

MS. PSAKI: Again, our objective is to make them readily available to people where they are across the country. And we have made the assessment that doing that is most effective by making them -- by donating these 50 million tests to community health centers and rural health centers, by making them available at 20,000 pharmacies, by working with schools and workplaces to make testing available, and also to have -- providing the option for people to get free tests in their homes.

Go ahead.

Q Two polar opposite questions. One Ukraine and --

MS. PSAKI: I always -- I like the set up today that everybody is doing. "Polar opposites." "Different topics."

Go ahead.

Q Well, they are, really. Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- Ukraine and the messaging, and the results on the vaccines -- not just being fully vaccinated, but now the boosters as the vaccines are waning.

On Ukraine, you talked -- well, Jake talked about "clarity." He talked about "deescalating." He talked about being direct -- the President was. But is there any room, as the effort is to deescalate -- is there any more room for the President to maybe have another conversation -- another direct conversation with Putin on this and efforts as we seem like we're at the 11th hour?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, I mean -- and, April, I will say that the President certainly values leader-to-leader diplomacy, as you've seen evidence of over the course of the last several weeks.

What they agreed to at the end of the call was that there would be close coordination and discussion at national -- the level of senior national security staff. That's the next natural step here. It's really up to President Putin to determine what the path forward will look like.

So, I don't have any calls to predict or preview at this point in time.

Q But it's not hypothetical to say, leader to leader, Putin is someone that this -- this country has had some issues with over the years. And it's not about trust; it's about watching what he does.

So, the question, once again, is: Is there an opening, a possibility if it needs be -- if there needs to be a conversation, would the President be amenable to talking once again to Putin if --

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President just ended a call with him just a couple of hours ago. So, I think we're going to see how this goes here with conversations and important follow-up. But I don't think the President has ever hesitated to have leader-to-leader conversations if that is going to be effective and helpful in resolving any circumstances.

Q And the last piece. On the booster, with the messaging -- what is the next piece? What are you getting back from the nation as you're asking for boosters?

Dr. Fauci has said that, you know, the two shots are now waning. We're seeing more people who were vaccinated in the hospital from breakthroughs. And now it's boosters. What are you seeing from America? Is there a weariness, or are people responding to the call?

MS. PSAKI: We've -- we've seen people responding to the call, April. I mean, our boosters program is off to a very strong start in our assessment. Forty-seven million people have already received a booster. About 1 million people are getting boosted every single day -- more than ever before.

So, this is in strong demand, which is good news because, as you noted, it will help protect people further, it will help give another layer of additional protection. And we have plenty of supply across the country -- 80,000 sites -- and we're working with governors and FEMA to ensure we have plenty of easy and convenient locations.

So, there has been an increase in boosting by people over the past week-plus -- 1 million people a day -- and we're continuing to make sure they're accessible around the country.

continuing to make sure they're accessible around the country.

Karen, go ahead. Okay, I'll go to Karen because I just called on her. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Somewhat of a follow-up on the testing: The CDC is now urging people to use a rapid test before they go into an indoor gathering, even if they're vaccinated or don't have symptoms. You talked about the free tests that will soon be out there for Americans, but it's still going to take some time. Right now, they're still a little bit pricey. The administration has invested billions of dollars to bring the cost of that down. When do you anticipate they will be cheaper for Americans to buy if they wanted to just walk into a pharmacy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we do know now that we are donate- -- or we are giving 50 million tests now, this month, to community health centers and rural health centers across the country. And there are already 20,000 pharmacies across the country where free testing is available. And you can also go to your doctor and get a free test. So, there are options.

We are working to implement some of these specifics by mid-January, in terms of how people can get reimbursed for tests -- I think is what you're asking about. We're doing that as rapidly as we can, as people are looking to get home tests.

They're about \$7 a test, and certainly we'll continue our objective here. Our larger objective is also to create a market so that that cost continues going down, that there are more tests on the market, and the costs continue to decrease over time.

Q Thanks. And why didn't we see the CDC make this recommendation before the Thanksgiving holiday -- that people should start doing it -- before people were gathering indoors with family and friends, that they should consider doing these rapid tests?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would -- I would really point you to the CDC because they look at a range of data and science as they make assessments or make additional recommendations. And I would encourage you to ask them that exact question.

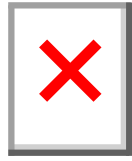
Thank you so much, everyone.

4:04 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre En Route Kansas City, MO
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 8, 2021 3:47 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2021

Press Gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Kansas City, Missouri

12:00 P.M. CST

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: All right. Good afternoon, everybody. I hope you're all ready for some good, great, amazing barbecue. That's a joke. Ha ha.

Okay, a quick overview of what we'll be doing today in Missouri. As you all know, the President will visit the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, where he will be briefed on the Authority's operations and how it is benefiting from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

He will be joined there by the Authority's president and CEO Robbie Makinen, Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, and Representatives Sharice Davids and Emanuel Cleaver.

President Biden will also hear from the president of the local Amalgamated Transit Union, Will Howard, on how members of his union benefit from the funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.

The historic investment in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide more than \$670 million for public transportation, making commutes easier so people can get to work and home faster. It will also help Kansas City's ambitious "zero fare, zero emissions" plan to reduce pollution and increase opportunity by providing free public transit and transitioning its bus fleet to electric buses.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will also support projects like replacing the Buck O Neil Bridge in Kansas City and a new terminal at Kansas City International Airport.

Today, we're also -- we -- we're also launching the Build Back -- I'm sorry, we're also launching Build.gov and an accompanying bill -- an accompanying brand "Build a Better America." So again, that -- we're launching Build- -- Build.gov and an accompanying brand, "Building a Better America."

"Building a Better America" represents the heart of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law -- how these historic investments will bring Americans together to rebuild our country's infrastructure better than before and change people's lives for the better.

You'll start to see this at today's event, listening sessions with Cabinet members, and across the administration's digital channels.

In the coming months, Build.gov will grow to serve as a hub for governors, mayors, Tribal Leaders, business owners, union members, and Americans to learn more about the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, how to help rebuild our country, access resources for their communities, see progress the administration is delivering, and much more.

With that, Darlene, you want to kick us off?

Q Thanks. Two questions to start. The first one is on Russia. Is the President concerned that his credibility may suffer if, despite the threat of severe consequences to Putin -- if Putin goes ahead and invades Ukraine despite the meeting yesterday and the threat of severe consequences for foreign invasion?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, let me just first say, the President actually took a couple of questions right before boarding Marine One. So, I just want to give you, from him -- directly what he said was, you know, his conversation was a "straightforward" conversation. "There were no minced words. It was polite." But he made clear if, in fact, that Putin invades Ukraine -- Russia invades Ukraine -- "there will be severe consequences" and severe "economic consequences."

He also made it clear we would provide the defensive capabilities to the Ukraine -- Ukrainians as well.

The "good news" and the "positive news," the President said, "is that, thus far, our teams have been in constant contact... We're having meetings at a higher level, not just with us but... at least four of our major NATO Allies and Russia to discuss."

He was also asked, "Are you confident that [Putin] got the message and knows this is different?" And he said, "I [have] absolute confidence he got the message."

So, again, we -- the goal here -- and as Jake Sullivan said yesterday during the briefing with Jen Psaki -- was that our goal is to make sure that we head to diplomacy and de-escalate. That is going to be the focus. That's what the teams are going to be working on. And that was what the President said directly and in a straightforward way to Putin.

Q And on the Democracy Summit tomorrow and Friday, in addition to talking about upholding democracy abroad, can you give us a sense of whether the President will talk about what he's doing to uphold democracy here at home? For example, will he talk about the struggle to get voting rights legislation passed? Will he talk about the January 6th insurrection -- those kinds of things?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't want to get ahead of what the President is going to say tomorrow. But as -- all the things that you just mentioned, Darlene, are clearly things that the President feels are key and important things that we need to address here in our country.

But I do want to say this: On day zero of the Summit for Democracy, we are excited to be convening over 100 governments and even more members of civil society and the private sector to focus on what the President has called "the challenge of

our time," reversing the ongoing global democ- -- democratic recession and ensuring that democracies deliver for their people.

So that is kind of the goal, as we all know, of the summit. And that's going to be focus of the summit.

I don't -- again, I don't want to get ahead of the specifics of what the President is going to say. But, clearly, what you just listed out are things that are critical and key and important for our own democracy.

Q Karine, so to follow up on Russia briefly: So when the President was talking about Russia and the U.S. and NATO Allies meeting, when he said that just before -- as he was leaving the White House, what was he talking about? Is that -- is that something that's happening at the leader level? When is that happening? Can you tell us more about that?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah. So, basically, what the President was talking about -- you know, he said that there are conversations happening at different levels, as you just said.

Look, the two Presidents tasked their teams to follow up on the issues discussed yesterday. And as the President said, you know, his engagement with Russia will be closely coordinated with our allies and our partners that we're constantly having conversations with.

As you know, we put out readouts over the last couple of days. But we don't have anything more to share on specifics at this point, beyond the President's comments and what Jake said yesterday during the briefing yesterday.

Q Should we expect to see a follow-up face-to-face meeting between Vladimir Putin and President Biden?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don't have anything else to share on that. As you know, yesterday's conversation, as the President said and as Jake said, was useful. And they're just going to continue moving forward with making sure that -- it's all about de-escalation -- right? -- and making sure that we go on a path of diplomacy.

Q Karine, the President said that that meeting with NATO and Russia would be about Putin's security concerns. Can you kind of explain what concerns that the Russian President raised in their conversation that the President believes is worthy of a potential summit between those kind of bodies?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Are you talking about --

Q When the President was departing today, he said that they're "having meetings at a higher level" with "at least four... major NATO Allies and Russia to discuss the future of Russia's concerns." And so, I'm wondering -- and I know you said you couldn't say what forum that would be, but what Russia's concerns were that were worthy of discussion.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don't know if you're talking about the NATO component and Ukraine. Is --

Q I don't know what the President was talking about when he said "Russia" -- like what Russia's concerns were that he believes NATO should be brought in on.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. So, let me -- let me touch first on the NATO component because that came up. I think Jake actually talked about this yesterday.

So, you know, the President told Putin in their call: One nation can't force another nation to change its border, one nation cannot tell another to change its politics, and nations can't tell others who they can work -- who they can work with.

So, the United States has consistently expressed support for the principle that every country has a sovereign right to make its own decisions with respect to its security. That is written into the founding documents of the Alliance, and that remains U.S. policy today and will remain U.S. policy in the future.

You know, whether there will be negotiations -- I think that's the other part of your question -- as we said in the meeting readout, the two Presidents tasked their teams to follow up, as I just stated, and we're going to continue to stay in close coordination with our allies and partners.

We have found a way to have discussions at the height -- at the height of the Cold War, and we've done this in the post-Cold War era through the NATO-Russia Council, the OSCE, and other mechanisms. There's no reason we can't do that going forward.

Q And then yesterday, the President pulled the nomination of Omarova to be Comptroller of the Currency. And I'm wondering -- you know, Janet said at the end of November that you strongly support her nomination and that you weren't going to pull it. And so, I'm wondering what changed between now and then.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No, thanks for the question, Justin. Let me just say a couple of things because I think this is really important. So, as you saw from the news yesterday -- as you just stated, Justin -- the President has accepted her request to withdraw her name from nomination for the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. You can expect -- and so we put out a statement on that.

But the President nominated Saule because of her deep expertise in the financial regulation and her longstanding, respected career in the private sector, the public sector, and as a leading academic in the field.

She has lived the American Dream, escaping her birthplace in the former Soviet Union and immigrating to America. She went on to work at the Department of Treasury under President George W. Bush and currently works as a professor at Cornell Law School.

As a strong advocate for consumers and a staunch defender of the safety and soundness of our financial system, she would have brought invaluable insight and perspective to our important work on behalf of the American people.

But from the very beginning of her nomination, she was subjected to inappropriate, often very personal, unfair, and completely unacceptable attacks. And so that's -- now she requested to withdraw, and we respected her decision to do that.

Q Karine, the President said today, before leaving the White House, that he was confident that Vladimir Putin "got the message." But does he leave that conversation yesterday more confident that Putin will not invade Ukraine?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: You know, Jake -- Jake Sullivan actually addressed this. Basically, the ball is in the court of President Putin.

The President, again, was direct. He was straightforward. Like, he made -- you know, he made the United States' positions clear on what was happening -- on what is happening in Ukraine. And so, now it's -- we're going to continue to have those conversations on the staff level. That's the way they left it, as I've said before.

And again, the goal here is de-escalation. The goal here is to go down a path of diplomacy.

Q And last night, the House passed a new National Defense Authorization Act, which has significant reforms to the military justice system. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who's been a leader on this issue, says that the reforms don't go far enough, that this has basically been "gutted...behind closed doors" and "doing a disservice to our service members and our democracy." Does the White House believe these reforms go far enough, or was more needed?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just say a couple of things, because it's -- this is clearly very important. And it was a -- it was a -- we reached a historical point yesterday with meaningful reform of the military justice system's handling of --

handling of sexual assault cases. It includes critical recommendations made by Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assaults -- IRC -- called for by the President and Secretary Austin, including removing investigation and prosecution of sexual assault from the chain of command and creating dedicated units to handle these cases and related crimes.

The President believes that this legislation takes groundbreaking steps to improve the response to and prevent -- prevention of sexual assault in the military and express gratitude to Secretary Austin for his strong support as we have worked towards this moment.

The President would also like to thank Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Senator Joni Ernst, and Congresswoman Jackie Speier for their tireless work, over many years of it, to advance these important reforms.

The President would also like to thank Senator Jack Reed and Congressman Smith for their steadfast efforts to find common ground and reach a deal that implements key recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault.

These changes will ensure that any service member who experiences sexual assault or related crimes -- including women, men, LGBTQI+ individuals -- will be able to rely on a military justice system that is independent from command influence and control and with specialized prosecutors who will be equipped to handle these complex cases in a trauma-informed way. So, the administration is also pleased to see that.

Thanks to the tireless advocacy of Senator Gillibrand and others, military prosecutors will also have independent authority to prosecute the additional seriousness of crimes of murder, kidnapping, and manslaughter.

Look, this is -- as I said, this is -- this a -- it takes steps to improve the system, and so this is a step forward and we welcome it.

Q Karine, has the White House got a response to this story that came out saying that President -- former President George W. Bush -- this is speculating -- might have been a target of a Havana Syndrome-type attack, based on the symptoms that he and the former First Lady experienced.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, I can't speak to anything that's speculated. I -- this is the first time I'm hearing about this report, and so I would have to go back and check with our team.

Q Okay. And on the Supreme Court, I'm sure you've digested the 300-page report, but there's a recommendation -- there's an idea for an 18-year term that's called "worthy of consideration" by the commission. Where is the President now on a term limit for Supreme Court justices?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Let me -- so, the commission unanimously voted to approve their report yesterday and sent it to the President, as you all know. Soon, the White House will post it online and release it to the press.

Like we said previously, out of respect for the work of this diverse committee made up of many different viewpoints, the White House will not comment until the President has reviewed it.

But I'll say this: That it is absolutely unprecedented in American history to have a commission with this purpose, at this scale, bringing this much expertise and so many diverse perspectives to bear, to weigh in on these important and substantive questions. And the President is deeply appreciative of all the experts who have participated in this process and worked so hard to make their historic contributions. So, I don't have anything to share at this moment.

Q Will he make his positions known before the big cases come down in the summer? I mean, when is he going to -- he'll make his views known before the big cases come down?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I just don't have a timeline for you right now.

Q May I ask you a question about Germany? Germany has a new chancellor today. Does the President plan to meet Olaf Scholz, you know, soon? And if he does, how confident is the President that Germany would support strong sanctions against Nord Stream 2?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. So, for the first part of your question, President Biden thanks former Chancellor Merkel for her many years of leadership and extends the congratulations to Germany's new chancellor. And the President is looking forward to building on the strong ties between our two nations and working closely together to make progress on today's global challenges.

The President looks forward to speaking with the chancellor, but I don't have any specific call to review.

And on your other question -- so, we have had extensive conversation with incoming and outgoing German administrations, as it relates to Nord Stream 2 -- right? -- that's the question you were asking? -- in the context of a potential Russian invasion. But I'm not going to get into private diplomatic discussions, other than to say this is an important priority for the Biden administration, as you all know.

We are continuing to work with Germany to implement the July 21st Joint Statement of the United States and Germany on Support for Ukraine, [European] Energy Security, and ~~Other~~ [Our] Climate Goals.

And I'd point you to the clear commitments our countries made in the joint statement to take action if Russia attempts to use energy as a weapon or commit further aggressive acts against Ukraine.

Q So, the President has ruled out unilateral use of U.S. forces to help in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but is there concern amongst White House officials and larger administration officials about the threat of a proxy war that could extend for a long time -- indirect involvement that could carry on for years and years and years and could become, as Chris Murphy has said, the "next Afghanistan"?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just first say this -- and you're talking about the sta- -- the comment that the President made before getting on Marine One about the troops -- troops in Ukraine -- U.S. troops in -- specifically?

So, as the President has made clear, if Russia chooses to pursue confrontation, the United States and our European allies will impose significant and severe economic harm on the Russian economy. That includes strong economic measures.

We would provide additional defensive materiel to Ukraine, which Jake Sullivan talked about yesterday, above and beyond what we are already providing, and fortify our NATO Allies on the eastern flank with additional capabilities in response to such an escalation.

So, what the President said was that the United States is not currently considering using unilateral force to confront Russia. Jake just talked about it moments ago at an event that he was at. That's not our fo- -- our current focus. But we are preparing for all contingencies, as we have been doing for weeks now, including preparing specific, robust responses to Russian escalation should they be required.

The President laid out very clearly to President Putin that there will be significant and severe consequences if he chooses to further invade Ukraine.

We have been consistent in our message to Russia: The United States does not seek conflict. Diplomacy and de-escalation is the only responsible way to resolve this potential crisis. Russia should return to dialogue through diplomatic avenues, such as the Minsk Agreements. And that is -- that is our position.

Q So, Vladimir Putin has also recently said that his appetite is also for de-escalation to diplomacy. But it seems to me -- and essentially what I'm wondering is, is there -- is there an ability to reconcile the two positions: the U.S. saying that you

cannot tell another country what alliances to join, et cetera, and Vladimir Putin drawing a red line saying that Ukraine is not to be a NATO member? Is there even common ground possible here?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, here's the thing: I'm not going to predict or lay out any potential ways to get a -- get to the question that you're asking. All I could say here is that, you know, both teams agreed to get together -- and they have been having constant communication -- to talk about ways to de-escalate and to talk about ways to, you know, go down the road of diplomacy. And that is -- that is the direction that we're trying to go down.

Q You also mentioned additional contingencies -- there's always the chance of additional contingencies later down the line. Do those additional contingencies, if you can respond to it, include the potential for offensive capability (inaudible)?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I'm not going to respond to what our contingency plans are going to be. Clearly, that is a conversation that's going to have -- that (inaudible) with the teams, between Russia and the United States and our -- also our allies. We've been working closely with our European allies in lockstep. So, I'm not going to get into what that could potentially look like.

Q Karine, can I ask a couple things that are happening in the House right now? One is the potential resolution -- the censure resolution and stripping of committees of Representative Boebert over her Islamic -- Islamophobic comments that she made towards Representative Omar. Does the President support her being stripped from her committees?

And a second is: Former Chief of Staff Mark Meadows has refused to further cooperate with the January 6th committee. Does the President support a criminal contempt effort from the Justice Department there?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me -- on the -- on your second question first: As the President has said before, January 6th was one of the darkest moments in our country's history. And it's vital that we have a full accounting of what happened to ensure it never occurs again and never happens again.

The position of the White House regarding Meadows's testimony is clear and laid out in our letter detailing the President's discussion not to assert executive privilege.

As we wrote, the decision was made in recognition of these unique and extraordinary circumstances where Congress is investigating an effort to obstruct the lawful transfer of power under our Constitution. The President has full faith in the January 6th Select -- Select Committee's ability to carry out that work. And that's where we are on that.

Q And on Representative Boebert?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, so I don't have anything to share on that. I haven't spoken to him about that particular question you just asked me.

Q Just two quick ones on today. You mentioned the launch of Build.gov -- the website and branding.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Build -- yeah, Build.gov.

Q Build.gov.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yes. I want to say "Build Back Better."

Q Right. (Laughter.)

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: But it's -- we got to get that first -- (laughs) -- done and signed. But build -- Build.gov.

Q And you said something about branding. Is this in any way recognition by the White House that BBB -- Build Back

Better -- that you're still having trouble -- that people are still not understanding what that is, what it will do?

And then, secondly, you mentioned federal support for the Buck O Neil Bridge. Is there previous federal money going to the replacement bridge that's under construction, or is there new --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, those are great questions, Darlene. So, the accompanying brand -- just to put it out there -- is "Build a Better America." And, you know, as you can imagine, we're constantly messaging, as you know, to the American people every day, making sure they know what it is that the President is doing to make their lives easier, to deliver for them. And we're constantly looking for different avenues and different ways to do that. And so, this is part of it.

The President has been, you know, traveling the country for the past several months -- certainly for the past several weeks on -- specifically on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. And when he even -- when he talks about the Infrastructure Law, he mentions the Build Back Better framework as well -- two pieces of -- two pieces of his policy -- economic policies that's going to make lives of Americans so much better, lower costs.

And as we know, with the law -- the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law -- you know, make sure that we're dealing with that hard infrastructure, make sure that we're dealing with broadband, and make sure we're taking the lead out of water.

So, this is all part of what we're trying to do to continue to message with the American people. And so, this is an opportunity to do that in Kansas City, Missouri, today.

Q And then, federal support for the Buck O Neil Bridge?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't any details about that. So, I would -- I can -- I'm happy to check with the team and get more specifics on if there has been past federal support. I don't know.

But I know that this -- what we're saying here is the Infrastructure Law -- the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will help kind of rebuild many of these builds and high- -- highways and tunnels across the country.

Q Karine, I know the President talked about it at -- before he left -- the President talked about the Pfizer data and the Omicron variant.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yes, yes.

Q But could we get a -- just a more full response from the White House --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, absolutely.

Q -- about your reaction to this news today?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Absolutely, Karen. No problem.

So, this is encouraging news. As you said, the President spoke to this on his way to Air Force One today. It shows vaccines continue to offer protection against the variant. These early studies are helpful to inform our understanding of Omicron. And as Dr. Fauci said Tuesday, we continue to gather data on vaccine effectiveness, as well as transmission and severity. And we'll keep the public informed as we have scientific updates.

But the news today is an important reminder to get boosted. It increases your protection and offers you protection against Omicron. We need everyone to get vaccinated and boosted to be ready to face this threat and to help us end this pandemic. That is the whole -- you know, the whole goal here is to, you know, get out of this pandemic and make sure that we get ahead of what's to come.

Q Just one on Meadows. Just one on that. We're -- so we've got Meadows not cooperating to the extent the committee thought. The Bannon trial is set for the summer. We've got people pleading the Fifth. Is there a concern that these various events could run this thing out into the -- into a new Congress and therefore stop the committee from doing what it's trying to do?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No, we have complete trust in the committee and the July -- in the July 6th -- January 6th -- pardon me -- Select Committee's ability to do their work, and we're going to leave it to them to do that.

Q Karine, any reaction to -- we're seeing the UK, Australia, Canada all join the Beijing Olympics diplomatic boycott. Is that -- was that the goal to get all these countries to follow you guys? And what's the expectation about what that's going to achieve?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, you know, decisions to -- countries' decisions to boycott the Olympics -- that's their own kind of -- their decisions that they have to make for themselves.

We made our stance very clear on where we stand with the 2022 Winter Olympics. And -- but, you know, it's up to them. It's up to them to decide how they're going to move forward and if they're going to boycott or not.

Q Another sports question. Can you say if the President will attend the Army-Navy game Saturday in New Jersey?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, such a good question. I don't have anything to preview about his weekend -- weekend stops and what he's going to be doing or if he's going to be attending events.

But I'll say this, the President has said this before and it bears repeating: The United States has the finest military that the world has ever seen, and the President is so proud to be the Commander-in-Chief of such an incredible group of warriors.

As the President says at the end of nearly all of his addresses -- you probably will hear it today -- "May God protect our troops, current and future."

Okay.

Q Thank you, Karine.

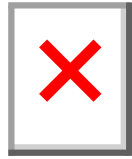
MS. JEAN-PIERRE: All right.

12:28 P.M. CST

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2021

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Economic Council Director Brian Deese,
December 9, 2021**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:12 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone.

Q Hi. Good afternoon.

MS. PSAKI: Good afternoon. Okay, today we have joining us our NEC Director, Brian Deese, who is going to give some brief opening remarks. He'll take some questions, and then we'll do a briefing from there.

Take it away.

MR. DEESE: All right. Hello, everybody. It's good to be here today. All right.

Q Hello!

MR. DEESE: Enthusiasm. I like that. (Laughter.)

So I just wanted to spend a couple of minutes on providing some context on where we are in the economic recovery and also use some charts, which should be really fun.

The President -- the President released a statement earlier today, saying that our economy -- our economic recovery has two components: getting Americans back to work and getting prices and supply chains back to normal. And so, I want to provide a little bit of context on our perspective on that issue.

So first, today, we learned that the number of Americans filing for unemployment insurance fell to its lowest level since 1969. And I will, as I think I have done every time I've come to this podium, reinforce that every time we look at data like this, one week -- even one month -- can be volatile, so we look at the averages and trends.

But if you look at the first slide here, you'll see that the trend underscores that the four-week moving average for initial UI claims is now down by about 75 percent since the beginning of the year. And another way to think about that is that at the beginning of this year, there were 18 million Americans who are collecting unemployment benefits. And today, we learned that now that number has fallen to fewer than 2 million.

So, in addition to that consistent trend, we're also seeing a reduction in 16 million Americans who were previously relying on government benefits that have now transitioned off of it.

We also learned last week that the unemployment rate fell to 4.2 percent, which is, again, the fastest year-to-date decline in the unemployment rate on record.

And in this second chart, you see -- there we are. This -- the second chart, you see that that is not only the fastest decline, but it's also very significantly accelerated from what was projected at the beginning of this year.

So, the -- I guess mauve. What color is that? That light brown line.

Q (Inaudible.)

MR. DEESE: Mauve -- is that right?

Q Light brown.

Q It's not mauve.

MR. DEESE: No? No. (Laughter.) Okay. I'm getting clear feedback from the front row that it is not mauve. (Laughter.)

The brown line -- the light brown line shows the projections from the beginning of this year, prior to the passage of the American Rescue Plan, which showed that it would -- it projected to take our economy until the end of 2024 to get to an unemployment rate of about 4.2 percent.

And now we have reached that in the fourth quarter of 2021, which underscores both the significance of the American Rescue Plan in helping drive a strong labor market recovery but also just the benefit for the American people of reaching that point.

I would just note as well, in terms of labor market strength, that we have also seen encouraging signs in labor force participation, because when the unemployment comes -- rate comes down, it can be because people are joining the labor force or coming out. And we saw that the prime age employment population ratio, which is the metric of -- that economists generally look at, increased by five tenths of a percent last month, and we've now recovered nearly 85 percent of our pandemic drop in that metric.

So, we've seen very strong labor market developments, and that -- those labor market developments are coupled by strong developments in overall economic growth and in household income and demand. And so, that puts us in a position where, today, real household income is higher than before the pandemic. So, real household income for the typical American family is \$350 a month higher now than before the pandemic, in real terms, accounting for price increases,

accounting for inflation.

And so that strength -- that strength of the labor market, that strength of household balance sheets, that strength of economic growth -- positions us uniquely well to deal with the challenges that we face of prices and supply chain issues. In fact, uniquely among industrialized countries, we are the only country that has seen GDP now recover from its pre-pandemic levels, has seen household income recover from its pre-pandemic levels. So that positions us uniquely well.

And so, on that note, we are, as you all know, very focused on addressing the issue of prices and supply chain bottlenecks head on, from that position of strength.

Tomorrow, we will get data on consumer prices for November. And I'm not going to attempt to predict what those data are. Outside forecasters expect those data to continue to show price increases at -- to remain at elevated levels. But I want to provide a little bit of context on that front as well.

The first is that that data is, by definition, backward-looking, and so it won't capture some recent price movements, particularly in the area of energy.

And so, for example, prices of gas at the gas pump are now down nationally. They're down about nine cents. But to put some context on that, this next chart over here, this shows the inflation-adjusted real price of gas at the pump over the last 10 years. And what it shows is that, on average, over the last 10 years -- and, in fact, this is true over the last 20 years -- the average price at the pump for a gallon of gas has been about \$3.13 in real terms, inflation adjusted.

And so, today, 20 states now have pump prices that are below that 20-year average. And as the -- as prices come down nationally over the next couple of weeks, as we expect and hope that they will, we hope to see more states falling into that category. Those price reductions will not be reflected in the data for November.

In addition, this week we've seen natural gas prices fall. They're now down 25 percent from their average in November. And that is -- that is good news, particularly looking into the winter home heating season. I know several of you reported on and were focused on natural gas price increases earlier this fall portending potentially big increases in heating costs over the winter. The very dramatic decline in natural gas prices over the course of the last couple of weeks have changed that outlook quite meaningfully.

So these declines are delivering, most importantly, some benefit to consumers and some benefits to consumers on a go-forward basis that won't be reflected in that data.

Secondly, we've seen some near movements on other commodity prices over the course of the last couple of weeks. We've seen shipping costs to move a container from Asia to the United States come down by about 25 percent.

Over the course of the last couple of weeks, the price of wheat, the price of pork has come down and, importantly, used cars as well.

I know many of you have seen and tracked, in some of the recent price data, that used cars have played an outsized influence. There's been challenges in the used car market, including relating to -- reflecting the fact that rental car companies sold off their fleets and were buying back. We anticipate that some of the recent decline in used car prices at the wholesale level indicates that we may see prices decline there as well. Again, that won't be reflected in backward-looking data from tomorrow.

And lastly, the consensus estimates of outside experts continue to forecast and project that price increases will moderate going into 2022. The Blue-Chip consensus for core PCE inflation, for example, in -- by the fourth quarter of next year is down to 2.2 percent, for example.

So, that's, I think, important context for all of you in thinking about the data releases. But most importantly from our

perspective, it is a reason to redouble our efforts to focus on both the immediate-term and the medium-term steps that we can take to try to address prices and bring down costs for families.

That's what we're focused on with respect to our supply chain work, our energy price work, and, of course, in moving the Build Back Better Act, which will do more than any piece of legislation in modern American history to reduce costs for families.

So, with that, I will open the floor.

MS. PSAKI: Kristen, kick us off.

Q Thank you, Jen. And, Brian, thank you for being here.

Jumping off right there, on Build Back Better: As you anticipate and wait for this new data tomorrow -- and I think there's also going to be a new cost estimate of Build Back Better requested by Republicans -- how concerned is the White House that it will complicate your efforts to win over those moderate Democrats like Joe Manchin?

MS. DEESE: Well, we are quite confident that if the question is, "What can we do to address the costs that are most pressing to American families?" -- that that -- if that is the debate and that is the discussion, then the case for the Build Back Better Act is -- only gets stronger and that we are building momentum around that set of arguments.

If you step back and you think about a typical family's budget and what they have to spend on expenses in a typical month, about 60 percent of those costs fall into housing, healthcare, prescription drugs, childcare, and transportation. That's what, you know, the bulk of a family's budget is made up of.

And on each of those areas, the legislation that the President has prioritized and is moving through Congress would address and reduce those costs. And so, I think that if that's the debate and that's the question -- how can we address those costs that families are facing -- again, the Build Back Better Act will do more to lower costs than any piece of legislation in modern American history. And so we feel quite enthusiastic about being able to make that case.

Q One quick follow-up on inflation: Fed Chair Jerome Powell said that "transitory" is no longer the right way to describe inflation. He said, "It now appears that factors pushing inflation upward will linger well into next year." Given that, do you believe that this inflation is now more entrenched and not transitory?

MR. DEESE: What we -- what we believe is that price increases elevated to the level that we're seeing hit American families and their pocketbooks, and we need to do everything that we can to address those directly.

We also believe that the strength of our economic recovery and the strength of our labor market and the strength of wage increases and the steps that we've taken to try to provide some relief to American families position our economy and American households uniquely well to address what is a global issue around price increases, in the context of supply chains and otherwise.

Q But is Powell right? Will these increased prices last through next year?

MR. DEESE: Well, I -- I am not going to get into the prediction business, other than to say -- and I'll echo what I noted at the beginning -- is that most outside, independent forecasters continue to see price increases moderating, and moderating meaningfully, over the course of next year.

MS. PSAKI: Mary.

Q Along the same line, the President did try to set expectations in his statement today, saying, you know, you expect inflation numbers to stay high, but that doesn't reflect the reality. So, when do you expect the reports will actually reflect

this?

MR. DEESE: Well, I would just point to some of the real-world -- you know, real-world data that we're seeing, which is that we've seen gas prices come down. We've seen natural gas prices come down. We've seen real progress in unsticking some of the supply chain bottlenecks that have been -- that have persisted in our economy.

I was noting on supply chains that there's actually now some reporting that the principal concern is on the back end of the holiday season -- too much excess inventory, and people have over-ordered.

And so -- so, certainly these are not, you know -- these are things that don't work themselves out overnight. And we -- I will go back to what I said at the beginning of this: We never over-index on any one piece of data or any one data release. But we -- you know, we're going to stay focused on what we can do to try to address these prices in the immediate term.

MS. PSAKI: Nandita.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just talking about sort of gas prices coming down, Brian, a group of bipartisan lawmakers, six of them from Texas, as you're probably aware, sent a letter to President Biden about not reinstating a ban on U.S. oil exports. What is the position of the White House on that, considering the letter was sent, explicitly saying that the White House is considering a move to that effect?

MR. DEESE: It's not an issue that we're currently focused on. The President, in our focus on energy markets, has made clear to the team that all options should be on the table to try to address challenges in the market and bring relief to American consumers. That's certainly the approach that we have taken to date in our international engagements, our diplomatic engagements, and actions we've taken, including the exchange and sale from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve that the President announced about 10 days ago.

So, we'll continue to work on those issues. We'll continue to work with states and localities to make sure that they have the support that they need, but that specific issue is not one that we're currently focused on.

Q Sorry, and just a quick -- a quick follow-up. In terms of sort of your overall, you know, economic growth sort of forecasts from the White House -- you know, given the fact that the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly, some economists have started factoring in sort of a slowdown in demand and -- you know, for services and hiring in general. What are sort of your expectations just over the next few quarters, in terms of sort of overall economic growth in the U.S.?

MR. DEESE: Well, we, like others, are obviously tracking very closely the questions raised by the Omicron variant and are waiting and watching the information as we receive it, with the understanding that we need to know more. But we are learning some. We've seen some encouraging data coming out recently. But it's something that we will continue to monitor closely and study closely.

In terms of, you know, the current -- growth currently: All indications are that the economy in the fourth quarter continues to grow robustly, and we certainly expect that to continue. And our focus is on how we can maintain the strength of the overall economic recovery, the strength of the labor market recovery, while also addressing head on these price challenges and these supply chain bottlenecks, and to be very clear that the risk exists that price increases become entrenched in the long term; that's something that would be a real problem for the economy.

We are working in looking forward and don't see that in the current environment, but are focused on the steps that we can take to drive that kind of robust recovery going forward.

MS. PSAKI: Weijia.

Q Thank you, Jen. And thank you, Brian. Just a quick follow-up on Build Back Better, and then one on unemployment.

Given how involved you are with negotiations, what is the most viable timeline right now for passing it, and is before Christmas still realistic?

MR. DEESE: So, we want to move as quickly as possible. And we are working very closely with Senator Schumer and the entire caucus on facilitating that outcome. And Senator Schumer has indicated his intention, his timeline, and we're both supportive of that and believe that that's -- that's right and viable.

We want to move as quickly as possible here. We think that the outstanding issues are getting worked through in the process. We're making a lot of progress. So, we're -- we want to move as quick as possible, and we believe there is every reason why we can.

Q Okay. And in terms of unemployment, the system now -- and I think you referenced this earlier -- doesn't account for gig workers and self-employed who were on uninsured -- unemployment insurance, but then they ran out, if they were pandemic related. So, is there any way you're tracking the number of those people who might not be included in the numbers but might still be struggling? And is there anything that you can do to help them?

MR. DEESE: So, there's sort of two -- two elements of that question.

The first is that there were -- people who were previously receiving unemployment insurance and are no longer receiving unemployment insurance are obviously not reflected in the UI claims. And these reflect the people who are receiving government assistance. And that has come down dramatically, as I said, from 18 million to less than 2 million.

Within that category, people who were on unemployment insurance and then come off of unemployment insurance, the way to track that data is really to look at the labor force data, because those people could either be in the labor force actively looking for a job, or they could be employed, or they could end up out of the labor force.

And so one of the things from an economic point of view -- one of the concerns that you have is to track the labor force participation, because if people come off of unemployment but they leave the labor force entirely, then that's a -- that's an outcome that you want -- you hope to avoid.

So that one of the positive indications in our current labor market is that what we're seeing is: Even as the number of people receiving unemployment insurance has come down dramatically, labor force participation has stayed steady and started to tick up, which suggests that people are coming back into the labor market, finding jobs, in many cases, or are actively looking for jobs. But that's the sort of best proxy to get at what I think you're trying to refer to.

MS. PSAKI: Jacqui.

Q Thank you. Brian, some of the critics -- administration's critics have said over the last few months, as these reports come out and show inflation is rising, that the administration highlighting the bright spots like unemployment is glossing over the reality that people are paying more for food and things -- basic necessities. And a lot of the people who are impacted the most are the poorest or they're on fixed incomes. They might not be moved by an unemployment statistic. So, what's your message to those people, especially getting closer to midterms?

MR. DEESE: Yeah, absolutely. And just to be very clear that the -- the issue of, you know, increased prices hits people in very practical ways in their lives, and no one likes to pay more at the gas pump. Nobody likes to pay more at the grocery store. And for people who are, you know, a lower income, it can be -- it can be tough.

I think the message is that employment and our labor market are really important ways in which people can seek and find economic opportunity and prosperity. And the fact that wages are increasing the most for people in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution is something that hasn't happened in our economy in some time and is really positive, because what it means is that there are more job opportunities and job opportunities at higher wages for people to move into. That's point one.

Point two is that, in terms of household income and their balance sheets, if you look at the bottom 25 percent or the bottom 40 percent of households and you look at both the increase in wages that people have received and the benefits that people have received -- because, in the American Rescue Plan, for example, we passed a Child Tax Credit that is now going to families on a monthly basis. We provided checks to people in there.

And you look in the aggregate: Household income for those people in the lower ends of the income spectrum is actually higher today, on a monthly basis, even when you take into account increased inflation.

So that's not true for every person, and every individual has challenges, and we want to speak to all of those. But in terms of overall, economically speaking, because of the strength of the economic recovery, the strength of the labor market, and the support that we've provided over the course of the year, people are better positioned today to deal with these challenges, which are real and which are tough and which is why we're focused every day on what we can do to try to alleviate them.

Q Does the administration see inflation as a driving need to extend the Child Tax Credit?

MR. DEESE: The -- our view is that the Child Tax Credit is a -- you know, a really important, basic support for families and that we should extend it. And we should extend it because it's doing what we hoped it would do, which is dramatically reduce child poverty in America, dramatically reduce poverty in America, and give families some breathing room in a very strong but uncertain recovery.

So, certainly, it's the President's position that we should do that -- and we can do that, I would just underscore. We can do that as part of Build Back Better in a way that is fiscally responsible, fully paid for, won't add to any inflationary pressures in the economy.

MS. PSAKI: Heather.

Q Yes, thanks. Brian, can you give us any timing on when the President may name additional Fed nominees? Is that process drawing to a close? Could we see something next week?

MR. DEESE: I cannot. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Josh.

Q You alluded to the forecast for tomorrow's number. You know, I know you didn't want to name any, so allow me.

MR. DEESE: Great.

Q 6.8 percent is our median estimate year over year; that's higher than last month, with 6.2. The month-over-month figure is 0.7, or 0.9. So, in other words, they're sort of showing different things. (Inaudible) is getting worse, month over month getting better.

My question for you is: Where are we, do you think, in the arc of inflation right now? You referenced the forecast bringing it down by Q4. Do you think the wave is cresting? When you talk of backward-looking data, do you think that inflation is leveling off; the data aren't just capturing it? Or do you think it's going to get worse before it gets better?

MR. DEESE: So, a couple of points. First, I'm not going to try to predict or project. Your projection is an aggregated estimate of a lot of people who have thought about this, and I'm not going to get into the projection game. We obviously do our own estimates.

The second is, you raise an important point, and I think this is good context for -- in the -- you know, in anticipation of it,

which is: Because of what we have seen over the course of the last 12 months or 11 months, the year-over-year headline number will be elevated compared to, you know, historic levels under any circumstances. That's baked in, and that's largely a function -- well, that is 100 percent a function of everything that happened starting before November of this year.

So, in a sense, the year-over-year is -- should be taken with that context.

In terms of your question about, you know, the timing, I think that we are in a place where we are seeing some of the -- when you look at what are the underlying issues that are driving this price pressures, we are seeing some movement that is notable -- you know, as I've spoken about, on energy, with respect to the supply chains. And our focus is on look- -- tracking that across time because we think that that will be what will end up flowing through to affect those numbers across time.

This is not -- you know, I would not try to project on a, you know, week or month-by-month basis because these numbers move around. You know, I mentioned used car prices, and a lot of people focus on what's happening at the wholesale markets when dealers are buying used cars because that is really an indication of where the prices are going. But that could take, you know, a month or two to filter through into data.

So, in each of these cases, there are specific elements, and we'll continue to look closely at them. But I think you have seen -- you are seeing, in some important areas, some movement that is notable.

Q So do you think the wave is cresting, or is it too soon to say?

MR. DEESE: You know, we will -- we'll just -- we're going to continue to focus on what we can do to advance this recovery and advance this recovery in a way where, you know, typical households continue to have some of that breathing room and more Americans are able to take advantage of a job market where there are, you know, historic opportunities out there.

MS. PSAKI: Phil.

Q Thanks, Brian. Just two quick ones, if you don't mind. One of the concerns last month on the topline numbers was that perhaps it was broadening out a little bit. I'm thinking particularly not just pandemic-driven price increases, but maybe rent being one specifically. Have you guys seen anything in that side of things, not driven by the pandemic, that has raised concerns as you look at the data?

Well, I'm glad you raised this issue around housing and shelter prices -- "shelter" being, you know, either rent or homes -- because I think it connects to a point that, Kristen, you raised, which is: We have, for years, in this country had a problem of inadequate housing supply, of single-family homes to buy and of houses to rent. It is decades in the making of underinvestment in affordable supply, particularly in areas of the country where there is the most economic opportunity.

And so it's a persistent challenge of people wanting to move to, you know, a different part of the country where they might have a job opportunity and are costed out of that because of housing.

The answer to that problem is to make a historic investment in increasing the supply of affordable housing in America. That is the real answer to that question. And the sooner that we do that, the sooner that we initiate that process, the sooner that we are going to actually address that underlying challenge.

And so, some of the price increases that are already baked in and will flow through to this -- to these numbers, we know that everyone should anticipate that, but the real policy question it goes to why Build Back Better is so important is: Are we going to actually take some steps to finally address that issue so that we can say to the American people that, looking forward, they can actually expect some real relief?

The housing investments in the Build Back Better plan are directed exactly to that issue: How do we build the kind of housing supply that typical people need across the country in urban, suburban, and in rural areas?

nousing supply that typical people need across the country in urban, suburban, and in rural areas?

And so that is -- that is a real present issue, one that will continue to be with us. But hopefully, if we can get this bill done, we'll actually have the tools in place to start to show people some real progress.

Q And then, just from a broader perspective, do you guys view it inside your team as an acceptable trade-off if prices are high for a shorter duration, a shorter period of time, perhaps because of some of the demand-driven elements of ARP so long as you've been able to achieve some of the data -- positive data you've been laying out over the course of this day and I think the White House has been talking about for the last several months? Like, this is a trade-off that's acceptable so long as those price increases don't last or become entrenched?

MR. DEESE: Well, I would start -- we're humble enough to not suggest that we control all the levers of the macroeconomy and we're in a complicated, uncertain global environment, and -- number one.

Number two, I think that our view, and I think borne out by what you're seeing internationally, is that the challenges of supply chains, of price increases, of the issues of labor supply are persistent across industrialized countries. But what's unique about the United States right now is the strength of our economic growth, the strength of our labor market, and that is in no small part due to the American Rescue Plan.

So we're absolutely, you know, not satisfied or want to accept a situation where Americans are paying high prices when they can't afford it. I think where we are in this economy is one where we have real strength and that positions us to address real challenges that we need to.

MS. PSAKI: We can do a few more. April.

Q I want to go back to the Child Tax Credit. December 15th could be that last check if BBB is not passed for the Child Tax Credit. If it's not passed, what does that do to this child poverty rate that you have been touting so much -- how you slashed it? Does it stay the same, or do you anticipate a rise for that?

MR. DEESE: Well, we are confident that we're going to get Build Back Better passed. Extending the Child Tax Credit is one of many reasons why we need to do that and we need to do that as soon as possible.

And so, that's why you see this administration as focused as we are on working with our congressional counterparts to move -- to move that agenda.

There are multiple elements of this bill where if you look at costs and you look at, you know, typical household situations, the urgency is very clear. This is one. The lack of affordable housing is another. The lack of affordable childcare is another that is not a "tomorrow" issue for so many families that are trying to figure out how to get somebody back into the labor market.

And so, we're -- you know, that's the case we're making, and that's -- and we're confident we're going to get this done.

Q And then, on housing, can you talk about the price of new housing, as well as existing housing? Part of the problem, they're saying, with housing prices -- new housing prices -- it deals with inflation and lumber. The cost of lumber has pushed up the price of housing and the supply chain issue.

How, in the short-term, do you plan to combat as you -- combat that as you're dealing with the housing issue? And talking about affordable housing, houses to buy right now are up because of inflation, supply chain issues.

MR. DEESE: Yeah. So, it's connected to Phil's question. You know, the prices in the residential market are elevated, but a lot of that is a supply issue. The supply issue is in part connected to near-term supply chain issues, but it is much deeper and longer-term -- about years and years in which we've underinvested in supply, compared to the demand that -- in the economy for housing, particularly in certain regions and geographies.

economy for housing, particularly in certain regions and geographies.

The supply chain challenges that are affecting the inputs that go into homebuilding are similar to the supply chain issues we're facing overall, but we've tried to take a dedicated focus in a number of areas. So, for example, we have an hours-of-service waiver for trucks that move across the country to be able to operate additional hours. We extended that to cover building materials as well.

The issue of helping to move a product through our ports is very important, particularly for building materials that are being imported.

So, you know, we were -- we're focused on the supply chain issues in general, but, as they relate to building materials wherever they can, we're trying to highlight them.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Let's do Kaitlan and Courtney, and then we're going to wrap it up.

Go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Thank you, Jen. Thank you, Brian. My first question is on Russia. The U.S. and European allies have pledged "severe" harm on Russia if it escalates the situation in Ukraine.

As you and the White House know, the economy is global, it is intertwined, especially the energy market. And European consumers are already paying record costs to heat their homes this winter.

So I'm wondering how the administration is thinking about mitigating the impact on the U.S. economy with whatever decisions you decide to take with regard to sanctions.

MR. DEESE: So, I will leave the question of sanctions and the impact on our European counterparts to Jake and to Jen. I think they've spoken to them and the, sort of, dynamic involved there, including as it relates to Nord Stream.

With respect to U.S. consumers, the -- natural gas, in particular, is an issue that -- is a commodity that doesn't trade globally. And so, the decline that I referenced earlier -- 25 percent decline in natural gas prices since November -- that's the price of U.S. natural gas, which is about -- I haven't looked in the last day -- but, you know, four to five times lower than in Europe. And that's for a set of reasons -- the export constraint -- export constraints.

But in terms of the American consumer, looking forward to this winter, there's some positive news in terms of domestic natural gas and not a lot of flow-through to the issues you're raising.

Q And on wages, just to follow up domestically: I think the average American would find inflation more manageable if wages were also going up. And in the last year, inflation-adjusted weekly earnings are down 1.3 percent. So when can Americans expect to earn more money for the work that they're already doing?

MR. DEESE: Yeah, it's a good question and good context to -- connects to the earlier question as well.

So, if you look at wage growth, it's important to look at it through a couple of lenses. The first is: Where is that wage growth happening in the income spectrum? And what you're seeing is wage growth today that is fastest and strongest in the bottom half of the income distribution. So, for working families that are making less, they're seeing their wages increase more and, in many cases, significantly faster than price increases. So that's point one, distributionally.

The second is in terms of overall household balance sheets -- the income that families have. And when you think about a family and they're -- them trying to balance their checkbook or the -- this year, the question is, "What was my wage increase, and what was the support that I received through checks from the government, through the Child Tax Credit?

And when you take those into account and look at household income consistent with the data that you just said, the typical

AND WHEN YOU TAKE THOSE INTO ACCOUNT AND LOOK AT HOUSEHOLD INCOME, CONSISTENT WITH THE DATA THAT YOU JUST SAID, THE TYPICAL family -- the family, you know, at the 50th percentile -- has actually seen their household income increase, even accounting for price increases.

Obviously, as we move forward in this recovery, what we want to see is -- we want to see a strong labor market recovery; want to see wage increases, particularly for those at the bottom; and we want to see, you know, a balancing out here of prices.

That s the scenario that we re all trying to work toward.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Courtney, last one.

Q Can you give an update on the Competition Council that you re chairing? It s something I didn t hear you mention in the context of all this and --

MR. DEESE: You said it s something that s what?

Q The Competition Council. You never mentioned it in all of this. Can you talk about some of the accomplishments of that council and what you all are working on right now?

MR. DEESE: Sure. Sure. I m excited for the interest. And we will have -- (laughter) -- and I mean that. I mean that sincerely.

MS. PSAKI: Settle in, everyone. (Laughter.)

MR. DEESE: No, I mean that sincerely. So -- and we will be -- we ll be convening the full council around the end of the year. And so, look out for that.

It s -- I can talk about some of the specifics, but I will say that, actually, you know, it s consistent with the general philosophy that does interact with a lot of the things that we re discussing here, which is that the President s -- the core directive in the -- in the executive order was to pursue pro-competition policies across the federal government, across agencies and use antitrust statutes -- enforce them robustly -- across agencies as well.

And so, this intersects with a number of the issues that we ve discussed. I would note positively that the House this week passed a bill on increasing competition in ocean shipping, which is something that we encouraged as part of that executive order.

But more -- you know, more directly, you take an issue like the railroads and the, you know, lack of competition in that sector. Well, that affects this question of: How do we unstick bottlenecks if there s not sufficient competition among rail lines?

We talk about food prices. And I think the last time I was here, I was with Secretary Vilsack. When you look at most of the increase in food costs, you can isolate a significant portion of that to meat, beef, pork, and chicken in particular. Those are very concentrated industries where a small number of meat processors control the industry.

And so, what you ve seen is prices for the farmers go up, prices for consumers go up, and profits for the meat-processing companies in the middle go up. And that s an issue of concern and one that we have focused on both from an antitrust perspective, but also investing in helping competitors get into that market.

In fact, today we re making \$500 million available to small meat processors to try to increase competition in that space.

So, we ll be happy to follow up and give you a full slate of where we are on the -- there were -- for those of you who were

So, I'm happy to follow up and get you a list of those items on the -- those items -- for those of you who were paying attention, there were 72 specific actions in that executive order. We're tracking against all of them.

MS. PSAKI: Go through them all.

MR. DEESE: But I will spare the rest of you that, and we're happy to follow up.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Thank you, everyone, so much. Thank you, Brian.

MR. DEESE: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: I definitely kept him much longer than I promised, so we want him to come back.

All right, so I only have one item for all of you at the top. As I think all of you saw this morning -- or many of you saw -- this morning, the President opened the Summit for Democracy and announced the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal -- a landmark set of policy and foreign assistance initiatives to defend and bolster democracy, human rights, and the fight against corruption.

The initiative represents a significant targeted expansion of U.S. government efforts to defend, sustain, and grow democratic resilience with likeminded governmental and non-governmental partners.

In the coming year, the United States is planning to provide up to \$424.4 million toward the initiative. And these efforts will center on five areas of work crucial to the functioning of transparent, accountable governance, including supporting free and independent media, fighting corruption, bolstering democratic reformers, advancing technology for democracy, defending free and fair elections and political processes.

I know we'll also have a call this afternoon -- I'm not sure exactly the timing -- to give you more information on the deliverables from this as well.

Colleen, why don't you kick us off, or continue our journey here together?

Q Thank you. Do you have an update for us on the President's call with Zelenskyy? And another one, just sort of related -- sort of: There were a couple of reports last night about a potential financial threat or a potential military action to Iran in regards to the faltering nuclear talks. I wondered if you had a comment or update on that.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let me start with the first. When I came out here, the President was still on the call. So, our plan was to provide a written readout to all of you, which you should be getting as soon as it's complete or following the briefing -- whenever it's ready.

But I will highlight for you that the President's intention going into this call was to provide an update for President Zelenskyy on his call with President Putin and underscore our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as Secretary Blinken did when he spoke with President Zelenskyy earlier this week. So this is a follow-on to that call.

President Biden is also intending to -- was intending to discuss his deep concerns with Russia's buildup on Ukraine's borders and his commitment to respond to strong measures in the event of a Russian military escalation.

We've engaged closely with the Ukrainians throughout this process at a range of levels and have been in daily contact with senior officials in the Ukrainian government. So, clearly, that is a component of it.

I'd also note -- I think as many of you saw -- that the President also provided an update to the B9 eastern flank countries, with a personal readout of his call with President Putin, to hear their perspective on the current security situation and underscore our commitment to transatlantic security and to our NATO Allies that are -- with our NATO Allies -- that's sacred, and also to continue to stay in close coordination.

On the -- but we will get you a readout as soon as that is complete.

On the Iran question that you also posed second, I do have an update for you. As we've said many times from this podium and elsewhere in the government, President Biden is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon and believes diplomacy, in coordination with allies and regional partners, is the best path to achieve that goal.

We believe a diplomatic resolution offers the best path to avoiding a nuclear crisis. However, given the ongoing advances in Iran's nuclear program, the President has asked his team to be prepared in the event that diplomacy fails and we must turn to other options, and that requires preparations.

We have made clear to Iran that the only path out of sanctions is through nuclear compliance. We have kept all the sanctions that we inherited in place, and we've consistently enforced sanctions, all while also presenting the clear path of their removal.

If diplomacy cannot get on track soon, and if Iran's nuclear program continues to accelerate, then we will have no choice but to take additional measures to further restrict Iran's revenue-producing sectors.

While I'm not going to get into additional specifics on that front, I can provide you a little update on some of the coordination that we're doing on the international -- on the international front.

A senior Treasury official will lead a Treasury-State delegation to the UAE next week to talk about sanctions compliance. The delegation, which will be led by OFAC Director Andrea Gacki, will focus on engagements with the private sector and key UAE government officials to discuss our understanding of the companies and financial institutions that facilitate non-compliant Iranian commerce that runs through its -- or touches the UAE.

This trip follows a range of conversations that our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, and Brett McGurk had in October; that, obviously, Rob Malley and Brett McGurk had in November; and Deputy Treasury Secretary Adeyemo also had in November.

And this is part of our extended outreach to our partners around the world to ensure that we were preparing for a range of contingencies.

Q Jen, the timeline -- you know, how long diplo- -- the diplomacy is going to continue before (inaudible) to other actions?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to present a deadline today. But what I can tell you is that we have presented a diplomatic path forward; that path is still open. But based on the outcome of the last round of talks and the ongoing advancements in Iran's nuclear facilities, we are laying the path for -- the groundwork for another path entirely. So, it's just meant to be preparations.

Q Jen, the President said he hoped to announce by tomorrow meetings between Russia and NATO Allies about Russia's concerns. Do you have any update on that meeting and who may be attending?

MS. PSAKI: I think what the President was referring to is a range of discussions and engagements that we're continuing to have today: the B9, as an example of that; obviously, there are a number of NATO partners involved there. And, of course, we will -- while I have nothing to preview at this point, the President -- two presidents tasked their teams to follow up, and we expect that to continue as well.

So, it was not meant to be an indication of a deal cut, concessions made, any formal format or anything along those lines -- more about the commitment to ongoing engagement.

Q And you said, you know, you don't know what Vladimir Putin's next move is here; it's not clear yet whether he's made

up his mind whether or not to invade Ukraine. But just now, the Russian President said the situation in southeast Ukraine resembles "genocide." That was how he described it. Is that something that you would view as a rhetorical escalation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Russians are known for their rhetorical escalations, as they are also known for their ways of providing misinformation around the world and within eastern flank countries. So, I think we have to take their own efforts to communicate to their public with a grain of salt.

What we know is that the aggression here is on the Russian side. The military buildup is on the Russian side. There's a path -- a diplomatic path forward. The part of the President's objective -- our President's objective -- in having the call was to convey that clearly -- that certainly is our preference -- but also to convey clearly that there would be consequences, they would be significant and severe. And we're going to coordinate with our European partners on that.

So, I would, unfortunately -- as I've said before, I'm not a spokesperson for the Kremlin, and I would take their -- their words with a little bit of a grain of salt.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just a quick question on -- Ukraine has asked to become a member of the NATO Alliance and they've put that out for several years. It's been out there, but really has -- there hasn't been any decision on that. What is the United States' position on that issue? I mean, does the President generally support the enlargement of NATO, or does he want the Alliance to add new members? What is his position?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Nandita, the President has spoken to this in the past. And obviously, there are requirements that any country -- which the President certainly supports -- any country aspiring to join security alliances -- NATO and others as well. And he certainly supports the aspiration of Ukraine. There are certain requirements that they would need to meet on a range of issues, including corruption and other topics. And it's obviously up to NATO partner countries and NATO, the Alliance, to determine what the path forward looks like.

Q As sort of biggest member of the Alliance -- largest member of the Alliance, what is the U.S. telling NATO on this issue, specifically? And is the President, perhaps, offering any assurances to President Zelenskyy today as he speaks to him on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: No, the President's message has been clear. There are -- he certainly supports the aspiration of Ukraine, as he supports the aspiration of a range of countries, again, to join security alliances around the world. There are certain requirements that need to be met. Those are well known, and the United States, as a member of NATO, supports that path.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q And, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q Sorry, a quick question on the Senate passage of the Republican bill yesterday to overturn President Biden's vaccine mandate for private employers. Are you concerned that given, sort of, the Democratic support that that -- a bill actually was able to get -- are you concerned that it perhaps will actually be able to, you know, interest some centrist House Democrats to maybe join in and, you know, and secure a vote on that? I understand the White House has said that, you know, you will veto the resolution if it lands on the President's desk.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what's most important for people to know out there and to understand is the reason why the President proposed these requirements, which include not just a vaccine requirement, but also a testing option -- testing once a week, which we feel and I think the American people feel is quite reasonable -- in order to keep workplaces safe,

keep schools safe, keep stores safe for people out there Christmas shopping and holiday shopping safe.

We also know that it's something -- it's steps that economists support. It's steps that 60 percent of businesses have already put in place.

So, again, we're hopeful that this doesn't come to the President's desk. I can't make a prediction of that. I leave that to the vote counters or the whip counters in the House. But if it comes to his desk, he will veto it.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Apart from whatever President Zelenskyy might have asked the President for today, can you clarify what Ukraine has formally requested of the U.S. as they prepare for any potential invasion? Have they requested support for air and naval defense or electronic warfare, as an example?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not going to get into specifics of private requests made through diplomatic and defense channels from the Ukrainian government. If they want to speak to that, they certainly can speak to that.

I would note that there were requests -- there have been requests made over the course of time, and the United States has provided over the course of some time now, I guess, \$400 billion, I believe this is correct -- \$400 million, sorry -- "billion" would be a lot -- \$400 million in security assistance that we've committed to Ukraine this year, as a part of our efforts to support their sovereignty and territorial integrity. And that includes \$60 million of security assistance that we announced during the President's visit in September, which we're still providing, we're still delivering to the Ukrainians.

So, in terms of their specific requests, what they want to convey privately -- if they want to convey that publicly, that is certainly their prerogative, but we would not do that on their behalf.

Q And the head of Ukraine's military intelligence service is quoted in the New York Times saying, "There are not sufficient military resources for repelling a full-scale attack by Russia if it begins without the support of Western forces." Has Ukraine expressed a similar sentiment to the administration, and do you have a response?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to get into private diplomatic conversations, but I will convey to you -- and what -- what the President would convey, has conveyed, I'm sure is conveying directly to President Zelenskyy: Our objective is to make clear the significant and severe economic consequences if Russia were to invade Ukraine, not just from us, but from the global community.

Obviously, it's up to President Putin to decide how he's going to respond to that, what steps he may or may not take as it relates to that.

But I think what the public should see clearly -- whether it's the Ukrainian public or the global public -- is that the United States is standing up for what we believe are democratic values, for the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine.

And our objective is to prevent that from happening.

Q And one quick one on vaccines: Based on conversations Pfizer has had with the administration, should Americans be mentally preparing for a fourth shot?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you really to what the CDC and our health and medical experts have conveyed, and they will continue to evaluate and assess what is needed for the American people and to keep people safe. But I don't want to get ahead of their reviews of data.

Go ahead, Jacqui.

Q Thanks, Jen. On vaccines, Amtrak, which we know is near and dear to the President's heart, announced that they will potentially have to cut some long-distance routes because they don't have enough employees to operate when the federal mandate takes effect. And that's despite the reporting on the Hill today that 94 percent of their employees are vaccinated overall.

Amtrak got \$66 billion from the infrastructure deal; now they're talking about having to make cuts. Is this policy undermining the President's own legislation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say -- and you touched on this, Jacqui, but it's great news that 94 percent of Amtrak's workforce is vaccinated. That is an enormous percentage of their workforce, to state the obvious. They also still have about a month before the deadline for federal contractors on January 4th, or at least a couple of weeks -- four weeks, approximately.

Our -- what we -- what we have conveyed to employers is that post deadline, we expect employers will follow their standard HR process. That means for employees not in compliance, they'll go through education, counseling, accommodations, and enforcement. That would be what the process would be to play out.

But, of course, these requirements -- we don't expect these requirements will cause disruptions to services that people depend on. There's some time to implement it. We're, of course, working with all federal contractors and federal employees and ind- -- and parts of the federal government to implement this moving forward.

Q And then, on Ukraine, there are some reports that the U.S. is pressuring Ukraine to cede land to Russia as a way to deter them from invading. Is that true?

MS. PSAKI: No, that's absolutely false.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you. Staying on Ukraine, Russian troops are still amassed along the border. Do you have any indication at this point that the President's strategy is working?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Kristen, I think it's going to be up to President Putin to make a decision about whether he is going to invade Ukraine and -- and send a message to the global community that he does not respect the territorial integrity of a country when the United States, our European partners are sending a clear message that there will be significant economic consequences -- severe economic consequences -- beyond, as Jake Sullivan said the other day, what we have seen in 2014.

So, at this point, obviously, you would know if they have made the decision to invade. They have not. But again, it's -- the ball is in his court.

Q And we know that Ukraine -- some lawmakers on Capitol Hill said that they want more military equipment now. I know we don't have a readout yet of the call. But are there any discussions about potentially sending that equipment now and not waiting until there's further invasion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there is equipment that we're continuing to provide. That is a follow-up from the President Zelenskyy's meeting with President Biden back in September. So, that is something they're continuing to receive.

And, of course, there are a range of options under consideration, but nothing I can preview at this point in time.

Q Because they want more. They're basically saying, yes, that is the case; but given this current situation, they actually want more.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I understand that. And they've conveyed that publicly. I don't have anything to preview at this

point. But certainly, we have been a strong supporter of not only the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also through security assistance. And the President has a long record of that.

Q If I could do one just domestically on the Child Tax Credit and really just following up on the questions that April was asking --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Are there any discussions about potentially pulling that piece out of Build Back Better and passing it unilaterally as a standalone bill if Build Back Better doesn't pass by Christmas so that there isn't a lapse?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think April -- I don't know where she went. Okay, there she is. I was pointing to her in the ether there. (Laughter.)

April raised an important point here, which is that December 15th would be the last child -- check from the Child Tax Credit because it would expire January 1st.

One of the reasons that we have been pressing for the passing of the Build Back Better is because there are key components of this package that would lower costs for American families early next year. So, when we talk about inflation and we talk about costs and how they're impacting families' budgets, that's why we, Leader Schumer, and others have been pressing so hard to move this forward.

In terms of the mechanics of legislative vehicles, I'd really point you to the Senate on that. But again, you know, that is a timeline and that is something that we are well aware of.

And to go back to -- I can't remember who asked the question before -- maybe April, maybe Jacqui, I'm not sure -- it is true that, in part, because of the Child Tax Credit, we cut child poverty in half.

I'm not an economist. I can check and see if there's more predictions of what the impact of the lack of existence of that would be, but that sends a clear message about the impact that has had on low-income families, on families who are struggling to put food on the table. And it's been a pivotal contributor to our success in doing that.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thanks. I just want to circle back the President's comments yesterday about NATO Allies. He said that he hoped, by Friday, he would, quote, be able to announce "meetings at a higher level, not just with us but with at least four of our major NATO Allies and Russia to discuss the future of Russia's concerns relative to NATO writ large."

Are these meetings, conversations not happening? And if not, what was he talking about exactly?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he has a call with the B9 this afternoon. That's something that includes a number of NATO Allies. And, of course, we are in touch every single day with a number of NATO Allies and partners.

And as I noted a little bit earlier, when he -- when he had the conversation with President Putin, they discussed and agreed to have their teams follow up in ongoing discussions and engagements.

In terms of any other format or forum, there is no current mechanism for that. But right now, our focus is on engaging with the Europeans, many of our NATO Allies; doing that at a very high level, as the President referenced; and also following up, as was discussed in his call with President Putin.

Q So we should not expect some kind of announcement tomorrow about some sort of conversation with these -- the entities he's talking about, about accommodation?

MS. PSAKI: Not one that I have to predict at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q One more --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q The President, today, spoke about global press freedom during the Summit.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q I'm just wondering if he's going to commit to holding a year-end press conference.

MS. PSAKI: Well, one, I would say that global press freedom is something that he feels is important to stand up for not just here, but when he is traveling around the world and ensuring that your colleagues around the world who are dealing with circumstances where they don't -- they are put in jail, they don't have access to any officials, they are restricted from covering global events, human rights abuses around the world -- not that what you don't all do isn't very challenging; I'm not suggesting that -- but there are a lot of circumstances around the world that I think even go beyond -- go beyond.

I would say the President answers questions multiple times a week. I think he's done it already several times this week. I don't have a formal press conference with embroidered cushions to predict for you at this point in time. But I can assure you that he will take your questions many, many times before the end of the year, and he looks forward, absolutely, to doing that.

Go ahead, Josh.

Q Can I just ask quickly on Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You spoke to measures you're preparing. Are there particular sectors that these sanctions would be aimed at? Or can you give us any more detail about what options are on the table?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Certainly understand your question, Josh. I think part of the effort of our OFAC Director in going over- -- going to the UAE to have these discussions is to have these discussions at that level about the range -- a range of sectors and options, but I don't have anything else to preview at this point in time.

Q Is there a concern that existing restrictions are being violated with regards to this trip? Like people are finding a way around existing --

MS. PSAKI: We're talking about -- we have kept the sanctions in place. We're talking about additional steps, should they be needed. Obviously, a diplomatic path forward and having a constructive dialogue through the P5+1 format is our objective, but we're preparing a range of options in addition to what we have in place.

Q Have you consulted any of the P5+1 on these measures?

MS. PSAKI: That's part of our discussions, and this is part of the -- our OFAC Director's trip is building on conversations that Brett McGurk, that Jake Sullivan and others have been having in Europe as well.

Q Okay. Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Just a quick question on -- just a real quick question on the Democracy Summit.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You mentioned the \$424 million.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you have a sense how much of that is already appropriated versus how much would need to be approved from Congress?

MS. PSAKI: Let me check, Scott. It's a really good question. I don't have that in front of me, but I will check for you, and I'll get that around to all of you after the briefing.

Go ahead, Ashley.

Q Two quick questions on Ukraine. One, why did President Biden immediately call top U.S. allies right after speaking with President Putin and waited two days to call Presidents Zelenskyy?

MS. PSAKI: He was traveling yesterday -- I think as you all know -- and he was looking forward to having a good, lengthy call with President Zelenskyy today, which I expect he will do. I would note that we also followed up with Ukrainian counterparts at a lower level than the President. So it was just a matter of scheduling and getting it all on the books.

Q And yesterday the President also said that combat troops on the ground in Ukraine are currently off the table. Can you give us a sense of what would change that calculation -- when they would be back on the table?

MS. PSAKI: That's not currently part of our discussion or part of our policy calculations, so I don't have anything to predict on that front.

Go ahead, Zolan.

Q Thank you. On Afghanistan, there's -- in recent days, some parolees or people seeking parole have started to be denied who are looking to flee from Afghanistan.

I understand the system has been flooded with, I think, roughly 30,000 applications, but some of the lawyers for those parolees or applicants have said that the documentation requirement, including specifying an address or a specific threat, given that it might have been 10 years ago or their home might have been destroyed, is a pretty high standard. Is the President currently satisfied with this system of humanitarian parole? Or is there any thought of lobbying Congress for another special parole program?

MS. PSAKI: Well, here's what we're doing -- I know you didn't exactly ask me this, and you follow this closely, but for others: Through Operation Allies Welcome, we're proud to welcome more than 74,000 Afghans to the United States and have received funding from Congress to accept up to 95,000 through Operation Allies Welcome through the current fiscal year.

So, obviously, what we're doing now is continuing to process, through a vetting process and through -- and there are requirements of that, of course, as there should be. That's an addition to Afghans who are admitted through the U.S. Refugee Admission Program and other pathways.

You touched on this, Zolan, a little bit, but the infrastructure to support refugee resettlement was decimated by the prior administration. We've been working hard to rebuild that capacity. I would say the success we've had to date of welcoming that number of people is a reflection of the fact that we've made some progress in that regard.

And right now, DHS is processing applications for Afghan nationals located outside of the United States who are seeking humanitarian referral based on urgent humanitarian need or significant public benefit reason.

There are going to be requirements, of course, through any of these systems, as there should. As we consider welcoming people back in, we're continuing to put in more resources so that we can process more people and continuing to try to take - do everything we do -- can -- do everything we can, I should say -- sorry -- to handle the surge in interest and in cases.

But there will be people who don't meet the requirements who aren't going to be able to come to the United States, and we just want to be very clear and transparent about that as well.

Q Jen, on -- with the Democracy Summit, again. At a CNN town hall, the President was asked about voting rights, police reform. He said that he had been so focused on Build Back Better and infrastructure but that he was going to move on to that -- indicated he would move on to that.

Now that we are moving -- you know, you've had some progress with that legislation -- is there any update towards whether he would be more open to a filibuster carveout? Or just what exactly is he doing when it comes to those two legislative measures, given the summit going on and (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, one, I would say: As the President -- as you heard the President say, you know, having a summit like this is an opportunity to discuss how we can all improve our democracies, protect democracy around the world, and do that in coordination with not just leaders, but civil society actors, private sector, et cetera. That's the purpose of this summit.

There are dozens of White House staff working every single day on voting rights and this priority. It's fundamental to upholding the rule of law.

You've heard the President talk about this many times since he took office. He signed a historic executive order in March. We've worked to double the voting rights staff in the Civil Rights Division. He's appointed the Vice President, at her request, to lead this effort.

There are discussions, as you know, in Congress among a range of leaders about how to continue to move this forward, and we are eager, active participants of those discussions.

I don't have anything more in terms of views or his steps on the legislative process at this point.

Q No change to his approach on the filibuster?

MS. PSAKI: Don't have any updates today. Okay, I got to -- I got to wrap in a second.

Let me go to AFP. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Thank you very much.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Thank you. One on Russia, one on Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and one on China, if I may. Could you tell us a bit more about President Biden's -- how President Biden views Putin's central argument that seems to boil down to: They -- they don't want Ukraine, A, to enter NATO and, B, also (inaudible) also not have any U.S.-offensive weapons or NATO-offensive weapons in Ukraine.?

So, when President Biden referred to looking for accommodations, was he talking about cutting some sort of deal with Putin about, "We won't do this if you don't do that?"

MS. PSAKI: Let me be very clear: President Biden told President Putin in their call that one nation can't force another nation to change its border, one nation cannot tell another to change its politics, and nations can't tell others who they can work with.

We've consistently expressed support for the principle that every country has the sovereign right to make its own decisions with respect to its security. That is written into the underlying principle of the Alliance and that remains U.S. policy today and will remain U.S. policy in the future.

As you know, NATO is a defensive alliance and they don't have aggressive intent toward Russia. They've conveyed that, leaders of NATO have conveyed that. Every step -- step we have taken to put in place the protective measures needed to defend our Allies.

So, that -- just to be clear about where the President stands -- that is what he conveyed directly to President Putin.

Q Okay. And then a quick one on China --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- because the Olympics are almost -- would President Biden like European allies to join this diplomatic boycott initiative? Is he disappointed in the French very publicly not doing so?

And just more generally, you know, if you're going to talk about genocide in a country -- which is, you know, right there in the statement -- is playing sports at all a kind of a reasonable thing to be doing? Why stop at a diplomatic boycott?

MS. PSAKI: Well -- well, first, I would say this is the decision we made -- the United States made. The United States has been a leader in holding China accountable, as it relates to human rights abuses, the -- what we've seen in Xinjiang, which, again, the President and we have referred to as a "genocide." And we have taken steps at the global level to lead this effort to put accountability measures in place.

Q But, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: As it relates to the Olympics, we made a decision -- the President made a decision that we cannot continue with business as usual, that not sending a diplomatic delegation was making that clear not just to China, but to the global community. There are others who have followed that same pattern and have taken that step as well. We leave it to other countries to make their own decision.

I'm not going to express support, disappointment, or anything like that from here. They will make their own decision.

And I will also just paraphrase -- and I wish I had the quote in front of me -- Senator Romney, where he said -- and he -- his quote was better than this, so I'm paraphrasing it here. But that we cannot leave global diplomacy on the shoulders of athletes who have been training their whole lives to compete in the Olympics.

If you look back at 1980 -- and there was a boycott -- all of those people who trained for the Olympics, it was left on their shoulders -- young athletes who had been training their whole lives. We are sending a very clear message about our view on human rights, but we made the decision not to leave that on the shoulders of athletes.

on human rights, but we made the decision not to leave that on the shoulders of athletes.

(Cross-talk.)

MS. PSAKI: Let me just go to Raquel, and then we got to wrap up.

Raquel, go ahead. Raquel.

Q Thank you so much --

Q (Inaudible) is there any reason why you keep a travel ban on other African nations --

MS. PSAKI: Can -- can we let -- can we let Raquel --

Simon, Simon, Simon --

Q I have been trying to ask a question for one --

Q A lot of us have, so --

MS. PSAKI: Simon, I'm trying to answer your question. And then I'm going to go to Raquel, okay?

Let me --

Q Thank you so much, Jen, for --

MS. PSAKI: Can I say one thing, Raquel, and then I'll go to you?

Q Sure.

MS. PSAKI: Simon, we're evaluating every single day. We don't want these to be permanent measures --

Q Jen, can I ask my question?

MS. PSAKI: -- and it is something that the President is getting updates from his COVID team every single day on.

Q So -- so, my question is: The Omicron variant is now in 57 countries. The WHO issued a statement today and said that Africa has 46 percent of the nearly 1,000 cases globally. But 70 -- almost 70 countries in the world have imposed travel ban on only Black African nation.

And the U.S. is among the countries that have imposed sanctions on only eight African nations, when the virus -- when the variant is in 57 countries. Why don't you just lift it or impose sanctions on all the countries that have it? What would you say to those who believe that this is a racist ban that targets only African and Black African nations?

MS. PSAKI: Simon, I would convey to you that is absolutely not the intention. That is not our policy. This was a recommendation of the health and medical experts because there were a large number of cases in South Africa. And they made a decision early on, out of an abundance of caution and to protect the American people, to slow the spread of the variant.

This is not meant to be permanent. It's not meant to be a punishment. And we are evaluating every single day decisions on whether to -- when to lift these restrictions.

Go ahead Raquel

Go ahead, Raquel.

Q Thank you so much, Jen. Since it s --

Q Jen, on the --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Raquel.

Q -- democracy day here today in White House, what is the White House assessment so far from what you guys are hearing or from world leaders and the commitment they are making?

And also, what commitments would President Biden like to see from Brazil and other countries experiencing, right now, forms of democratic backsliding? What is President Biden expecting to hear from President Bolsonaro tomorrow?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that the President convened the summit in order to have a forum at a global level to discuss publicly but also privately -- and he convened a private discussion with leaders this morning -- to engage, listen, and speak honestly about the challenges and opportunities facing democratic governments and how democracies can deliver for their citizens.

And part of this is an opportunity, as I noted in my opening, to stand up for the freedom of speech, the freedom of press; for ensuring that, as a global community, we are lifting up democratic societies, we are fighting corruption, we are bolstering democratic reforms.

And the United States wants to be a country that leads by example and builds and repairs from the damage done for four years.

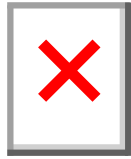
Thank you so much, everyone. I appreciate you. Have a good day.

3:23 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with President Alejandro Giammattei of Guatemala
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 9, 2021 9:52 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2021

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with President Alejandro Giammattei of Guatemala

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with the President of Guatemala, Alejandro Giammattei, and his delegation on December 8 at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce building before the culmination of his visit to Washington to review extensive bilateral cooperation on migration, counternarcotics, and promoting economic opportunity. Also in the meeting were National Security Advisor to the Vice President Nancy McEldowney, NSC Senior Director Juan Gonzalez, and U.S. Ambassador William Popp. Mr. Sullivan applauded the Giammattei government's work to combat criminal organizations involved in the trafficking and smuggling of drugs and people, and both noted the United States' desire to collaborate with Guatemala to expand port security. Ambassador McEldowney provided an update on the Vice President's Call to Action to drive private sector investment in the region and address the root causes of migration. Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to work with Guatemala to combat corruption, address citizen security, and support regional economic development.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on President Biden's Calls with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine and European Leaders
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 9, 2021 10:25 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2021

Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on President Biden's Calls with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine and European Leaders

Via Teleconference

6:00 P.M. EST

MODERATOR: Thank you. Good evening, everyone, and thanks for joining. A reminder that today's call will be on background, attributed to a "senior administration official." The contents will be embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

Our speaker today is [senior administration official]. They'll have a few remarks at the top, and then we're happy to take some questions. Over to you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, and good evening, everybody. Sorry for running a few minutes late. Happy to jump on and give a readout of the two calls that the President made today.

Before I do that, let me just take a brief step back and put this in the context of the larger diplomatic outreach that we have been doing this week.

Obviously, as everybody is tracking, the President spoke with President Putin on Tuesday. Similarly to what the President did this summer before he met with Putin in Geneva, there was a clear effort made to engage with our allies and partners on key security issues.

Last week, Secretary Blinken was in Riga, where he participated in the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting, including conversations with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, as well as our NATO Allies.

On Monday, before the President spoke with President Putin, he had a conversation with his Quint partners. Everybody will be tracking that immediately after the call with President Putin, President Biden again followed up with his Quint partners to give them a readout of the call.

Diplomacy continued with the Europeans as well. Secretary Blinken spoke yesterday with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg to give him a readout of the call and have a follow-up conversation.

And in addition to NATO, we have been engaged in active diplomacy with our partners in the European Union, including Secretary Blinken's conversation yesterday with European Union President Charles Michel, as well as ongoing conversations at various levels of the EU government.

So, within that context, the President, today, then had a conversation with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy. There was an initial touch made by Secretary Blinken, I believe, on Monday, with Zelenskyy to set the stage for the President's phone call. And it was very important to President Biden that he call and follow up with Zelenskyy personally after that call.

Similarly, the President spoke today with the B9 -- the Bucharest Nine. This is our group of eastern flank allies.

So, just wanted to give that initial chapeau to place the calls that happened today within this broader context of diplomacy that we have been doing with our European partners and allies both before and after the President's conversation with President Putin.

The call today with President Zelenskyy was very warm. It lasted around 90 minutes. The main purpose of the call was an opportunity for President Biden to give President Zelenskyy a readout of his phone conversation with President Putin.

President Biden made very clear a continued U.S. commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The President shared a readout of his conversation with President Putin -- including telling Zelenskyy, as he had told Putin, that if Russia further invades Ukraine, the U.S. and our European allies would respond with strong economic measures, provide additional defensive materiel to Ukraine, and fortify our NATO Allies on the eastern flank with additional capabilities.

He also explained that he had told President Putin that there is another option in terms of de-escalation and diplomacy. So, as part of that, the President underscored the United States' continued support for the Normandy Format and ongoing efforts to implement the Minsk Agreements, including U.S. support for that overall process, which, of course, is led by our French and German allies.

I know there's been lots of churn in the press about whether or not there were concessions. There very clearly were not. I think President Biden has made very clear that he stood by our principles. He made very clear that one nation can't force another nation to change its border, one nation cannot tell another to change its politics, and nations can't tell others who they can work with.

And so, President Biden underscored those points that he made to Putin and made very clear to President Zelenskyy that that was a key message of his call with him.

Turning to the call that the President had with the B9: He engaged with this grouping earlier in the summer in advance of his trip to Geneva, where he participated in a summit with those leaders. It was a very positive exchange. I think the eastern flank allies were very appreciative of the outreach and found the President's message quite reassuring and really underscored the unity of resolve that that we have within the alliance.

The President was very clear to express his awareness of the broader concerns that are had by the eastern flank. So, in addition to what we have been seeing in terms of the worrying buildup of Russian forces on Ukraine's border, the President also made clear that these threats are bigger than Ukraine and reaffirmed his very strong support to transatlantic security

and reiterated -- as he frequently does -- the sacred commitment, as he describes it, of the United States to Article 5, to transatlantic security, to NATO, and especially to our eastern flank allies.

Similarly to what he described to President Zelenskyy, the President gave a readout of the conversation that he had with President Putin and talked about his focus on the way forward.

The President made very clear that there was this other path separate from the military path -- similar to what he said to Zelenskyy -- that there was also the path of de-escalation and diplomacy. And the President made very clear that this path was going to be pursued in full consultation with our allies and partners.

The conversation was then an opportunity for several of the allies to be able to share their views of the security situation and to be able to discuss with the President their views on next steps, especially in terms of continuing to pursue this diplomatic path.

Finally, the President made clear his support for continued consultations and conversations at NATO about ongoing efforts to refine our defense and deterrence posture there.

So, let me stop there, and happy to take any questions.

Q Thanks for taking the question. What's your current assessment of the effect that the threat of sanctions have had on Putin's behavior? And are you expecting that there will be direct engagement between NATO members and Russia to address concerns that Putin raised on the call with Biden? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, in terms of the first question, I'm not going to characterize the Russian position on that. All I can say is that President Biden made very clear what the United States' view was, which was the readiness to impose very significant economic consequences if Russia took steps to further invade Ukraine.

In terms of follow-up, this is something that we are actively discussing with our partners. That was the purpose of the conversations that have been happening at NATO with our Western European partners and then with the Eastern European partners today.

There are existing formats, including the NATO-Russia Council, where there is a longstanding invitation to the Russians to participate in talks. That invitation very much remains open. And we will continue working through ways to continue engaging diplomatically on this full range of issues.

Q Hi, thanks for doing this. A couple questions, if I may. In terms -- just in terms of sequencing the calls, why did Zelenskyy get a call two days after -- after the Putin call, coming after European allies, when this is obviously an issue which concerns Ukraine so directly?

And secondly, in terms of your internal kind of thinking and planning for deterrence and responses, what are you defining as an "invasion"? Like what is the red line there? You know, Russia is obviously very skilled at this hybrid warfare game. So are we talking border skirmishes? Is it more little green men, escalation in the Donbas, or tanks in Kiev? What would be the line that would trigger the response there? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks for that question. In terms of the sequencing, the President obviously has a lot of other things on his agenda, including domestic issues, domestic travel, and the rest. And so, you know, had an entire sequence of calls and conversations that we did with the full range of partners.

As I mentioned, Secretary Blinken had spoken with Zelenskyy in advance of the call. There obviously have been continued conversations with the Ukrainians as well as our European partners over the last couple of days.

The one thing that I would say that the President made crystal clear to Zelenskyy in his call today was that if Ukraine is on

the agenda, then Ukraine is at the table. And I think the conversation today was an important opportunity for the President to be able to follow up with Zelenskyy on that call, and to be able to engage with him directly as a follow-up to conversations that we were able to have with the Ukrainians over the last couple of days.

And on your second question, I'm, you know, not going to speak to any of the specifics on there. But suffice it to say that the President made very clear to President Putin that there would be very significant consequences and made very clear that if there was any further escalatory measures against Ukraine that there would be a very strong reaction and very significant consequences.

Q Thanks very much for doing the call. Two questions. One, given that the President was at the Democracy Summit and has been stressing corruption, did the topic of corruption come up in his conversation with President Zelenskyy?

And second, both National Security Advisor Sullivan and Under Secretary Nuland have stressed that our response will not be like 2014. What, in the administration's view, was wrong with our response in 2014? And what is the lesson that's been derived from that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, on the first question, the President did actually make reference to the importance of democratic resilience in democratic institutions in his calls with both President Zelenskyy and with the B9. Obviously, a focus on democracy is something that is always front and center on the President's mind. And as you said, it was very apt today, in terms of this being the kickoff to the Democracy Summit.

I think there certainly is a recognition of the significant progress that Ukraine has made to date on some of these democratic reforms, a recognition of continued steps that they need to make. And I think a reminder for all of us that one of the best ways to address our own security, both in the United States and in Europe, is to ensure that we have strong and resilient democratic institutions here at home.

And in terms of looking forward at steps: Certainly, I think in the context of economic measures, the President has made very clear that the United States, in consultation with our European partners, are looking at a very strong set of economic measures. And I think some of those will include things that that were not done in the past.

So, I don't want to detail the full range of things that are being contemplated, but I think what the President and Under Secretary Nuland and others have laid out is what the President made very clear to President Putin, which is that there would be significant consequences, particularly on the economic side, if these military aggressions were to continue.

Q Hi. Thanks so much for doing the call. Did President Zelenskyy make any specific requests of President Biden in this call? I know you mentioned that there was a discussion of defensive materiel for Ukraine and fortifying the NATO Allies in the eastern flank. But did he come to the call with any specific requests of the President?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not going to read out the Ukrainian side of the call, and we'll refer you to the Ukrainian government for information on their side.

But what I can say from the President's perspective is that he did make very clear to President Zelenskyy what he had also said to President Putin, which is a strong and ongoing commitment by the United States to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, cited the continuing security assistance that we have been continuing to provide to Ukraine, as well as the strong resolve that the United States has in partnership with our European allies for a significant response if Russia were to further invade Ukraine.

Q Hi, everyone. Thanks so much for doing this. I have a quick logistical question and then a substantive one. The call today with Zelenskyy was a telephone call. Right? It was not a video call like the one that the President held with President Putin? That was my first one.

And then also, just in terms of any kind of conditions that the U.S. and its allies may set for these talks to proceed to, kind of, you know, really get underway. Is there a condition—like Russian de-escalation, a reduction of troops, reduction of

or, you know, really get underway: is there a condition -- like Russian de-escalation, a reduction of troops, reduction of threatening rhetoric, anything like that -- that's being put on the table as a definitive condition or even just a gesture from the Russian side that they are, you know, coming to this with good intentions and ready to really proceed, you know, with the talks? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks. So, on your first question, both of these were phone calls today; they were not video calls.

And in terms of that, I'm not going to go into any further -- in terms of reading out the conversation on what the President discussed with Putin on those fronts. It's not something that we're going to telegraph publicly.

But I think the two of them did agree, as Jake Sullivan had read out, that the President and President Putin agreed that our teams are going to follow up on the issues that were discussed today.

The President and his colleagues agreed that we're going to work together to ensure that our engagement with Russia is closely coordinated.

So, I think within the next couple of days, we're obviously going to continue talking with our European partners, we're going to continue talking with our Russian partners, and finding a way forward.

The one thing I will add is, I know there has been a lot of churn in the press on this idea of concessions and what is going to happen in the talks. And the one thing that I want to make clear -- and this goes to your question -- is that we are always prepared to talk about security issues with Russia and, frankly, a large number of formats exist to be able to do that. That's why the NATO-Russia Council exists. It's why the OSCE exists. It's venues where the Russians can raise their concerns, and it's venues where we can raise our concerns.

And so, we are, of course, prepared to talk to the Russians about this full set of issues.

MODERATOR: All right. Thanks, everyone. Those are all the questions that we have time for.

Again, reminder that we're on background, attributed to a "senior administration official." And with the conclusion of the call, the embargo is lifted.

Thank you.

6:19 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, December 10, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 10, 2021 8:00 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 10, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, December 10, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:27 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Just a few things going on today. Okay, so we continue to make further progress on the President's Port Action Plan which will lower the cost of goods for American families by strengthening supply chains and modernizing port operations.

And today I wanted to highlight that the Department of Transportation awarded \$12.6 million in grants to ~~nine~~ [eleven] marine highway projects across the country in Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. These investments through Amer- -- the America's Marine Highway Program will help us move more goods more quickly and more efficiently, and help our agricultural exports get goods to market.

The announcement follows the successful first step -- step of the Port Action Plan, which provided the Port of Savannah \$8 million to set up container yards in Georgia and North Carolina, freeing up dock space and speeding up the flow of goods in and out of the port.

Three container sites are already in operation in Savannah, Statesboro, and Atlanta, and are already supporting Georgia businesses such as Home Depot, Carter, and agricultural exporters.

And one more piece of good news for shipping costs: New data, today, confirms the cost of shipping a container between Asia and the West Coast is more than 25 percent lower than it was three months ago. So about fourth -- or, sorry, \$6,000

-- I was not a math major -- \$6,000 lower than it was three months ago, as this chart shows you.

And that's important for the American people to understand and know, because if the cost of shipping a container is less expensive, it means that more goods can be shipped [sic] -- shipped, that there should be more on the shelves stocked, and that the cost of goods also will come down. We've seen that play out, but this is definitely a positive sign.

Also wanted to give you a bit of a sense of the week ahead. We'll have more to come in the coming days, I promise. But I can confirm for you that on Thursday, the President will award the Medal of Honor to three Army soldiers for acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty.

And their stories are so amazing. I just wanted to take a brief moment to highlight a couple of them.

Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe will receive the Medal of Honor posthumously for his service as a platoon sergeant in Iraq. On October 17th, 2005, Cashe was conducting a nighttime mounted patrol when the Bradley fighting vehicle he was in charge of was attacked by enemy small arms fire. An improvised explosive device disabled the vehicle, causing it to become engulfed in flames. After extracting himself, he set about extracting the driver and his peers trapped in the troop compartment.

Despite the severe second- and third-degree burns covering the majority of his body, he repeatedly entered the burning building [vehicle] to retrieve his fellow soldiers. He selflessly refused evacuation until all of the other wounded soldiers were evacuated.

His heroic actions at the cost of his life saved the lives of his teammates.

Also being awarded a Medal of Honor is Sergeant First Class Christopher Celiz, who will receive the Medal of Honor, also posthumously, for service as the leader of special op -- of a special operations unit in Afghanistan on July 12th, 2018.

Sergeant Celiz led an operation to clear an area of enemy forces. When a large enemy force attacked, Sergeant First Class Celiz voluntarily exposed himself to intense enemy fire multiple times to retrieve and employ a heavy weapon system; direct and lead a medical evacuation via helicopter; and act as a physical shield for his team, the aircraft, and its crew.

After being hit by enemy fire, he motioned to the aircraft to depart rather than remain to load himself -- load him. His selfless actions saved the life of the evacuated partner -- partnered force member and almost certainly prevented further casualties. He died of the wounds he received in combat.

And finally, Major [Master] Sergeant Earl Plumlee will receive the Medal of Honor for his service as a weapons sergeant in Afghanistan on August 28th, 2013. Then-Staff Sergeant Plumlee -- Plumlee responded to a complex enemy attack when a massive explosion tore a 60-foot breach in the base's perimeter wall and 10 insurgents wearing suicide vests poured through. Staff Sergeant Plumlee and five special operations members mounted two vehicles and raced toward the site of the detonation.

Without cover and with complete disregard for his own safety, Staff Sergeant Plumlee repeatedly advanced on the enemy force, engaging multiple insurgents with only his pistol, killing two insurgents and engaging combatants at close range, including an insurgent whose suicide vest exploded a mere seven meters from his position.

Undeterred, he joined a small group of American and Polish soldiers who moved to counterattack the infiltrators, and carried a wounded soldier to safety.

So, the President looks forward to honoring two of those individuals posthumously, and one -- on next Thursday when he awards the Medal of Honor.

With that, Colleen, why don't you kick us off?

Q Okay. Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask two questions. One is: Can you talk a little bit about the, you know, White House outreach to Senator Manchin and other senators on the Build Back Better Act, in relation to the recent CPI Index reports today?

And then the second question is: I wondered what else the White House can do or should be doing with regards to women's reproductive rights, given everything that's happening? Specifically today, there was a ruling out of Texas that keeps the restrictions intact while the court -- sorry, while the lawsuits play out. So, I just wondered what else -- aside from the codification of Roe in Congress -- can and should the administration be doing.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. Well, let me take the first one, first. Let me first say that, as it relates to the CPI -- or the Consumer Price Index data this morning, let me start with the data. The data was taken in November. Even since that time, over the course of the last nearly two weeks, we've seen a decrease in costs in some of the areas that account for a big percentage of the rise in inflation.

So, about 50 percent of this -- of this inflation -- these inflation numbers -- of the inflation numbers, excuse me, is attributed to the rise in gas prices and the rise in car prices.

On gas prices -- and we had a chart, and maybe they'll pull it up again -- that Brian Deese, our NEC director, talked about just yesterday, what we've seen in recent days are gas prices are coming down from their peak. And this obviously isn't -- is not captured in the data since the data was through the course of November.

So, in 20 states, gas is below their 20-year average in real terms, and natural gas is down 25 percent from its November average.

We attribute this to a range of factors, including the President tapping the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in coordination with partners around the world. But more broadly, we're seeing positive signs of supply chain bottlenecks being addressed -- that are helping address this as well. And we expect those numbers to continue to decrease across the country.

The other piece that -- and gas, I should also note -- sorry -- the wholesale market is down over 30 cents per gallon since its peak, which is, again, a good sign.

The other piece, as we're seeing, as it relates to cars, is that wholesale car prices are down as well -- or used car prices are down as well. So, when car dealers are purchasing cars, they are at a lower cost than they were before for a range of reasons, including the availability of chips, because we've helped solve some issues in supply chain. That means that as we look to the first quarter of next year or the first couple of months of next year, those car prices are going to keep coming down.

One other -- third note -- let me just note -- in the data: One of, of course, the factors as it relates to cost that consumers are experiencing -- or the American people are experiencing -- is, of course, the cost of food, when you go to the grocery store. Twenty-five percent of that, our economists -- our economic experts estimate is related to meat prices. You go, you buy a pound of burger, or you buy a poultry -- whatever it may be.

And our assessment here -- and we've taken steps as it relates to our competition agenda -- is that dominant corporations in these industries are taking advantage of their market power to raise prices while increasing their own profit margins. Meat prices are a very good example of that -- something we're working to crack down on.

And just to give you a sense: Gross profit margins for big meat processes are up 50 percent, and net margins are up over 300 percent; that should not be the case. That is not all attributed to supply chain issues, et cetera.

So, I just wanted to dig into some of the data things there first. But I will note, as it relates to how this -- how we have these conversations now with this data out -- our argument is that this makes passing Build Back Better even more imperative, even more important. Because what Build Back Better will do is it will start cutting costs early next year,

including for childcare ca- -- cost, cutting them in half in 2022; making preschool free for many families, starting in 2022; saving families -- saving families the eight hu- -- \$8,600 a typical family currently spends on preschool; leading to the construction of additional housing units, starting in 2022.

These are all areas -- the way people -- and the President just talked about this too -- experience inflation, as you all know, is not through the data or graphs -- as much as we love graphs in here -- but it s about the cost on their family budgets. And so that s why, in our view and the President s view, the argument is even stronger to get it done now.

The last thing I would note on this -- and then I ll get to the other question you had -- is that the President just noted -- and I don t know if you saw -- that he would be speaking with Senator Manchin early next week. Obviously, we re in touch at a staff level. But I will leave it, of course, to Senator Manchin to speak to that further.

As it relates to the question about the Supreme Court ruling this morning, one, you can -- the President has obviously been at former Senator Dole s funeral for the majority of the day, but we will be issuing a statement in his name. We, naturally, wanted him to see and review and edit first, so you will all be getting that shortly.

But let me just note that we are -- the President is very concerned by the Supreme Court s decision allowing S.B. 8 to remain in effect, given the consequences the law has for women in Texas and around the country and for the rule of law.

I know you noted this, but I would just like to reiterate that the President is deeply committed to the constitutional right recognizing Roe v. Wade. And he has argued and advocated in the past for codifying Roe through passing the Women s Health Protection Act. And the ruling this morning is a reminder of how much these rights are at risk and how women across the country who have now -- in Texas, especially, it s been 101 days since this was put in place; 101 days where their health, their access to what has been law of the land for many decades now has been questioned and put -- and challenged.

And so, this is just a reiteration of how much -- a reinforcement, I should say -- of how important it is to codify Roe and move forward with the Women s Health Protection Act. And he s certainly hopeful that they will move forward with that. It s already passed the House -- so, in the Senate.

I would note, in terms of additional administration actions, HHS announced a department-wide response to protect patients and providers in response to Texas law S.B. 8. These actions include -- and they will continue to be built upon in coordination with the Gender Policy Council here -- issuing Title 10 grant support for health service providers, with Title 10 grantees receiving significant funding to support expansion of family planning services, as well as plan to expand access to emergency contraception and family planning services to any eligible applicant.

These are steps that have already been underway, but we will continue to explore what more can be done.

All right. Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Hi, Jen. What are the next steps in the U.S. process to extradite Julian Assange after the latest UK court decision?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is really a case for -- it s an ongoing criminal case, so I d refer you to the Department of Justice and their statement. The President is committed to an independent Department of Justice, and so we d really let them speak to any next steps.

Q Okay. And on another topic, Russia spelled out some specific demands for NATO today, including that NATO should rescind its promises that Ukraine and Georgia may eventually join the Alliance and that NATO not deploy weapons in countries that border Russia. What s the U.S. response to that? Have you seen those? And can you give us an update on when that meeting between the other NATO countries, the U.S., and Russia will take place?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this list -- which we have certainly seen but should not come as a surprise -- it s the same list of

demands that the Russians have been advocating for and voicing for several months, if not years. And that is their prerogative to have -- to have their views and demands. We have our own, and we have our own concerns about security circumstances around the world, including, of course, on the border of Russia and Ukraine.

Russia can raise their concerns; we can raise ours. Europeans can raise their concerns. That's the whole point of having a dialogue and a discussion.

While I don't have an update on what format that may take, which I think is the second part of your question, it's important to note that there have been formats for conversations about European security with Russia for 70 years, approximately. And many of those are formats that could work and we are open to being the format, moving forward.

I would note, also, that even as we're determining what that looks like, we have been engaged on a daily basis with all of the players here -- our European partners -- at a range of levels. Obviously, you saw the President have the call with the G9 leaders yesterday, as well as the Ukrainians. But we are in touch with -- through senior officials at the State Department, in the White House, and we will continue to be. But I don't have any update at this point on the format.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President said, just a few moments ago, that he thought that inflation may be at its peak right now. Is that the determination of your economic team when they look -- when they analyze, kind of, the state of play in the market right now? Or where is he kind of basing -- what's he basing that on?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think if the President were standing here -- I know he's always invited, which may be the next thing someone says, but -- which is okay -- you're invited if you're listening -- is that -- would be that we, of course, defer to the Federal Reserve and their assessments that they make, as they make predictions about inflation. They are predicting, as outside economists are, that inflation will come down next year. So, we would really defer to them, as would the President.

I think -- I have not obviously had a chance to speak to him, post his comments, because it was just shortly -- not so long ago. But I think what he is -- in his mind, as he went on to articulate, is what we're doing to lower costs for the American people. And that's how he sees it. It is -- of course, "inflation" is a term we use here, we use at the Federal Reserve -- a very important economic term.

The way the American people experience this at home is costs and what things cost. Whether it is the cost of gas or natural gas, heating your home or putting gas in your car, we're seeing those prices come down; or whether it is buying a car, again, we're projecting those prices will come down. We're obviously working to bring the cost of food down.

So, we are seeing those move in a good trajectory and in a good direction. And I think that's how he was articulating it.

Q And then, you guys have been consistent on your argument, as it relates to Build Back Better and inflation, now for weeks, if not months. Senator Manchin has been consistent in his position for weeks, and not months. Obviously, something is going to need to change in that dynamic on the Senator's side of things for him, I presume, to support Build Back Better. What changes in your argument that resonates with the Senator, given his long-held positions here on inflation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we will certainly let the Senator speak for himself. He will, of course, be speaking with the President, as the President alluded to, early next week. And I would expect the President will convey much of which we've -- what we've conveyed publicly: that while we've seen costs increase in some areas and we've seen a good direct -- they move in a good direction in some areas as well, what we need to do now is think about what we're going to do about rising costs, what is our plan to address rising costs.

You know, you saw every single Republican in the House vote against Build Back Better. What were they voting against?

Yes, they were voting against the President's agenda. They were also voting against lowering costs. They were voting against lowering costs for childcare, lowering costs for eldercare, lowering costs for healthcare.

And I think the -- not argument, because he has a very good working relationship with Senator Manchin -- but I think the case he will make is that this is exactly the time to pass this bill and move it forward so that we can lower costs for the American people on all of those topics, including insulin, in areas that really pinch -- force American families to pinch pennies.

Go ahead.

Q On that same point though, just politically, do these numbers make it more challenging, you think, to pass Build Back Better, given the fact that opponents and even Manchin argue that pouring more money into the economy will only make things worse?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what we know is what 17 Nobel economists -- laureate economists have conveyed, which is that this will help address inflation. We know that economists across the board -- many, many across the board -- have conveyed that this will help address what we see as rising costs.

And we also know that for American families sitting at home, they don't necessarily think of it as what the data and what the economists are saying; they think of it as what their daily -- what their weekly budgets are, what their monthly budgets are, and who -- which leader has a plan to address that.

So, actually, for us, politically, arguing we're going to bring down the cost of childcare, we're going to bring down the cost of preschool, we're going to make affordable housing a reality -- and on the other side of the aisle, you have people who are opposed to lowering that cost -- is a pretty viable argument.

Q And on the timeline here -- just to put a finer point on it -- you know, you noted some -- the costs are already going down that may not be reflected in this report and that you may see changes next year. But if, you know, you're an American at home worried about these rising prices, how long do you think Americans should be prepared for these increased prices to persist?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the way Amer- -- the American people look at it is not through data. Right? They look at it through how things are impacting their lives. So, what they can know is that gas prices are coming down in about 20 states across the country. We expect that to happen in more.

Natural gas prices are coming down. That means if they're looking to heat their homes -- it was a very cold day here yesterday; other cold days around the country -- those prices are coming down.

If they're looking to buy a used car, those prices should come down early next year. And also, there are steps we're taking to address areas of -- where we see prices increasing, like when they go to the store to buy some, you know, burgers for a barbecue -- that we're working to go after meat conglomerates for raising prices and jacking prices up.

So, it's area to area. But what we can tell them is where we're seeing progress, where we're still going after the problem. And what we would also convey to them is: You should look closely at who has a plan here and who's just shouting from a megaphone about it being a problem. We all agree it's a problem; it's who's going to do something about it.

Q And how worried are you that the Fed may have to raise interest rates?

MS. PSAKI: We really, of course, defer to the independence of the Federal Reserve in making those decisions and what they feel is right for the economy. So, I wouldn't say we're worried. We leave them to their independent assessment of what's needed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Is the Manchin conversation happening here at the White House in person or by phone?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything on the format. And, obviously, we've been in close touch with Senator Manchin, but I just was echoing what the President said just a few minutes ago.

Q Got it. And then on Assange, the High Court issued its ruling in part because of assurances from the administration that Assange would not be kept under the harsh conditions that are typically reserved for high-security prisoners. Can you talk about what assurances those were and where he might be held?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Weijia, it's really all through the Department of Justice, which is where those discussions would happen, so I'd really point you to them.

Q Okay. And then one more on COVID, because the President received a briefing yesterday: Is there anything you can share about what the doctors told him? Especially because it's been about two weeks since Dr. Fauci said it would be two weeks until we had more definitive information about Omicron.

MS. PSAKI: Well, he said it would be two weeks -- a few weeks. Obviously, we want to wait until there's an assessment that the doctors feel comfortable and confident in providing to the American people. I don't have an update for you here today, but as soon as they have an assessment to make, they will make it. There's also a briefing this afternoon with the COVID team as well.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Republicans are circulating a modified version of the CBO score for Build Back Better. In their version, it included extensions of programs without being paid for, which we understand is not how the President put forward this legislation. But the reason that they're saying they did that is because -- Lindsey Graham says, "If you believe these programs [are going to] go away [after] one, [or] two...years, you shouldn't have a driver's license." We all know Child Tax Credits are not going to go away after a year. What does the White House say to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to quote, of all people, Norm Ornstein at the American Enterprise Institute who put this quite well -- quote, "You can't assume programs will be extended just because Lindsey Graham wants to assure that. An estimate based on what's not in the bill is bogus and fundamentally dishonest."

I mean, this is not a CBO score. This is a fake CBO score. It's not about the existing bill anybody is debating or voting on. This is about proposing the extension of programs that has not been agreed to without the commitment of the President -- which he's made repeatedly, publicly, that he would never support extending these programs if they weren't paid for, period. That has been his commitment. That is his commitment.

I would also note that there's a particular irony here that it shouldn't be lost on Senator Graham -- maybe it is lost on Senator Graham; I don't know -- that the plan they proposed and passed for and passed into law, the 2017 tax cuts, were \$2 trillion, which were not paid for in any way, shape, or form. That didn't seem to upset them at all.

And I will say -- and they can thank us in any way they would like for this -- that what our projections and the projections of our economists predict is that, for our plan, if -- as this plan continues in the second decade, it would actually reduce the deficit by \$2 trillion.

So, we're actually covering their irresponsible tax cuts to corporations and high-wealth net worth individuals. They're very welcome for that.

Q Thank you. And then on crime: The National Sheriffs Association alleged that they haven't seen the kinds of federal support to crack down on crime that we talked about here in the briefing room earlier this week. I already have lengthy statements from the White House and the DOJ detailing and countering some of the points that they made.

But more broadly, if the feeling among communities and law enforcement groups is that things are getting worse and not better, and that they're not visibly enough seeing results from what the White House is doing, how can the White House project a stronger image that they're tough on crime and crack down on this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Jacqui, I would first say that we recognize, and let me just reiterate, that we agree that violent crime is a serious problem. We have concerns about what we've seen -- serious concerns -- about retail theft in a range of communities across the country.

And I know you are aware of this, but we have actually taken some, what we would consider, serious steps to help work with these communities, whether it's plussing up police forces in San Francisco and LA, or having the FBI work directly with the LA Police Department to address areas where we have seen an increase in retail theft.

I would also note that what the President has proposed -- and obviously we're on the CR short-term budget right now -- is an increase and a plus-up in funding for the COPS program of almost \$300 billion more than what was proposed by the former President, because he believes that police departments and law enforcement should be properly funded and supported. That is something he's been a believer in his entire career.

So, I would say, we are committed to -- but we are working -- we have proposed additional funding. We are working directly now. And, obviously, this work is ongoing.

Q And then one real quick one on the Jussie Smollett verdict. Both the President and Vice President tweeted at the time of the attack. The President tweeted: "What happened to @JussieSmollett must never be tolerated in this country." "We are with you, Jussie." The Vice President called it an "attempted modern-day lynching."

Since the guilty verdict, are there any lessons learned here on rushing to judgment when a crime is alleged?

MS. PSAKI: I think there are lessons learned perhaps for everybody who commented at the time, including former President Trump. I wish April Ryan was here because I think she asked him the question. Do I see her somewhere, or no? Okay.

Q She just left.

MS. PSAKI: She just left!

Where he said, "I can tell you that it's horrible. It's doesn't get worse," in response to her question about the trial -- about the -- about Jussie Smollett at the time.

I would say that we respect the jury's decision. Lying to the police, particularly about something as heinous as a hate crime, is shameful. Instances of that need to be investigated fully. And those found guilty need to be punished. And false accusations divert valuable police resources away from important investigations. They make it harder for real victims to come forward and be believed.

You know, if you look back at the time -- it's also true and important to note that accusations of hate crimes should be taken seriously, and they need to be fully investigated.

But that's where everybody was looking at it at the time. But certainly knowing what we know now, it's important to also note the danger of lying to police and lying about hate crimes and the fact that it diverts important resources

note the danger of lying to police and lying about hate crimes and the fact that it diverts important resources.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thank you, Jen. I know you've gotten some questions about the timeline of inflation, but let me just try again in this context.

I think it bears repeating, because now we have the numbers: Fed Chair Jerome Powell said that "transitory" is no longer the right way to describe inflation. He said it "now appears that factors pushing inflation upward will linger well into next year."

I asked Brian Deese this question yesterday, so let me put it to you today. Given that -- given what Jerome Powell is now saying, does the administration, does the President acknowledge that inflation is more entrenched and not transitory?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Kristen, I would say that -- I can't speak, obviously, for Jerome Powell. But I think part of the point here is that it doesn't really matter what you call it. Our view, but more importantly, the view of the Federal Reserve -- which he oversees -- private sector forecasters in the markets has been and remains -- and has been for months -- that inflation will ease over time. That is the projections of the Federal Reserve, that is the projections of outside forecasters -- and that it will -- it will ease next year, and that our supply chain issues and higher prices are rooted in the pandemic, which will subside -- subside as it gets under control.

So, I can't parse for him his comments, but they make projections on a regular basis, on a predictable basis, which is important for the markets, important for people to look to, as do we -- which I think is the most important thing to watch.

They are predicting, as they have for months -- which hasn't changed even when he made those comments -- that it will subside next year.

Q And I think when people hear the term "well into next year," though -- I interviewed a business owner today, some families who say it's this piling up of prices that's causing the suffering. What do you say to those families who are suffering and they hear a term like "well into next year" and they feel panicked?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that we take the rise in prices -- and that impacts individual families, small businesses, anyone across this country -- incredibly seriously, Kristen. And that's why it's so important to note and to detail, as I did at the beginning -- but I can highlight a little bit more -- what the President is doing and what this administration is doing to lower prices. And that includes using every lever at our disposal to lower gas prices -- something that's impacting people across this country.

We've seen some progress: Twenty states across the country, we've seen it go down. We expect that to increase.

Another key driver in these inflation numbers is the price of cars. We're seeing wholesale car prices come down. That means when families go to a lot to buy a used car -- first quarter of next year, the prices will be lower.

And we're also using tools at the President's disposal to go after meat conglomerates, where we're seeing -- when people go to the grocery store and a pound of meat is more expensive than it should be. We agree. That's less related to supply chain issues. A lot of that is related to the actions these conglomerates are taking to take advantage of the American people in the industry.

So what people should understand is that the President is focused on bringing down costs in all of these industries, how they're impacting their daily lives -- which is what's most important to him -- and that also getting the Build Back Better Agenda and Bill passed will help lower a range of costs that impact people's bottom lines, their pocketbooks, their budgets.

Q And, obviously, the Child Tax Credit is a part of the Build Back Better plan. I asked you about this yesterday, if there's any discussion about pulling it out as a standalone piece for the families who rely on that tax credit. Will the President say

any discussion about putting it out as a standalone piece for the families who rely on that tax credit. Will the President say to Congress, "Don't leave until we get this done" to make sure that that Child Tax Credit does get extended? What's his plan for that?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's important to note that there's not a single Republican who supports extending the Child Tax Credit, as I -- unless they want to speak out, and, if they do, they're welcome to join us in supporting the extension of that.

We believe that the full package -- the entirety of the package has key components that will lower costs for American families. That's what we're advocating to push to pass. That's what Leader Schumer would like to do and see passed. And that's what our focus is on at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thanks. Going back to abortion: What path does this White House see for the Women's Health Protection Act, given the current balance in the Senate? Would you advocate for a filibuster carveout in order to pass that bill and protect access to abortion?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that we would like to see that bill come up for a vote in the Senate. We would like to see that bill move forward. But in terms of the mechanisms for that, I don't have anything new on that; we will defer to leaders in the Senate.

Q And then, also, there's some reports today about conversations among senators about potentially exploring a rules change to expedite ambassador nominations. Is the White House involved in this conversation at all? And how worried are you about a scenario where, you know, tensions are escalating at the border of Ukraine and you don't have ambassadors in some of these key European cities?

MS. PSAKI: We're deeply worried about it. You know, it is true, let me first state, having worked at the State Department for quite -- for a few years -- that we have a very talented Foreign Service -- Foreign Service team and officials around the country -- around the world, and career officials that are around the world.

But it should be that if there are qualified, talented, experienced nominees who have been nominated by a President to serve in key positions around the world, they should move forward through the Senate. And what we're seeing now is that there is a delay in process.

A number of these nominees will end up with a majority of votes -- not everyone -- not everyone, but a vast majority of votes, Democrats and Republicans. Yet there's an insistence on hours and hours of debate that's slowing the process.

And you're absolutely right, there are key countries in the world where we have not had ambassadors. The President has been in office for almost a year now, and they're still not confirmed. So, it is an area of serious concern.

In terms of the process piece, I'd have to check on that. And our engagement, I'll talk to the legislative team about that.

Go ahead.

Q The CENTCOM commander did an interview this week in which he indicated that the 2,500 troops in Iraq might come under increased pressure from Iranian-backed militias that want the U.S. out of Iraq. One of the reasons the President pulled out of Afghanistan was because he was afraid that American troops there would come under increased risk if the Taliban took over the country. Can you explain why the U.S. presence in Iraq will remain if the President was so interested for that reason in getting out of Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to talk to our national security team about their specific view on this, and probably the Department of Defense and their team about it. I would say that Afghanistan was, of course, a war that we fought for 20 years, where we had troops on the ground and -- who were fighting a war on behalf of the Afghans they were unwilling to fight for

had troops on the ground and -- who were fighting a war on behalf of the regimes they were unwilling to fight for themselves. I know it's tempting to compare different warzones; they're always a little different and have different circumstances. But I can check with them on this specific case.

Q And one other question. We understand the mother of Austin Tice -- the journalist who's been captive in Syria for so long -- was going to be meeting with the National Security Advisor. Do you have an update on that meeting? And does the U.S. government have hope that Austin Tice might soon be returned to this family?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can confirm that Debra Tice met with Jake Sullivan, our National Security Advisor, today. I would also note that she has been, and her family have been, in touch and have met a number of times with members of our national security team and been on phone calls, as we have been with all families of individuals who are held overseas.

It's our standard practice not to share specific details about any potential meetings or specific cases, out of respect for the families and to preserve confidentiality.

Our team, of course, will remain in close contact, but I can't give you an assessment.

Obviously, we're going to do everything we can to bring Austin Tice and any individual and any American who's being held overseas.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. First, I just wanted to ask quickly -- the Chinese firm Evergrande has slipped into default. You were asked about this a couple months ago and said that the U.S. was monitoring. But now that it's actually happened, I'm wondering, sort of, what the level of concern is and if the administration or the White House has undertaken any action in response.

MS. PSAKI: Well, the vast majority of their business and, of course, market impact is in China, not in the United States, as I think you well know. Obviously, any potential impact would be monitored by the Department of Treasury.

I have not heard any additional or new assessment on that. But, of course, we certainly -- they monitor not only domestic but also global markets.

Q And I just wanted to sort of diagram a sentence that you said earlier.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, okay. (Laughter.) It's a Friday. Give me a break.

Q I know.

Well, I'll explain. You said --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- you were talking about --

MS. PSAKI: You need a chalkboard or something.

Q -- yeah -- the CBO --

Q Charts. Charts.

Q -- the CBO report of the --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- non-existent bill. And you, in explaining why you didn't think it was valid, said that the President would never support extending these programs if they weren't paid for, period.

And the reason I'm asking this question is --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- I envision a scenario where in, like, two or three years I'm still sitting here, maybe you're not -- but a press -- (laughter) --

MS. PSAKI: Wow.

Q -- but a new press secretary --

MS. PSAKI: This is like a real harsh line of questioning. (Laughter.)

Q You might be done with us. But a Biden press secretary is sitting here and you're trying to extend some element of Build Back Better, because, as we all know, the package is not going to move -- or the elements of the package wouldn't all move together in a "we're just renewing Build Back Better." So, I want to be extremely specific. If there's an element of Build Back Better that expires, the President will never support renewing that element unless it is fully paid for and deficit-neutral?

MS. PSAKI: He wants to -- he would only support extending these programs if they were paid for, period. I'm not going to parse all individual moments. But that is what he has stated publicly. That is his commitment. He is a person who is fiscally responsible, unlike the person who asked for the fake CBO score. And that is his commitment as long as he is President.

Q So if it's Child Tax Credit or, you know, payments for childcare comes up -- you know, it's expiring, it's on its own, you don't have a way for to pay for it if you --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get ahead of a hypothetical. But, again, what this fake CBO score was about was extending all of the programs that would expire without paying for them. The President would pay for them.

There's no bill that exists on this front. And we --

Q Okay, I understand, but it's more like a --

MS. PSAKI: -- don't even know what the vehicle would be.

But, again, the President has been clear about his intention to pay for these programs. And so, that's one of the reasons why this is so disingenuous.

Go ahead.

Q You're saying that Americans aren't focused on big-picture data lines. But, yesterday, Brian talked to us for 40 minutes about lots of data points that are moving in the right direction.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q So, I'm wondering, given all of those things and given what you're talking about -- prices, month to month, moving in

the right direction -- what's the White House's big-picture view on why so many Americans are so pessimistic about the economy and about the direction of the country? Because another data point is: More and more Americans are saying "wrong track," on monthly polling, on that key question.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I was -- there may be -- there are certainly Americans who look at data; I'm not suggesting that. Many of them work in New York and other places. I'm conveying that the way people experience it -- I think you know what I'm saying. But the way people experience it -- and the President just said this as well -- is not by looking at charts in the paper, right? As much as we love charts, because they're -- it's important for us to note -- it's about their monthly budget and how much it takes to fill up their car -- their tank of gas, how much it takes to buy meat to have burgers for a barbecue. That's -- that's what I was saying.

Why are people experiencing things or why -- because -- and I -- we've talked about this a little bit before. But, you know, a lot of it -- what we're seeing in our data is people's psychology on the economy, on how they're experiencing things in the country right now is related to COVID and the fact that COVID -- we're still in a fight against this virus. People expected it to be over sooner. We have new variants that have come up. And people are looking to get back to a normal version of life.

And so that's our best assessment.

Obviously, Americans will experience things different ways, and we certainly understand that. But broadly, when you look at data, that's what we see.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I wanted to ask you something in light of this week's Democracy Summit.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Former President Trump has been undermining the 2020 election result for most of this year; you know, he puts out statements, various releases. And I wonder why President Biden has not used his bully pulpit to push back on the misinformation coming from former President Trump, just given that democracy is such a top concern?

MS. PSAKI: Why does President Bid- -- sorry, just so I understand your question: Why does President Biden not debate or lift up President Trump and his statements?

Q I don't think that -- no, I don't think that's what I was saying.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Why isn't President Biden pushing back on the misinformation that the former President is putting out?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think the President is doing what the American people elected him to do, which is to govern the country, to make people's lives better, to solve COVID, to put people back to work, and, certainly, to fight for protections that will protect -- save our democracy and -- moving forward, not to continue the 2020 election. So that's what he's focused on.

Q But don't you think it would be effective in some way to -- you know, this is the most powerful possible podium that exists in the United States from a political leader. Therefore, has there been any discussion of the President giving some kind of address to the country and speaking clearly about what did and did not happen, and clearing up misinformation? And particularly as democracy is very fragile, as --

MS. PSAKI: I think the President has spoken very clearly -- and facts back this up -- about the fact that the majority of the American people voted for Joe Biden to govern this country, that it went through dozens of courts who threw out

attempts to change the outcome of the election.

But we've made an assessment, which hasn't been the assessment made by everybody, that elevating and giving more fire to the conspiracy theory-laden arguments of the former President isn't constructive nor is it what the American people elected him to do.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. First, President Bukele of El Salvador posted some apparent screenshots alleging that Jean Manes of SOUTHCOM intervened to try and free another politician in El Salvador. And he alleges that she was intervening to try and free another politician who was allegedly assisting gangs in the area of El Salvador. Is the President aware of this interaction between Manes and President Bukele?

And also, posting WhatsApp screenshots of a U.S. diplomat -- what does this say about the U.S.'s relationship with what was once an intended partner to curb irregular migration north?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Zolan, it's a great question. I don't have all the details on the specific case -- not case, but the specific details of this -- this incident that you're referring to, so I can't speak to whether the President is aware of it. Obviously, he's regularly briefed by his national security team. But I'll talk to them and see if there's more details on it.

Q Okay, great. And then on MPP: The Homeland Security Secretary was asked about the expansion of MPP yesterday -

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- of including Haitians. I know you were asked about this earlier this week. But when asked about expanding it, he said, "We felt the good-faith implementation of this program required us to act." Why -- why is it that expanding a policy to include more migrants -- a policy that the President has referred to as "inhumane" -- is acting in good faith?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think as the Secretary has also stated, and I've stated too: We don't agree with this program. We find it has endemic flaws, it's imposed unjustifiable [sic] human costs -- unjustifiable human costs, pulled resources and personnel away from other priority efforts, and failed to address the root causes of irregular migration.

I'd also note that they made some changes to the program to attempt to instill some more humane components, even of a program that we are opposed to.

In terms of how we're implementing it, I mean, my understanding -- but I'd really point you to the Department of Homeland Security -- is that we are abiding by this Court order and working to implement that as we see the requirement.

But beyond that, I would really point you to them for more details.

Q But the Court order didn't specify expanding it to other nationalities, including Haitians. So, I mean, with everything you just said, given that the administration has, in court documents, criticized this policy -- I mean, why then expand it for this other population that the Trump administration did not include either?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first of all, the Trump administration allowed this program to continue, separated families and mothers from their children, and had an absolutely inhumane and horrific approach to immigration. So, I don't think there's any point of comparison there. I will check and see if there's more details on this to share with you.

Q The last one --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, go ahead.

Q -- I have is just with this tragedy involving a truck crash with more than 50 migrants that were killed. That s the initial reports. Just initial reports from people on the ground say that that truck was intending to come to the U.S. border, that those folks were trying to come to the U.S. Is the President, is the administration reaching out to Mexico, to partners in Central America this morning? Does this cause for a certain reevaluation of the strategy to deter migration north?

MS. PSAKI: It would really come through the Department of Homeland Security -- that kind of outreach. So, I would point you to them for any more detail about a connection with the Mexican government.

Q Or the Vice President at this point, since this is --

MS. PSAKI: I can check and see, but I suspect that conversation would first happen through the Department of Homeland Security.

Go ahead. Oh, go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Retail sales recently have been strong, even with prices increasing. Does the White House think that will continue, or is there concern about consumers starting to scale back due to higher prices?

MS. PSAKI: We have seen retail sales up. I mean, it is the holiday season right now. So, without being an economist, I suspect that retail sales are often up around the holiday season as people are engaging in retail therapy, or what have you, this time of year.

In terms of whether it will come down and be -- I think -- I would assume you mean below what the typical trends would be -- we haven t seen that to date, but I don t have any economic projections of what we expect on that front -- or I have not heard an expectation from our economic team that we expect them to come down.

Q And on a different topic: Manuel Oliver lost his son in the Parkland, Florida, high school shooting in 2018. He s been here in Washington this week. He spoke to us -- ABC -- and said he wants to meet with the President to talk about gun control in the wake of another school shooting.

I know that he s met with the President in the past, and some White House officials in the past have spoken with him, but is there a plan for the President to meet with Mr. Oliver while he s here in Washington? And then I just have one quick one after that about this.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Sure. Well, let me first say that we have been in touch with Mr. Oliver. Cedric Richmond has been in touch with him. And he was also offered a meeting with Cedric Richmond and members of our senior team.

I don t have anything to preview in terms of a meeting with the President, but certainly he is somebody, as you noted, that the -- who the President has met with in the past. We certainly respect and honor, one, his loss, but also his activism -- as a follow-up to that -- on behalf of gun safety. But I don t have anything to predict at this point for a meeting with the President.

Q And I think you were asked this earlier this week, but just to circle back on that: Has the President spoken with any of the families who lost a child in the Michigan school shooting last week?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have an update on that either at this point in time. Go ahead.

Q So, the Los Angeles school district -- 85 percent of its eligible students vaccinated, 12 years older and up, but they re pushing back the deadline for the rest of those students because, you know, tens of thousands were not going to meet that deadline. How does the White House view that experience? Is it viewed that this has been a successful use of a mandate on students? Is this a warning sign that not enough students are getting vaccinated? How would you characterize and look

at that situation?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I don't have any specific -- excuse me -- grade of the -- their implementation. Obviously, school districts across the country are going to implement, or not, different requirements to keep their schools safe.

What I would note is that that is a vast majority that is in compliance with what the requirements are -- they put in place -- by a large population of the school community. And that is something -- they have made the decision -- will make their community and their school safer, make parents feel more comfortable and confident in sending their kids to school. That's ultimately a good thing. But different schools are going to implement it differently.

I think the President's principle is, ultimately, that there should not be a cliff, that there should be efforts to find accommodation to ensure there is counseling, that there is communication and education about the efficacy of vaccines or alternatives like testing. And that is certainly something that we've conveyed to entities across the country.

Q And one more question on schools. Obviously, the White House wants schools to be open, been encouraging schools to open. Many schools are fully open. But inside schools, there are often very strict rules. For example, sometimes students are required to eat outside or eat distanced from each other or not talk to each other while they're eating. Does the White House want to see those rules lifted, as well, to get back to a little more normal school experience?

MS. PSAKI: Well, schools are taking steps -- especially since we've only recently approved, through the CDC and FDA, vaccines for 5- to 11-year-olds; they're not approved for kids younger than that -- to keep their kids safe and keep students safe.

I will tell you, I have a three-year-old who goes to school, sits outside for snacks and lunch, wears a mask inside, and it's no big deal to him. I'm not saying that's the case for everybody, but these are steps that schools are taking to keep kids safe. And I think the vast majority of parents appreciate that.

Obviously, we want to get to a point where we're turning to a version of normalcy for everybody, right? Where you're not sending your kid's backpack with seven extra masks, right? Where you're not adding two hats so that they're warm outside for a snack. There's no question that's the case. But we also think the most important thing should be safety -- the safety of kids; keeping kids in school, which the President is very focused on. And some of these steps -- creative steps that schools have taken have enabled that to be possible.

Go ahead, Tina.

Q Is the Biden administration considering extending that student loan payment pause? I know there's -- if not, besides legislation that probably won't pass, what are some of the options that would help these people?

MS. PSAKI: You're talking about the student loan payment pause that expires in February, just for clarity?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: So, in the coming weeks, we will release more details about our plans and will engage directly with federal student loan borrowers to ensure they have the resources they need and are in the appropriate repayment plan.

We're still assessing the impact of the Omicron variant. But a smooth transition back into repayment is a high priority for the administration. The Department of Education is already communicating with borrowers to help them to prepare for return to repayment on February 1st and has secured contract extensions with loan servicers.

So, we are preparing for a range of steps here. These steps have provided, I would just note, more than \$12.5 billion in discharges to nearly 640,000 borrowers, plus tens of billions more saved by the 41 million borrowers who have benefited from the extended student loan payment pause. But it expires February 1, so, right now, we're just making a range of

preparations.

Q Okay. And then on the Olympics: China earlier this week said, when they learned of the diplomatic boycott, that there might be some retaliation. Are there counter actions that have been discussed within the administration?

MS. PSAKI: We would certainly let China speak for themselves, as we noted when we made this announcement. We felt -- the President felt that we could not proceed with business as usual and send a diplomatic delegation to the Olympics.

But obviously, we work with China on issues where there is agreement and we make clear where we have concerns, and that includes our strong concerns about human rights abuses, specifically in Xinjiang.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just following up on Zeke's question on Austin Tice: You mentioned that the administration is doing everything it can to free him. Does "everything" include direct engagement with the Assad government in Syria?

MS. PSAKI: I m not going to detail anything further. Our objective is, of course, bringing people home.

Q And not just the Tice family, but other families of those who have been held captive have criticized the President that they haven't seen direct, personal engagement on their family cases. Maybe you could explain what the President has done directly to help free some of these Americans abroad.

MS. PSAKI: I m not going to detail the President s engagement because it s not advantageous to our objective of bringing people home.

What I can tell you is that Austin Tice's mother and all of the families of Americans who are being held overseas have been in touch with our national security team, have been in touch with Jake Sullivan and other senior officials in a range of departments, at the State Department and others, multiple times. And we are absolutely committed to closely coordinating with them, to doing everything we can from here in the United States government to bring their loved ones home.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Following on that UK court ruling on Assange, has the President ever given any consideration at all to a pardon? And also, what is your response to the message in some quarters that prosecuting Assange is an assault on freedom of speech, freedom of the press, information, et cetera?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would again reiterate that this is a case that is still ongoing. It s really under the purview of the Department of Justice. They ve put out a statement. I'd point you to that for any further comment.

I would say, broadly speaking, outside of this case, that the President has been an advocate for freedom of speech, freedom of press. He s holding a two-day Democracy Summit that s wrapping up today.

The freedom of media and press is a central component of that. He announced an additional tranche of funding to ensure we re advocating for that, and he is somebody who s going to continue to advocate that, domestically and internationally, through the course of his presidency.

Go ahead, Nadia.

Q Thank you, Jen. You said you re expecting the price oil to go down soon. What do you base that on? And will the President reach out to OPEC Plus producer countries again? And then I have another question.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we ve already seen the price go down some. So I was basing it on what we ve seen in the data, in the oil

markets.

Q And yesterday you talked elaborately about possible sanctions -- economic sanction on Iraq -- on Iran, sorry -- on Iran. And you said that you would send delegations perhaps to the UAE --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and talk to your allies, like Japan and South Korea and the rest. Two questions. Number one is: Are you going back to the maximum pressure campaign that the previous administration used to convince Iran to come back to the negotiation? And second, what kind of leverage do you have on China to stop importing Iranian oil?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say: First, we're not using the last administration's approach as a model. They pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal, which meant that we -- they've been able to proceed and progress in their nuclear program without visibility from the United States or the global community in a way that it leads to a reduction in everyone's security and is -- ultimately, has enormously negative impacts globally.

As it relates to what our leverage is on China: China was a constructive member of the P5+1, has continued to be, and obviously there are certain restrictions and requirements everybody would have to implement in order for this to move forward. That's all a part of the negotiations. I don't think anyone wants to see Iran acquire a nuclear weapon. I'm not sure if you would call that leverage as much as something that is important to the security of the global community.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. On China, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai has previously said there's this range of enforcement mechanisms on the table to hold China accountable to the phase one trade deal. But China is on track to fall short of the goals, primarily boosting imports of U.S. agricultural goods. How confident is the President he can hold China accountable to those commitments in time since those obligations are expiring?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know they're expiring at the end of the year. Right? Am I remembering this correctly? So we have a couple more weeks. Ambassador Tai is, of course, running point for the administration on the implementation on these phase one negotiations and discussions. I don't have an update from here, but I can certainly check and see if there's more to report.

Q All right. But what message does it send to American farmers who were, you know, hoping for a boost from these export obligations if they aren't met? And should we expect the President to take action if that is the case?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, there's an ongoing review and assessment -- and maybe this is what I shorthand -- was referencing -- that is over -- being overseen by Ambassador Tai about these tariffs and how they impact negatively, unintentionally, certain industries in the United States. I don't have anything to preview on that front, but that is also an ongoing process that's happening right now.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A follow-up on that question about El Salvador. What's the White House response to the President of El Salvador accusations against the U.S.? He says, and I quote, "The interests of the United States has nothing to do with democracy in any country." End quote.

And any comment on the decision of Nicaragua to break relations with Taiwan and return (inaudible) to China?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, let me start with Nicaragua. The decision deprives Nicaragua's people of a reliable and democratic partner in Taiwan. Taiwan is a like-minded democratic partner, a steadfast partner and friend to countries throughout the region. We encourage all countries that care about democratic institutions, transparency, the rule of law, and promoting

economic prosperity for their citizens to expand engagement with Taiwan. We refer you to the State Department for anything further, but I would note that they put out an extensive statement on that.

Go ahead.

Q And the point on El Salvador --

MS. PSAKI: On --

Q -- on the quote of the President of El Salvador saying that the U.S. government has nothing to do with democracy in any country.

MS. PSAKI: It's hard for me to even know the context of that statement. The United States just hosted a two-day Democracy Summit, where we announced an extensive financial commitment to contribute to the preservation of democracy around the world.

The President -- as the President conveyed, democracy "works best with consensus and cooperation." And he's also noted that we all need to continue to work harder to preserve our own democracy. I don't have an exact reaction to them.

Go ahead.

Q Two quick foreign policy questions for you.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q One is on Afghanistan. Yesterday, as was mentioned earlier, the head of Central Command did an interview, and during that interview, he said that the number of al Qaeda members in Afghanistan has, in his words, "probably slightly increased." Does that surprise the President? Is that a concern for the President?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that President Biden made clear from the start of the Afghanistan withdrawal process that it's critical for us to retain our over-the-horizon with- -- counterterrorism abilities, our ability to prevent, detect, and disrupt terrorism threats without having a permanent military presence on the ground that could be a target.

And that is something he is committed to ensuring. Our national security team is working to ensure we have the capabilities, working with partner countries in the region who share that concern, who do not want terrorism to have a birthplace or rebirth place in the region.

And we have also been clear that we will not allow terrorists to threaten the homeland from Afghanistan, and we will hold the Taliban accountable.

I know we obviously do regular assessments for our -- from our intelligence team on this -- from the CIA Director, from our Director of the National Intelligence Agency. I'd really point you to them on our -- on their assessments. But the President takes his commitment to ensuring they do not rebuild, they do not gather, and they do not threat -- pose a threat to the Homeland quite seriously.

Q And then on Russia: Just a few days after President Biden's conversation with President Putin, is it fair to say that the ball is now in President Putin's court in the sense that the next step is up to him as to whether or not he pulls back his troops from the Russian-Ukrainian border or he moves into Ukraine? What's your assessment there? Is that a fair and accurate assessment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that our objective continues to be diplomatic discussions. And to go back to Jeff's earlier question, those could take a range of formats. There's decades of precedent on this and a lot of formats that exist where

those could continue. And those could -- and that is really our objective and our focus. Those would not, of course, involve just the Russians.

Our overarching approach here is that we're not going to have conversations without the key players involved, whether that is conversations about Ukraine without Ukraine or conversations about NATO without NATO. Those are our principles.

So, that's really what our focus is on at this point. Obviously, all of this effort -- diplomatic effort to date, coordination with our European partners, the President's very direct conversation with President Putin -- was meant to convey very clearly that if he were to choose to invade, there would be severe and significant economic consequences.

Obviously, you know, he is the one who has control over the military troops of Russia, not other countries. But, certainly, our effort and our focus is to have those diplomatic discussions and have the ball move forward through that channel.

I think I'm going to have to wrap it up here in just a moment.

Let's go. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have two quick follow-ups.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The first is: You've been consistent on this, and so has the President, about your support for codifying *Roe v. Wade*.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q What's more, Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer have also voiced their support. Has the White House been doing outreach on this? And do you think that you would have the votes to be successful?

MS. PSAKI: I can't give an assessment of the vote count at this point. What I will tell you is that we have been engaged with leaders on Capitol Hill -- many of whom have been quite outspoken about their concern and the need to move forward with the Women's Health Protection Act -- today, in light of the fact that women in Texas have been -- for 101 days, they've had their basic access to women's healthcare, to their fundamental right that's been the law of the land for decades be put into question and at risk.

In terms of what our engagement will be, we will continue to be engaged. And the ruling this morning reinforces that there is more work to be done, reinforces that need to engage on Capitol Hill and with localities around the country.

Q And then my second follow-up: Moments ago, you were pretty definitive when you said that President Biden "would only support extending these programs if they were paid for, period." Does that necessarily mean that, sometime in the future, President Biden would be prepared to raise taxes?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think President Biden has been pretty clear about his protection of keeping taxes low for the middle class and lowering them, but we don't have any hypothetical bill we're talking about here.

I think you've seen him convey that pretty clearly, and all of the bills he's supported have been consistent. But we'll have hypothetical -- we'll have real conversations when real bills exist.

Edward, why don't you do the last one.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. So you talked about inflation here in the room -- the highest we haven't seen since 1982. The President has been in office about 11 months. What grade does the President give himself on his handling of the economy?

economy:

MS. PSAKI: I think every President I've ever worked for -- I've only worked for two -- but they try not to grade themselves. But I will tell you what the President is proud of working on with Congress, with governors, with leaders across the country is his effort to lower prices for people across the country -- whether it's the steps he took to lower the price of gas; whether it's the steps he took from the beginning to address bottlenecks in the supply chain that we're seeing play out now positively in terms of improvements; or whether it's his effort -- his proposal to introduce Build Back Better, which will cut costs for people across the country.

All right, happy Friday, everyone. Thank you, everyone. Have a good day.

3:29 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Russian Foreign Policy Advisor Yuriy Ushakov
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 15, 2021 1:51 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Russian Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Yuriy Ushakov

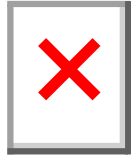
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Russian Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Yuriy Ushakov to follow up on the December 7 call between President Biden and President Putin. Mr. Sullivan reiterated our strong concerns about the Russian military build-up on the border with Ukraine and emphasized that the United States will continue to coordinate closely with our European allies and partners as we seek to address security and strategic matters through diplomacy. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried will consult with NATO Allies in Brussels on December 16 to develop a coordinated approach.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with National Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan of Armenia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 15, 2021 7:19 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with National Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan of Armenia

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met with National Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan of Armenia today. Mr. Sullivan conveyed the commitment of the United States to peace, security, and prosperity in Armenia and the South Caucasus region. He expressed concern over ongoing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and emphasized that military movements near un-demarcated borders are irresponsible and provocative. He welcomed the ongoing communication between the two sides and emphasized the U.S. commitment to continue supporting confidence-building measures and regional reconciliation both bilaterally and as a Minsk Group Co-Chair. Mr. Sullivan welcomed the announcement yesterday that Turkey and Armenia will appoint special envoys to discuss the normalization process. Mr. Sullivan appreciated Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's participation in The Summit for Democracy and underscored our strong cooperation on reform, democratic institution-building, and economic development in Armenia.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with B9 Counterparts
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 16, 2021 6:29 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with B9 Counterparts

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with National Security Advisors, Foreign Ministers, and other officials from the Bucharest Nine (B9) group of our eastern flank NATO Allies. Mr. Sullivan briefed on the latest U.S. engagements with Russian officials and consulted his counterparts on issues of importance to Transatlantic security. Mr. Sullivan and his counterparts all underscored the need for Russia to take immediate steps to deescalate the situation at its border with Ukraine. Mr. Sullivan affirmed the U.S. commitment to continued close coordination, noting that our unity with Allies and partners is our greatest strength and that we will not make any decisions related to their security without them. All participants emphasized their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression.

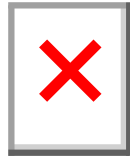
The Bucharest Nine members are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, December 16, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 16, 2021 6:30 PM (UTC-05:00)



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Press Briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:50 P.M. EST

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hello.

Q Heads up.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Heads up, indeed.

Good afternoon, everybody.

Q Good afternoon.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. So, joining us today is Deputy National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi, where he helps implement the President's domestic climate agenda, coordinating the all-of-government approach to tackle the climate crisis, creating good-paying union jobs, and advance environmental justice.

Ali was formerly at Stanford's Precourt Institute for Energy where he taught graduate students in STEM on economic and technology policy topics related to climate change. For eight years, Zaidi served in key roles within the Obama-Biden administration, including as the Associate Director for Natural Resources, Energy, and Science at OMB; as Deputy Director of Energy Policy for the Domestic Policy Council; and as a Senior Director for Cabinet Affairs.

He is here today to discuss the Biden-Harris Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan, which was announced earlier today.

I hope you all join me in welcoming him -- welcoming him to the -- to the podium and to the Briefing Room. It's his first time.

So, all yours.

He's going to take probably like two or three questions afterwards. I'll let you know who gets called on. But thank you so much, Ali.

MR. ZAIDI: Thank you.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: The podium is yours.

MR. ZAIDI: Thank you, Karine, and good to be with everybody here today.

President Biden and Vice President Harris believe that no child, no family, no American should have to worry about lead exposure from the water that they drink or the air that they breathe.

That's why today we're announcing the Biden-Harris Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan -- 10 agencies stepping forward with 15 bold actions, the nation's largest investment in infrastructure -- to take on and tackle this public health crisis and this staggering source of environmental injustice.

Let's do some of the numbers here.

Lead exposure threatens millions of Americans through their water -- up to 10 million households and 400,000 schools and childcare centers; through lead paint in nearly 24 million housing units. This is where people live.

And we know that these exposures are highly unsafe, especially for our kids. We're not just finding out. We've known this for over 100 years.

In fact, Congress passed a law banning new lead pipes in the year I was born. And in the years since, we've let these pipes persist in our communities.

And the truth is: They persisted the longest in low-income communities, whether rural or urban, and in communities of color.

The good news is this: We know how to get after this challenge and fix this problem.

And that's why President Biden and Vice President Harris have made replacing lead pipes a centerpiece of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and why, today, Vice President Harris stood with child health champions and labor union leaders alike to join together and issue this Action Plan with a new goal to make rapid progress replacing all lead pipes in this decade -- working in close collaboration with our state, local, and Tribal partners, with a focus on communities that have been underserved and overburdened, and in a way that creates good-paying jobs -- jobs welding and fabricating, jobs fitting and installing these upgrades, jobs in infrastructure that can support a family.

Today's Action Plan has three pillars. The first is about getting resources into the hands of communities. EPA is announcing that nearly \$3 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will be deployed next year, in 2022, to replace these pipes. And we're going to tap into the American Rescue Plan that the President passed at the beginning of his administration with its \$350 billion in state, local, and Tribal recovery funds.

Second, the EPA is writing new regulations that will strengthen the Lead and Copper Rule, include -- including enhanced

testing requirements. This is absolutely critical that we pair the investments with clear standards about where we need to go.

And third, we're marshaling tools from across our agencies -- 10 of them -- bringing actions to the table so that we can tackle this crisis head on. And just, as an example, we've got a Cabinet-level partnership, a bunch of agencies coming together at the very top of the agencies, focused on lead remediation in schools and childcare centers.

We've got the CDC working overtime to make sure we close those gaps that we have in critical health screening.

Across our federal housing portfolio: HUD, USDA, the Department of Interior -- we are working to eliminate lead pipes and lead paint hazards.

And we've got EPA and the Department of Labor working with local communities, not only to accelerate projects, but make sure that we do them in partnership with unions.

Thanks to the leadership of the President and the Vice President, we passed a big-deal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. And that's going to help us replace all the lead pipes. And we're excited to get to work.

And with that, I'm eager to take some questions.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you so much, Ali. Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Ali, I'd like to ask you about the Build Back Better plan. The plan is clearly at risk right now in Congress. Certainly not -- it doesn't look like it's going to happen before Christmas.

The climate piece is a good chunk of that. What will you guys do in your office if those provisions don't end up getting passed? And how does the President then intend to proceed with his goals of reducing emissions without it?

MR. ZAIDI: Jeff, thanks for the question. You know, what we're talking about today, I think, reinforces the case for investing in America. Every dollar that we invest in this challenge to take on the lead pipe crisis around the country yields \$3 of benefits.

It's going to unlock good jobs. It's going to unlock public health benefits. It's going to help revitalize communities left out and left behind.

And the Build Back Better Act does exactly that same thing -- a playbook that is focused on boosting our economic resilience and taking on the climate crisis. And we're excited to be involved in conversations that help us move forward.

But let me also note this: From day one in this administration, every single day, the President has been advancing critical climate action. If you look at some of the actions we've taken in just the last few months: tackling super-pollutants in the form of hydrocarbons; tackling methane emissions not only here, but bringing around -- over 100 countries from around the world to take on the same challenge; making sure we're shifting quickly to an electric vehicle future.

So we're excited to be continuing to push forward in an ambitious way, in a bold way. And I think today's announcement really brings home the point: If we invest in America, we create good-paying jobs and we unlock environmental benefits all at the same time.

Q Just to follow up, what are your biggest concerns about things that may be taken out of that bill, if it passes at all, in the climate space?

MR. ZAIDI: You know, again, I want to focus on what we're doing today, because, as I noted, you know, this is action that is long overdue. I think the American people are excited to see us get to work in taking on something that's festered in

communities for over 100 years.

But we're -- look, we're leaning in to every opportunity we've got. The President has been very clear: When he sees the climate crisis, he sees the motivation to move with the urgency and pace that's necessary, at the scale that's necessary, and he sees jobs. And we're excited to be bringing those jobs into communities, helping sustain families all around the country.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Peter.

Q Ali, thank you for being here. The President had said he wanted \$45 billion to deal with lead pipes and to deal with issue -- this issue in the infrastructure bill. Obviously, he got close to \$15 billion. You guys say that's still enough to deal with it, 100 percent. How is that the case if he didn't get -- if he only got a third of the money you were looking for?

MS. ZAIDI: Absolutely. Thank you for raising that question.

One of the things that's been remarkable -- and I think this is the case on lead pipes; I think this is the case on a lot of things -- if you look at electric vehicles, for example, in just this last year -- and it's accelerated since folks got together on the South Lawn in August -- we've had the Detroit Three invest almost \$100 billion into the electric vehicle future.

The strength of this President's leadership, the certainty and clarity with which he has projected the vision, I think is bringing folks to the table with resources and creativity. And one example of that creativity is the American Rescue Plan, which included \$350 billion to support state and local governments.

We've got folks in Milwaukee who now have \$6 million from that ARP funding that's supporting job training to help replace lead pipes. We've got folks in Duluth, Minnesota: \$11 million from that American Rescue Plan going towards lead remediation.

I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania, so I'm particularly excited about the 6.5 million bucks that Governor Wolf helped unlock so that Erie can get after some of the lead gooseneck issues that they've got in the community.

So, one, we are seeing folks sprinting in this direction right now, right away.

The second thing -- and this is where the action plan comes in -- is we've been working really hard to make sure that we're being inventive and creative in the way we go after this challenge. That means creating regional technical assistance hubs. It means making sure that we're standardizing contracting, we're using the best technology, we're using data tools to help bend the cost curve -- because this doesn't have to cost as much as it's always costed.

We have been learning along the way, and it's time to harness those learnings to deliver the solutions that the American people are looking for.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: April.

Q Crunching the numbers a little bit more and drilling down a little bit more: When you talk about different areas, a lot of it is a heavy lift when it comes to piping and infrastructure and going into houses, going into streets. And then you have the paint in homes that's easier to remediate.

Over these 10 years, can you give us the numbers -- the anticipation of numbers that we're going to see when it comes to the remediation pipes, lead pipes, as well as paint? Could you give us the status?

MR. ZAIDI: Yeah, absolutely. We know, today -- we estimate that there are 6 to 10 million homes that are impacted by lead service lines, and we need to do everything that we can to move as quickly through that challenge as possible.

But we also recognize -- and I think it's important to be transparent about this -- that a little bit of this is mapping the

topography of the mountain as we're starting to climb it.

We have to go out there. We have to collect the data. There are communities around the United States where we don't know where the pipes are. So, those are estimates. We need to figure that out on the front end. That's why we're investing in the data and the community engagement to figure that out.

But the goal is very clear: within this decade, making sure we're getting after that challenge.

And on the lead paint front, that is a place where we need to continue to accelerate and marshal investment. It's something where the Build Back Better plan actually does invest dollars. And we're using the resources we have already available to us -- talked about HUD, USDA, and also the Department of the Interior, which works in Indian Country -- making sure that we're making those resources available.

Q A follow-up: But as you talk about climbing the mountain, do you still at least have a baseline of what you want to see accomplished over this decade?

MR. ZAIDI: Yeah, the baseline is this: We've got \$15 billion of funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. We're going to move \$3 billion of that next year. We're going to leverage that significantly. We're going to mobilize the resources we're already mobilizing through the American Rescue Plan that are creating jobs right now and improving quality of life and health conditions in communities like Duluth, like Milwaukee, like back home in Erie, Pennsylvania. We're excited about that work.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Ed.

Q Just real quick, Ali -- and thanks for being here. You say \$3 billion of the \$15 billion will be sent out next year. Do you yet know when -- precisely or approximately -- the first lead pipe will actually be removed in the building and replaced with a new one?

MR. ZAIDI: We are seeing, Ed -- thank you for the question. And I remember you from your Federal Eye days. So, good to see you. It -- it is -- throwback.

It is so important that we start making this progress right away. And you look at, for example, the city of Pittsburgh, which now has a plan to get all the pipes out by 2026, the funds from the American Rescue Plan already mobilized and taking pipes out of the ground, replacing them with a safer alternative. These dollars will accelerate that effort.

And I don't think we're skipping a beat here. What we've been doing, as an administration, is building the relationships and building, to use a maybe tried term, the infrastructure to deliver the resources that we need -- make sure it gets metabolized in the system as quickly as possible.

So, I think that the short answer to your question is: It's already making a difference in communities right now, and we're really excited about that.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Darlene.

Q Thank you for being here. Could you address environmentalists -- their concerns about the plan, just setting a goal for removing the lead service lines versus mandating that these lines be removed? Can you explain why the administration has gone that way and not --

MR. ZAIDI: Absolutely. I'm really --

Q -- mandated the removal?

MR. ZAIDI: -- I am -- as a -- as an environmentalist, appreciate you asking that question. This is a multi-prong approach, and setting the goal is the motivation. And I think the point hopefully I've conveyed is: Simply by setting that goal, President Biden, Vice President Harris have motivated action in communities all around the country already. But that's not enough.

And what the EPA is doing is embarking on rulemaking that will create new binding requirements so that we can have the certainty. I mean, you just think about -- you put your kid in the car, you don't just buckle them up with a regular seat belt; you put them in the car seat, you put the seat belt on. I would say a lot of my friends click four or five things before they start driving.

We're going to invest. We're going to set standards. We're going to bring technical assistance. We're going to be there shoulder-to-shoulder with folks as they take on this challenge.

And the EPA is doing that. And just to speak to the EPA process: On day one, the first day of this administration, the President signed an order reestablishing the scientific integrity of our rulemaking processes. And so, that is what's going to dictate the process.

But the goals are very clear, and I think you heard them from Michael Regan, our administrator, how vigorously the EPA intends to develop standards, requirements to make sure that we're delivering on the target.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay, we're going to take two more. Phil and Zolan after.

Q I'm going to follow my good friend Jeff's lead and broaden it out a little bit, if you don't mind. Given the scale of the administration's climate ambitions -- of which this is very much a good example of -- have you guys felt any constraints on the regulatory side by concern over securing one vote, in particular in the United States Senate, in terms of what you're able to do, how far you're able to go, in terms of your agenda on the climate side broadly?

MR. ZAIDI: You know, one of the things that's been constraining -- and I don't think folks write about this enough -- is the incredible hollowing out of the U.S. government as we came in.

And one of the things that folks at EPA and other regulatory agencies have had to do is build up that strength, that capacity to be able to do the analytical work to underpin regulations. To the point earlier, we've got to make sure that these regulations are grounded in the best science, in the best data, the best engineering work.

But if you look at our record, you know -- I'll just tick through some of the sectors.

If you look at the industrial sector, we finalized regulations that will take hundreds of million metric tons out of the air in the form of hydrofluorocarbons avoided.

If you look at the oil and gas sector, we proposed the most sweeping methane action strategy and rules, requirements around reducing methane emissions. And we went and we galvanized the rest of the world to come along with us, over 100 countries joining that ambition.

If you look at the auto sector, which is going through transition, we've sit -- we've been at the table -- and this is because of the leadership of the President and the Vice President -- we've been at the table with the automakers, with the environmentalists, with the engineers, with the scientists, and with our brothers and sisters in the UAW. And we forged historic standards that will reach further than ever before on electric vehicles and on fuel economy.

So, as you just tick through it -- sector by sector, we've made tremendous progress.

And the regulatory muscle is not the only one that we're leaning on. Just last week, the President signed an executive order. Last week, he signed an executive order setting new goals for procurement -- how we use our buying power as the

largest purchaser of goods and services in the world -- how we use that to accelerate progress in electric vehicles, in clean power -- in 24/7 clean power, in the building sector, even in clean materials, like clean steel and clean cement.

So, I don't think there's any shot we're not taking. I think we are excited to be able to lean in and do it in a way that's grounded in the best science, grounded in the best analysis. And that's going to bring folks along -- bring along the good-paying jobs that the President talks about every time he talks about the climate crisis.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Zolan.

Q Let me follow up on Build Back Better -- on Build Back Better. There's multiple reports that Senator Manchin is objecting to including drilling bans off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, as well as Gulf of Mexico. How significant of a loss would that be? What is the White House doing to keep those in the bill?

And just, separately, a ban on drilling in ANWR is still in the package. What is the White House doing to ensure that that stays in the package?

[MR. ZAIDI: Well, let me talk a little bit about what we've been doing. You know, this is a President that came in and -- right over there -- signed back the protections for Bears Ears, an incredibly important national monument, and Grand Staircase-Escalante. He halted leasing in the Arctic Refuge and in Chaco Canyon -- important places to protect for posterity.](#)

He set the first-ever national conservation goal and is galvanizing folks across sectors, across states and local governments in tackling the climate crisis in a way that recognizes it's not just what we're doing to nature, it's that nature can be our partner in taking on the challenges that we face.

And, look, we've had incredibly productive dialogues, in the context of this bill and others, on how we take on the climate crisis in a way that marshals the power of nature-based solutions.

[And the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, by the way -- and, hopefully, I get to come back for the \\$21 billion we're going to spend to remediate the places we fouled and that can now become hubs of economic activity and hubs of climate solutions based in nature.](#) That was in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and brought together Democrats and Republicans in both chambers in the House to pass something historic.

So, we're excited about that work and we're moving forward.

Q But it does seem like the drilling bans are now not in Build Back Better. So, I mean, how significant of a loss would that be and can you still achieve your climate goals if that is left out?

MR. ZAIDI: So, I think I'm going to let Karine go into the -- into the -- (laughter) -- well, into the minutiae of the negotiations. But let me just say, because I think it's come up a few times -- Jeff started it, so he gets -- he gets tagged with it.

You know, we've got an incredible crisis that we're taking on, in the form of climate change. The President set an incredibly ambitious national target: 50 to 52 percent emissions reductions by 2030. He did that in April. And we have done everything we can to pursue the multiple pathways that are available to us in every sector.

There's no silver bullet when it comes to the climate crisis. But there is a thing as being too late. There's a thing as not being ambitious enough. And we're trying to make sure that we are as ambitious as we can be, leaning into every opportunity we've got in front of us.

And I think today is a great example of recognizing the intersections of these policy areas; recognizing the opportunity that's embedded in the crises that are in front of our communities; and being -- as, I think, the President and Vice

President model for all of us -- happy, excited warriors chasing after the prize here, which is to be partners to the American people and oftentimes folks who have been left behind and looked over. So, we're grateful to be part of that work.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Awesome. Thank you so much, Ali. Thank you.

Q Could you take a real quick question about rural pipelines?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: He has to go. He has to go. Thank you, Ali.

Q There are rural people who don't believe that (inaudible) will be able --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you, Ali.

Q -- change lead pipes in rural areas.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: "Lean into the possibilities" -- I love that.

Okay. I have a couple things for everybody at the top. But first, I want to welcome the members of our Domestic Policy Council who are here. I'm just -- I'm continuing a tradition that Jen started earlier this week in welcoming some staff members here. And also, the climate team. They do amazing work, and we couldn't be here without all of the policy, you know, wonks that -- wonkiness that you guys do. So, thank you so much and welcome.

Okay, few things at the top. I think there is a -- yep, there's a chart. You know we love charts here.

Today, we received further evidence that our jobs recovery is one of the strongest ever. The average number of Americans filing for unemployment over the last four weeks is now at its lowest level since ~~1959~~ [1969], as you see -- 69, pardon me -- 69 -- giving ourselves 10 extra years, but I meant 69 here.

We've added nearly 6 million jobs this year, the most of any first year President in history. And the number of people receiving unemployment benefits has dropped from 18 million to 2 million since President Biden took office.

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan and our successful vaccination program, Americans are back at work at a record-setting pace and families have more money in their pockets. Americans, on average, have about \$100 more in their pockets each month than they did last year, after accounting for inflation.

But even as -- even as we've built a -- an historic jobs and economic recovery, we have dealt with rising prices and supply chain challenges because of the pandemic, along with every other developed economy.

Fighting that inflation and lowering costs for the middle class is the President's top priority. While other countries face similar challenges, America, uniquely in the world, is racing ahead with more jobs, more growth, more new small business applications, and more opportunities, allowing us to tackle rising prices from a strength of position.

President Biden has taken strong, progressive measures to combat these challenges with a Port Action Plan, the largest release from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve ever, and actions to combat anti-competitive price gouging, including the industries that affect food prices.

And, today, the administration builds upon the President's Port Action Plan and recent investments in our nation's Marine Highway System with new actions to strengthen America's truck- -- trucking workforce, another critical link in our supply chain.

So, over 70 percent of American goods are shipped by truck, and, in most communities, trucks are the only form of delivery.

[The Truck Action Plan will cut red tape, make it easier for people to get commercial licenses, expand trucking apprenticeships, and launch outreach efforts to recruit new drivers, including by reaching out to veterans who already have the skills and experience to fill these jobs.](#)

This is the largest [latest] action the administration is taking to address supply chain blockages with the goal of reducing prices. So, this is a big day for the administration: lead pipes and taking on the supply chain with the trucking -- our truck announcement.

Yesterday, the Department of Education released new data showing that 99 percent of students are enrolled in full-time in-person learning this year -- this school year.

The data shows that not only did schools open their doors to offer full-time in-person learning this year, but that nearly all students and parents actually chose to come back as well.

This is very good news and in alignment with one of the President's top priorities. It's why he pushed so hard to pass the American Rescue Plan, which is giving schools funding to continue implementing mitigating -- mitigation measures, as well as help get students back on track.

This week, Secretary Cardona also visited Baton Rouge and highlighted how American Rescue Plan funds can be used for tutoring, hiring additional educators, and putting in place other supports to help students recover and accelerate their learning.

And last but not least, today, Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber Anne Neuberger and National Cyber Director Chris Inglis put out a letter to directly communicate with CEOs and business leaders around the country about the specific steps they can initiate now to reduce the risk for their organizations during this time of heightened risk and into the new year.

Some examples of these steps include changing passwords and mandate multi-factor authentication, backing up your data, and ensuring you have an incident response plan in place.

There is not a specific threat we are tracking, but, historically, we have seen breaches around national holidays because criminals know that security operations centers are often short-staffed, delaying the discovery of intrusions.

And with that, I give it to you. Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. Is there any comment on the release of the U.S. missionaries who were held in Haiti? Was the U.S. government involved in getting them sprung?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, we welcome reports that they are free and getting the care that they need after their ordeal, clearly.

We are thankful for the FBI, the State Department, and Haitian law enforcement officials who have been working tirelessly to get these missionaries safely home.

As Jake Sullivan said when this ordeal began, the President received daily updates on this issue. The U.S. government has been working tirelessly over the past two months to get them released and get them the medical care and support they need after an ordeal like this.

Protecting the welfare of Americans overseas and freeing Americans held against their will is a top Biden administration priority.

For any specifics on the details of this, I would refer you to the Department of State.

For any specifics on the details of this, I would refer you to the Department of State.

Q And then, today, the President had a conversation with several senators about voting rights. Can you, you know, talk a little bit about that, the senators that he was talking to? And how did that conversation come together in the first place?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So --

Q Was it initiated by the White House or the senators?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, today, the President, as you just mentioned, Darlene, and the Vice President met virtually with Democratic senators to discuss voting rights. The senators provided an update on their progress. And the President and the Vice President reaffirmed the importance of acting to ensure that every American can vote and have that vote be counted.

The members they spoke with include Senator Schumer -- Senators Schumer, Kaine, King, Klobuchar, Manchin, Merkley, Tester, and Warnock.

The President has been getting regular updates on this from his team who have made -- who all of us have made voting rights a priority.

Q And then, one last one: Yesterday he was asked a question in Kentucky, and he said that "if we can get [the] congressional voting rights done, we should do it. If we can't, we've got to keep going. There is nothing domestically more important than voting rights. It's the single-biggest issue."

Was he speaking generally about voting rights in the sense that if we can get it done, we should do it? Or was he trying to say that Build Back Better should now take a backseat and voting rights -- the Senate should --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: That's a jump. (Laughs.)

Q Well, it would be.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: That's a jump. (Laughs.) So, let me just -- let me just lay a couple things out for you.

The President has made clear that the systematic effort to deny people the right to vote in this country is just plainly wrong, unconstitutional, and goes against the very foundation that our democracy was built on.

The President believes the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy and has repeatedly urged Congress to act to protect the right to vote and access to voting.

He has addressed this issue in front of Congress. He has addressed this issue privately with members of Congress and senators, as I just read out, of both parties -- he's done this. He has addressed this issue with civil rights leaders at the White House.

And so, you know, protecting the cornerstone of our democracy should not be a partisan issue but, sadly, what we're seeing is that it has -- this has been the case.

So, in the past voting rights has been a bipartisan issue. So, my question to Republicans -- Republicans are: How has this changed? Why has that changed?

So, as the President said yesterday, to your point, there is nothing more urgent -- nothing more urgent than vo- -- passing voting rights and getting that done.

Anyone who knows this President has followed this -- his career on voting rights and knows this belief is core to who he is

ANYONE WHO KNOWS THE PRESIDENT HAS FOLLOWED HIS CAREER ON YOUTH RIGHTS AND KNOWS THE BENEFIT IS CORE TO WHO HE IS and will continue to work with Congress to get this done. And he's going to continue to focus on it and so will his team.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Earlier this week, the White House described talks between the President and Senator Manchin as constructive and productive. But sources on the Hill say that these talks have actually been going, you know, very poorly, and it does now appear that Build Back Better doesn't have a path forward this year.

So, I'm wondering how now would you describe the conversations between the two? And what, again, were those areas of productivity earlier this week?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, as you all know, you know, we don't go into specifics. We have a policy of not talking about private conversations, and even Manchin said that himself -- you know, person-to-person conversations should be kept private.

So, the President's discussions with lawmakers, outside of readouts that we have, usually we keep that promise. So, I don't have any more details to offer beyond what we've said this week.

You know, the President is determined to get this done as soon as possible, you know, to cut -- we're talking about cutting costs for American families. We're talking about childcare, eldercare. We're talking about prescription drugs -- lowering the cost of prescription drugs, which is so critical and important to American families and just to Americans across the country, and also, universal pre-K.

All these things are critical. And that's what the President is going to continue to focus on.

Q And I'm hoping you can clear something up here when it comes to the question of 2024. The Vice President did an interview with the Wall Street Journal, and she was asked if she assumed that Biden would run again. And she didn't say yes; she just said that the two of them hadn't talked about it.

Of course, you all and the President himself have said that he does plan to seek reelection. So, what's the disconnect here? Why --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, I can't speak to a conversation that the Vice President and the President has; I could only say what -- and reiterate what Jen has said and what the President has said himself: that he is planning to run for re-election in 2024. I don't have any more to add to --

Q But just be clear, when the President says he plans to run again, he means with Harris on the ticket?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yes -- (laughs) -- he does. There's no change. Yes. Yes.

Go ahead.

Q Karine, can you give us a sense of where the White House sees Build Back Better right now? Do you expect to get any more progress before the end of this year? Or is it likely now, from your perspective as well, to be done in 2022?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: As you know, we love process questions here. Let's see.

Q Glad to --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Let's see -- (laughs) --

Q Glad to provide one.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, there are a number of conversations happening behind the scenes. And I'm just not going to get -- I'm not in a position to give you an update or to get ahead of that -- of what the process is going to be here today.

What I can reiterate -- how important getting Build Back Better done. This is a priority for the President, to lower costs, again, for Americans that I just listed out: childcare, eldercare, prescription drugs, universal pre-K. All of these things are highly critical to American families. And that's what they want us to see -- to see us do, is to deliver, and that's going to be our focus.

Q And then one more on COVID. The variant is raging. Deaths and cases are up in this country and worldwide. The President unveiled his winter plan a few weeks ago.

Broadly, given where the cases are right now, do you feel, does the White House feel that its strategy is working?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, we know that the tools that we have in place is -- indeed works. Right? And the President, what he did with his winter plan that he put out a couple of weeks ago is just to build on that, build on what we know works.

So, our commitment -- just to lay out a little bit here -- is to sharing information transparently and as expeditiously as we can. We also want to make the most important thing clear, and we must all -- in this moment of the pandemic, we both know and have the tools, as I just mentioned, we need to protect us -- different than any other points of this pandemic.

If you think about where we were a year ago, we had less than 1 percent of the population that was fully vaccinated. Now we have 71 percent of the American public that's fully vaccinated.

So, we are in a different place than we were before, and that's because what we know is working. What we -- the tools that we have, we know, are working.

So, the most important -- important and encouraging news we have is that vaccines -- in particular boosters -- we know, protect us. And thanks to the President, they are widely available.

So, yesterday, Dr. Fauci told the American public that the existing vaccines are optimal for our protection against Omicron. So, we need to get everyone who is vaccinated now boosted. We've made them readily available. They're free.

And, through the winter plan, as I just mentioned, we have AARP doing extensive outreach to our most vulnerable, pharmacies doing proactive outreach and expanding availability, and have a continued ramp-up paid media campaign driving Americans to their boosters.

We also know it's critical Americans not lose sight of masking indoors where CDC recommends this. We've -- we've been clear that we must follow this simple measure we know helps to stop the spread.

And beyond vaccine effectiveness, we're looking at transmittable severity. We know vaccines and, importantly, boosters are critical, as Dr. Fauci also mentioned.

So, we also know this is a more transmittable variant, the Omicron, and so we have to do everything that we can to get people vaccinated quickly and get boosted -- and also boosted as quickly as we can.

So -- so, we're just going to continue pushing forward the plan, the tools that work to get -- to get Americans vaccinated and boosted.

Q Back to Build Back Better for a second. Some senators emerged from their lunch today suggesting the President himself would have a little more to say about the future of Build Back Better later today. Is that something we should still be anticipating?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So I don't have anything to share with you. Clearly, if the President has more to say, we will all -- let

you all know, but I don't have anything at this moment.

Q Before you came out here -- speaking of boosters -- and it may have crossed paths with you guys coming out here -- the CDC vaccine advisors to the CDC, apparently, voted unanimously to recommend people seeking vaccines or boosters go with Pfizer or Moderna instead of Johnson & Johnson.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q The CDC Director will have to make a decision ultimately, and it should be announced later today, I guess.

I'm just curious, at this point, what would be the message to somebody who has a J&J shot? And is it responsible for the United States to continue distributing that shot -- not only in this country, but around the world -- if the vaccine advisors are saying this?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, as you know, ACIP is an outside advisory panel. So the ACIP regular -- regularly meets to discuss the vaccines and clinical usage, as Dr. Walensky said yesterday. So it's not unusual. This is regular -- regularly happening.

Whatever decision they come -- they come to will go then to Dr. Walensky, and we will follow her guidance once we get that.

But what we know right now and can focus on is that -- the importance of getting vaccinated and boosted. As I just laid out, we have three effective vaccines available to people widely around the country. And right now, what we know: It is critical to get vaccinated and boosted to protect yourself from Omicron.

So that's what we know at this moment is that we have three that are effective.

Q If she were to come back and say -- and this is a hypothetical, I'm going to stress that --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yes.

Q -- because I know we --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: It is a hypothetical. We do not like hypotheticals in this room.

Q Do we know how -- whether she could say we shouldn't be giving out J&J anymore -- and how quickly it could be removed from the market?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I -- we don't -- I can't get ahead of what Dr. Walensky is going to say. We follow the science. We -- you know, we listen to the public health experts. That's our motto here -- the "North Star," if you will. And I'm going to leave it to Dr. Walensky.

Q Just to -- I wanted to circle back to Russia. Have there been any updates, in terms of -- I know there was, obviously, a U.S. official in Moscow -- where things stand on the talks? Any announcements about future talks maybe coming in the days or weeks ahead?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah. So, we are constantly consulting closely with our European allies and partners to determine the best way to proceed with the security talks that President Biden and President Putin agreed to very recently.

Today, National Security Advisor Sullivan had a call with his B9 counterparts. Yesterday, he spoke with Russian Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor. Today, Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried is in Brussels, meeting with NATO Allies to brief them on that conversation and on her meetings in Kyiv and Moscow, which she had this week.

Our focus continues to be diplomatic progress and de-escalation. That is the most important thing here. We believe progress is possible on ending the conflict in Eastern Ukraine through implementation of the Min- -- Minsk Agreements in support of Normandy Format. So that is our focus right now.

Q Okay. And just one more on -- sort of circling back to Build Back Better. I know the President is a veteran of these types of things, with 36 years in the Senate, Vice President. Does he view this as just kind of a step in the process? Is it a setback? What's kind of his perspective on where things stand right now in these talks?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, so, just to step back for a second and look at the big picture of what we've been dealing here -- dealing with here: So, this President and the congressional leadership team, working with two of the -- are working with two of the narrowest majorities possible -- has passed several of the most impactful economic legislation in American history.

He turned around a failing COVID response and a sputtering economy, and he's taking strong action to address the financial challenges that Americans care about the most.

His leadership and bills -- and those bills now resulted in unprecedented economic recovery that is the envy of the world, historic job growth, the fastest drop in unemployment in history, strengthened supply chains, and boosted competitiveness against China.

We delivered because we stayed focused on what the American people care about and did the work. That's exactly what's happening here.

Meanwhile, Republicans are actively seeking to hurt the pandemic response, explicitly rooting for infl- -- inflammati- -- pardon me -- inflation to get worse. And so, they are -- they are blocking what we're trying to do for the American people, which is bringing down the cost and doing the work on behalf of the American people.

So, of course, any President wants anything to happen sooner, right? They want -- he wants us to get this done as soon as possible. He wants to deliver the Build Back Better plan for the American families as soon as possible.

But we understand that it's going to take a -- it's going to take time, and we're going to -- but we're going to continue doing the work.

Q Thanks, Karine.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead. Go ahead, Ayesha.

Q Another question on Build Back Better -- I know that that seems to be the theme of today, but --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: (Laughs.) Yes. It's all good.

Q You know, one thing that seems to be a sticking point is -- for Senator Manchin -- is the Child Tax Credit. And so, I do want to know: Is the White House willing to move the expanded Child Tax Credit -- you know, the payments that people get each month -- is that negotiable?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: When you say "move," meaning --

Q To remove it from Build Back Better --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me --

Q -- to not have it as a part of the plan.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, first, if -- a standalone bill --

Q It's a standalone bill --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Right.

Q -- or, yeah.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay, so, in order to do that, we need the 60 -- 60 votes in the Senate, and we just don't have that. Right? So, that is not -- that is not an option here.

But, what we're going to continue to do is move forward and have the conversation on Build Back Better, and to get that done.

That's one of the reason the President included it in -- the Child Tax Credit -- included in the Build Back Better Bill.

Look, the CTC puts money directly into the pockets of families across this country at a time when, unfortunately, it costs -- it costs -- the costs of some everyday things have gone up. We'd hope that everyone in this town, regardless of party, would support it.

The President was clear when he signed the Child Tax Credit extension into law as part of the American Rescue Plan, he viewed it as a vital tool to fighting child poverty and helping families.

So, the President believes the Child Tax Credit is highly effective policy and needed now more than ever. And that's why he included it in the Build Back Better plan.

Q And so must it remain in the Build Back Better plan? Because there's some talks about it possibly being removed and maybe not being in a separate plan if Manchin will not support it.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I -- all I can tell you right now is if we -- what we've been hearing and people have been asking us -- would we -- would -- what -- how -- would we support it being in a standalone. And that thing is -- the reality is you need 60 votes in the Senate. There are no -- there -- we do not have 60 votes in the Senate to have -- to do that as a standalone.

So, we're going to continue to make sure that we work -- we work with the Senate to really get Build Back Better done.

Q And just really quickly, on voting rights: I know you said that there's nothing more urgent for the President right now than voting rights, but it does seem like Build Back Better, all these other things have taken a priority over voting rights -- like, that there has not been movement. And there is a great deal of frustration from, you know, activists, voting rights activists about that.

So, I guess, how do you address that: to say that it is the most urgent thing but it does not seem to be the top priority legislatively?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Let me just run through a little bit of what we have done, because I think that's important. I feel like sometimes that gets -- that gets lost as we're talking about voting rights. And it shouldn't because the President has made this a priority -- voting rights -- made this a priority throughout his career and practically on day one.

So, dozens of White House staff work on this priority every day. And it is fundamental to upholding the rule of law.

You all heard the President speak about this at length at the 10th anniversary of MLK's Memorial, which is very -- which was not too long ago, decrying the Big Lie and making the case for voting rights legislation.

Here's what we've also done, because we are not waiting for legislation; we wanted to make sure that we moved forward very quickly and got some of these things done.

So, the President's historic executive order in March, which he signed on Bloody Sunday and which agencies have now submitted action plans for, leveraging the power of the administration to protect the franchise and make it easier to vote. That's one.

DOJ has been doubling their voting rights staff at the Civil Rights Division, as well as taking steps to ensure compliance with voting rights statutes, launching a task force to combat the increase of threats against election officials and election workers, and issuing guidance on a variety of issues pertaining to fair and secure elections.

And the President appointed the Vice President, at her request, to lead this administration-wide effort using the bully pulpit and convening power to the White House.

So, the President believes the right to vote is critical, it's crucial to the health of our system -- of our system of government. So, that's what we've been doing. So, I don't want that to get lost.

Q Can I follow up on --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I'll get to you in a second, April.

Q Thanks, Karine. I wanted to also follow on this Child Tax Credit issue with Joe Manchin. I remember, a couple of months ago, we were sitting on the tarmac, delayed because the President, with much fanfare, came out and announced that he had a framework that had sort of sign-off from senators. And then, this week, we've learned that Joe Manchin has either asked for the Child Tax Credit to come out or sort of pitched a 10-year Child Tax Credit that would cost \$1.4 of his \$1.75 trillion.

So, based on that, has Joe Manchin sort of reneged on a commitment that he made to the President when you guys made that announcement? Or did you not actually have the announcement in hand before (inaudible)?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, Justin, as I said, we're -- I'm not going to get into private conversations. I'm certainly not going to lay out what has been negotiated or not negotiated. I'll let the -- I'll let Senator Manchin speak for himself on what he wants included or not, and where he sees this.

Q And then, on COVID: In response to Jeff, you said that the tools that we have are working. And I take the point that if you're fully vaccinated and boosted, the chance of severe harm from COVID to you -- your personal risk is relatively low. But that doesn't describe a majority of Americans.

And just in the last few weeks, we've seen cases up 40 percent, deaths up more than a third. And so I'm wondering, in light of that, are you guys still categorically ruling out the possibility that we might see lockdowns this winter, especially considering how boosters have not kind of had the uptick that we would need to see here?

And are --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well -- oh, sorry.

Q Yeah. Are there going to be any operational changes here at the White House? Obviously, you know, the President is 79 years old; he's been boosted, but the virus is swelling in a way that we haven't seen, probably, in a year.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, as it relates to shutdowns -- which is what I was trying to convey to Jeff as he asked me this question -- look, you know, we've been very clear, Dr. Fauci has been very clear, our public health experts have been very

clear: We know what works, and we're going to continue to do what works, which is making sure that, you know, we do everything we can to get folks vaccinated.

We're at 71 percent of people being fully vaccinated. That's a huge difference to where we were a year ago, as I just stated. A year ago, we were at less than 1 percent. We're at 83 percent -- more than 83 percent of people who have at least one shot. So, we're doing the work to get us there. With boosters -- about more than 50 million people have gotten that booster shot.

And the President laid out his Winter Plan about two weeks ago to really talk about those dozens -- the 12 tools -- additional tools -- to build on what's working to make sure that we offer it. We have -- the American public feels like they have that access and feel -- and feel comfortable in getting that booster shot.

So, it's important. We got to make sure that we take care of our seniors, our most vulnerable. So, that is what we know. We listen to the science. As I said, that is the North Star for us. We listen to health -- health officials.

And so, we're going to continue doing what we know works and continue to talk to the American public about that.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Thanks, Karine. First, a little before you came out here, a report (inaudible). Why is the administration suspending talks for cash payments to the families of illegal immigrants separated at the border? The President has said, "You lost your child -- it's gone -- you deserve some kind of compensation, no matter...the circumstance." Did he change his mind? Does he no longer think that these people need compensation?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, Peter, it's ongoing litigation, so I would refer you to the DOJ. I can't speak from -- from it from here -- about it from here.

Q Okay. A question about crime recently. The mayor in San Francisco is now trying to add police funding because when she pulled it to reinvest in communities, crime went way up. So would President Biden, as the leader of the Democratic Party, advise Democratic mayors not to pull money from police budgets?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I can say this: It is absolutely unacceptable when gun crimes are taking lives, when families don't feel safe going to the park or their local schools, when thieves feel impunity in stealing from retailers. So, we applaud the mayor making sure that there is more police presence in the city to protect Americans.

And so, if you're a mayor -- this is what we say to local leaders: If you're a mayor or a local leader, there is a crime problem in your community, we think you should step up and do something about it, just as many mayors are already doing. And we're -- and we've made clear that we're going to offer federal support to help you do that and to keep communities safe.

As just one example: The Department of Justice announced, last month, grants to help put 50 more cops on the beat in San Francisco and funding for over 1,000 more community-oriented policies -- policies, roles nationwide.

The President has proposed doubling that program. So, we want to make sure that -- that mayors and local leaders do indeed step up and make sure that they're protecting their community.

Q And then just one more topic, really quick.

Q Karine --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: We got to wrap it up.

Q Okay. Just quickly --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q Why is President Biden telling people still that the vaccinated cannot spread COVID?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Can you -- can you say more?

Q Yeah. In a local interview on Tuesday, he said, "How about making sure you re vaccinated so you do not spread the disease to anybody else?" The CDC says people who get vaccine breakthrough infections can be contagious.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I ll say this: I -- I didn t hear this interview so I would have to see it in its full context.

What I know and what the President believes is that we have to listen to the science. We have to listen to our public health officials. And that s what the President believes.

Thank you.

Q Tomorrow s commencement address? Tomorrow s commencement address?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, the -- in South -- in South Carolina?

Q Yes. What s the topic? Is he talking about voting rights? Is he advancing that?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I -- we ll have more to share with you on that later, but we know we have to go. But -- and if you want, you can come and see me in the back, and I can get you more information.

Q Thanks, Karine.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thanks, everybody.

4:45 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki En Route Orangeburg, SC
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 17, 2021 11:07 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2021

Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki En Route Orangeburg, SC

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Orangeburg, South Carolina

8:00 A.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Good morning. Thanks for joining us bright and early for this trip to Orangeburg, South Carolina, where the President will deliver remarks at South Carolina State University's 2021 Fall Commencement Ceremony.

Just to give you a little bit of background on what to expect to hear from him during the speech: The President is the first sitting president to deliver a commencement address at the school in its 125-year history.

He'll be joined on stage by South Carolina State President Alexander Conyers, Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, and White House HBCU Scholar Javonni Ayers, President of the Student Government Association.

During his remarks, the President will honor Congressman Clyburn, who is marching with the Class of 2021. The Congressman did not march to receive his degree from South Carolina State College in 1961, as the school did not conduct December ceremonies at that time.

The President will highlight the importance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities -- otherwise known as HBCUs -- and his work to support these institutions, as well as the communities in which they exist.

Several HBCU graduates serve in senior roles in the Biden-Harris administration -- of course, the Vice President, the first HBCU graduate ever to serve as Vice President; Director of the Office of Public Engagement Cedric Richmond, traveling

with us today; and EPA Administrator Michael Regan.

In just 11 months, the Biden-Harris administration has delivered a historic \$5.8 billion in investments to HCBUs, including:

- \$2.7 billion from the American Rescue Plan for direct emergency relief grants, \$25 million of that for South Carolina State, which used nearly \$6 million to clear student debt balances
- \$1 billion in relief funds distributed from the December 2020 Omnibus spending bill
- \$1.6 billion in debt relief from the Department of Education, including \$29 million for South Carolina State
- \$500 million in grant funding from the Department of Education for academic capacity-building and fiscal stability, including \$6 million for South Carolina State.

Finally, the President's Build Back Better Act -- which we're working to get through Congress -- provides \$10 billion to HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and minority-serving institutions.

And the President's budget includes \$807 million in discretionary funding to HBCUs, a \$72 million increase from the prior year. Together, they propose a \$950 increase to the maximum Pell Grant award, which will benefit the 75 percent of HBCU students who use Pell Grants.

I know that was a lot but hopefully helpful in your reporting. Okay, why don't you kick us off?

Q Great. Thanks, Jen. Obviously, kind of the big story of the week: With regard to Senator Manchin, did the President and the Senator talk past each other? Was there a misread? And how would you characterize the relationship right now?

MS. PSAKI: The President considers Senator Manchin a friend. He's somebody who he has had many candid and direct conversations with. It doesn't mean they always agree on everything, but that is not the bar that the President sets for his friendships or relationships with members of Congress.

The President is also someone who has been through many legislative battles, many legislative fights, many that have had ups and downs, but ultimately resulted in victory. Look at the Affordable Care Act an example, from several years ago.

And he is somebody who is committed to pressing forward through ups and downs, and that's where we are right now.

Q Do you expect to talk about voting rights today?

MS. PSAKI: We do.

Q Obviously, the President -- there is a lot of pressure on voting rights. What do we -- what should we expect to hear from the President? And what might be the path forward at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, you can expect the President will talk about voting rights and use this speech today as an opportunity to renew his call in Congress to protect the sacred right to vote, which is, of course, under attack from Republican officials across the country.

You'll hear the President talk about the fact that Republican attacks across the country are not just on limiting who gets to vote, but about changing who gets to count the vote and whose vote is counted. It's a sinister combination of voter suppression and election subversion, which is un-American, un-democratic, but not unprecedented.

As you know, the Vice President is, of course, leading this effort. And there's a number of steps we have taken to date, which we're looking to build on, but you will certainly hear the President make a passionate case in his remarks today.

Q Did the President speak with Senator Manchin about the filibuster and the role that that might play in the voting rights conversation right now?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more to read out about the President's conversation with Senator Manchin. He was a part of the conv- -- of the voting rights group the President spoke with yesterday. So, certainly, part of that is about the path forward, what that looks like, and how to move voting rights legislation into law.

Q Jen, let me ask you about one other topic. So, Russia, they actually put out a list of the various demands that they have regarding Ukraine. You know, they're repeating some of the things that you guys have already rejected, including, you know, restrictions on Ukraine eventually joining NATO, but they say that they're ready to talk about their list of demands as soon as Saturday. What's your reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have seen the Russian proposals. We're discussing them with our European allies and partners.

The North Atlantic Council statement yesterday underscored that any dialogue with Russia would have to proceed on the basis of reciprocity; address NATO's concerns about Russia's continued dangerous and threatening behavior; be based on the core principles and foundational documents of European security; and take place in consultation with NATO's European partners.

As you know, earlier this week, Assistant Secretary Donfried met with NATO Allies in Brussels, and National Security Advisor Sullivan spoke with his counterparts from B9 eastern flank allies about these and other issues.

I will note that there will be no talks on European security without European allies and partners. We will not compromise the key principles on which European security is built, including that all countries have the right to decide their own future and foreign policy free from the outside interference.

So, we've also -- and finally, the last thing I would note, Trevor, is that we've managed to engage with Russia over strategic concerns for decades. There's decades of precedent here and having these conversations through a range of formats: during the height of the Cold War and in the post-Cold war era through the NATO-Russia Council, the OSCE, and other mechanisms. There's no reason we can't do that moving forward to reduce instability. But we're going to do that in partnership and coordination with our European allies and partners.

Q Hey, good morning. In terms of Build Back Better: Would the President be more optimistic in the new year with maybe kind of a reset, a chance for Democrats to go back to their districts and get a sense of what's -- of what they need to do come '22?

And then, obviously, the midterm elections are going to be here before we know it. I mean, realistically, is there enough time -- I know, you're going to say that, you know, "We'll see." But I'm just curious, is there going to be enough time to get these major legislative pieces through between now and the next election?

MS. PSAKI: That's absolutely our plan. The President wants to see this move forward, as I think you saw in his statement, early next year.

I would note -- not that this was your question, but this is a prominent question we get about the Child Tax Credit, which is a component of this, not the only component. And if we get it done in January, we've talked to Treasury officials and others about doing double payments in February as an option. But the President wants to see this move forward. It's a priority for him as soon as Congress returns.

It is true that I think when members go back to their districts and talk to people in their communities, they will hear about their concerns about rising costs in a range of areas. And the price -- the case the President will continue to make, and members who are strong advocates for this will continue to make, is that this bill, the Build Back Better bill, will lower costs

for the American people -- childcare, healthcare, eldercare, things that are impacting people's pocketbooks on a daily basis. And we're eager to move it forward in January.

Q We're just about a week out from Christmas. I'm just curious, with COVID cases seeming to skyrocket in many parts of the country, does the President plan to change any of his holiday travel plans? And is he encouraging Americans to maybe think twice about doing anything special for this upcoming holiday break?

MS. PSAKI: Well -- as we always say, but I like to preface -- we rely on the advice and counsel of our health and medical experts. I know they'll be doing a briefing later this afternoon.

But the good news, as much as we're going through a challenging time where we're seeing cases rise, is that we know what works. We know that vaccines work. We know that boosting works. You've heard Dr. Fauci and Dr. Walensky talk about that just a few days ago. We know masking works. We know testing works. And so, we're going to continue to double down on the steps and the approaches that we know have been effective to date.

But I would leave it to them to announce any changes. I've none that I anticipate at this point in time.

Q So he's not changing --

Q Can I follow up on --

Q I'm sorry. He's not changing his holiday plans yet?

MS. PSAKI: No.

Q Okay. Thank you.

Q Can I follow up on the new variant?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q It's -- we now are starting to get evidence out of South Africa, as what we're seeing in Europe, about how it's affecting not only people's health, but their economies. Does the economic team think that there might need to be new measures pushed for in Congress, administratively, to help prop up the economy as the wave sweeps across the United States?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question. I know one you've asked before. And we're obviously continuing -- constantly assessing what the impact of COVID is on the economy, whether it's a new variant or a rise in cases in different parts of the country.

They -- there's not a new assessment that they have provided or new recommendations that they have provided to date. But that's obviously a conversation that's happening internally, as we look at not just the new variant, but any cases of -- any surges that we're seeing in communities across the country. And, of course, we'll continue to assess any new steps that need to be taken.

I will note that one of the things that we have done, which is -- you know, we, of course, link COVID and the impact of addressing COVID in communities with the economic impact -- is we've sent surge teams to -- we've really reupped our surge teams that we've sent to a number of parts of the country where we've seen increases.

And just to give you a sense: Colorado, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Vermont. We've sent new surge teams to a lot of those areas and communities to help address the rises in cases. And we'll continue to assess and do that as well.

Q And then on -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q A question about immigration reform and the Senate parliamentarian's decision on that. Does the White House have any comment on that? Does that mean Democrats have to find a new legislative pathway? And how hard would you like them to push on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the decision by the parliamentarian is deeply disappointing and relegates millions to an uncertain and frightening future. The President, the administration, and our partners on the Hill vehemently disagree with this decision and will keep fighting to give relief and protection to the many DREAMers, TPS holders, farm workers, and essential workers who are living in fear.

Ultimately, it's time for Congress to stop kicking the can down the road and finally provide certainty and stability to these groups, and make other badly needed reforms to our outdated immigration system.

As you know, that news just came out last night. And, of course, we would support any effort and mechanism for our partners in Congress to move forward reforms.

Q Should the Senate -- should they just be -- I mean, just move -- just push right through and do it regardless of what the parliamentarian says?

MS. PSAKI: I think they are -- we would encourage and support any effort that they make to look at any ways to move immigration forward. But I'm not suggesting we're advocating for a change in the Senate parliamentarian's role at this point in time. I'm just suggesting we support their efforts to get immigration reform done.

Q Is this a chance for the President to kind of say a special thanks to Representative Clyburn after his endorsement from the 2020 primary? I know it seems like 20 years ago since that happened, but a lot of people credit Clyburn's endorsement to really changing the game for then-candidate Biden. Is this a chance for him to say thank you?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that the President and Congressman Clyburn have been friends for decades. They've known each other for a long time. And certainly he appreciates Congressman Clyburn's support for his candidacy when he was running for president.

But he's somebody who the President has deeply admired for his work and advocacy on the -- on behalf of underserved communities, on behalf of minority communities, and just on behalf of the American people and the people in his district.

So, I would just see it as an opportunity to honor -- the President sees this as an opportunity to honor someone who he has had great admiration and respect for for many decades.

Q On voting rights --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, yeah. Yeah. You guys --

Q Is the White House seeing any progress right now on getting the voting rights legislation through? Anything that you can update us on that, on any progress?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, the good news is that the door is open to conversation by a broad range of members of the Senate. And this is a top priority for the President. He feels that voting rights is a fundamental right for the American people. He's eager to get it done. It's a -- and he is going to do everything he can to get it done.

He had a conversation with senators yesterday, as you all know. And I expect those conversations will continue at a staff level, and perhaps at his level, in the days and weeks ahead.

But I don't have a day-to-day assessment other than it's something that there is a broad range of support for and, really,

we're looking for the path forward at this point.

Q So did the meeting yesterday actually move the needle at all, can you say?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's more about keeping the door open to conversation and ensuring that there is -- that their members know the President's deep and abiding commitment to getting this done.

Q And then, on the search for the Federal Reserve Board members, is there anything new that you can update us on the timeline on what the President intends to announce?

MS. PSAKI: I know we are week to Christmas, right? I don't have anything to update you on, on the timeline. It is still something we would like to get done and announce before the end of the year.

Q Before the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I mean, we're close. So, soon.

Q The President asked yesterday -- when he was talking to Senate Democrats -- to eliminate the filibuster for voting rights. Will he call for eliminating the filibuster in voting rights today in his speech?

MS. PSAKI: The President is not going to talk about legislative strategy today. He will just reiterate his -- make a strong and passionate argument for voting rights, how it's so imperative and important to the people of the country.

Q Is there a path forward without eliminating the filibuster?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give you legislative analysis from here other than to convey that the President has made clear that his deep frustration with the obstreperous, to use a word -- his word -- nature of the Republicans' opposition to allowing voting rights and a range of other priorities to come up for a vote. I don't have anything to update you on, on his views on that, at this point.

Q Jen, one of the key talking points of this administration has been that the policies are popular. Given the popularity of the policies, why aren't they going through? And why aren't policies that get public approval helping President Biden's own public approval at this stage? What's the administration's thinking?

MS. PSAKI: On why they're not moving through Congress?

Q If they're popular, why aren't they moving through?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one piece that's important for the American people to know and understand is that we have a very slim majority in the House and in the Senate. And in the Senate, you need every single member of the Senate to support legislation moving forward.

Yes, the President's policies are very popular -- broadly popular across the country. But, ultimately, that's how the legislative process works.

Now, he also believes that because the Build Back Better Act will help, you know -- according to dozens of economists -- address inflation over the long term, it will help bring down costs for the American people next year, that it is something we will get across the finish line.

But he also is not naive about the ups and downs of legislative process making.

Q Speaking of that finish line, before he left for Rome and Scotland, the President announced a framework that he said

would get 50 votes in the Senate among Democrats. And he used that framework, particularly the climate provisions, to sell America's commitments on climate to the world at the COP conference.

So, was he premature in making that judgment that he had the votes? Overpromising? How should world leaders feel about, you know, what they're seeing right now on this bill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one of the reasons the President is so committed to Build Back Better is because it includes, as you referenced, urgent action on addressing the climate crisis, something he did talk about on his trip.

And I think world leaders and others around the world should understand and know the President is going to get this done and we're going to get it across the finish line.

And, yes, it's going to take more time than we anticipated, but that is the nature of policymaking, not just in the United States, but in many capitals around the world.

Q But was he wrong to say that that framework could get -- would get 50 votes?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think the President and many world leaders who are reading this or digesting it understand that, again, there are ups and downs in getting bills across the finish line.

And what is -- what is encouraging is that Senator Manchin has reiterated his support for Build Back funding level -- funding at the level of the first framework plan that the President announced in September that you referenced. And he also supports and is an advocate for lowering costs in a range of areas for the American people -- childcare, healthcare, eldercare.

So there's really broad agreement on a range of components. What we're working on now is the final details to get it across the finish line.

Okay. All right, guys.

Q Thank you, Jen.

8:16 A.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call on Broad Middle East Regional Year-End Discussion
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 17, 2021 8:01 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2021

Background Press Call on Broad Middle East Regional Year-End Discussion

Via Teleconference

11:09 A.M. EST

MODERATOR: Thank you, Carolyn and everyone. Good morning. Thanks for joining us for today's broad Middle East regional year-end discussion. Today's briefing is on background and attributable to a senior administration official. The briefing is embargoed until the conclusion.

For your awareness, our senior administration official is [senior administration official], but for the purposes of the remainder of this call, he will be referred to as a "senior administration official."

We'll have a little more time because we started a little later, so I just wanted to let you know that at the top as well.

With that, I'll turn it over to our senior administration official for opening remarks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks. And thanks, everybody, for joining us.

We thought what we would do towards the end of the year here is just kind of give a broad overview of President Biden's policy in the Middle East and -- region of Middle East and North Africa. And it's not always at the top of the headlines these days, which is fine for those of us working on it, with the exception, of course, of issues like Iran and Iran's nuclear program, which I can also address.

But I really just wanted to step back and kind of what is President's Biden's charge to us and what we've been working to do here over these past 10 months.

And I think, after some hard lessons learned over the last 20 years -- and I think it's fair to say a kind of singular focus of American foreign policy on the Middle East region in particular -- but also, since the attacks of 9/11, across the last three administrations, setting, really, maximalist and quite grandiose goals in this most volatile region of the world: regional transformation; democratization through nation building; regime changes -- really, multiple regime changes. You can kind of go down the list of the objectives and the end states that were identified.

And we really just kind of concluded that, you know, setting these types of objectives, the ends totally outstrip the means.

And so, President Biden's charge to us, being a practical-minded leader in particular, and recognizing global powers, global responsibilities, but that this region also is tied up with vital interests for the United States, which are not going away. And we need to remain deeply committed.

So what we've been trying to do is really just get back -- back to basics. And what I mean by that are the basics of sound strategy and statecraft: So, setting goals after a careful study of facts on the grounds; some consultation with partners, being very cognizant that we want to make sure that ends and means align; focusing on our comparative advantage of alliance building, alliance maintenance, and alliance strengthening; using diplomacy -- being ambitious in the use of diplomacy to de-escalate tensions wherever we can, and to further integrate different countries in this region, many of whom have not had ties before.

So, just with that, a kind of topper, if you can indulge me, I'll just go through, you know, issue by issue on what we deal with.

And I'll start with Israel. And again, back to basics. And a basic, fundamental principle, to President Biden -- as he often says: If Israel did not exist, we would have to invent it. And the security of Israel is first and foremost in his mind and ours.

And I think you can see that from his personal hands-on engagement during the 11-day Gaza conflict earlier this year, a conflict that had all the ingredients to go on for -- the last Hamas-Israel war that went on for almost 57 days -- I think that had all the ingredients this time around as well. But with a lot of -- a lot of very quiet diplomacy and very hands-on diplomacy from the President, the war ended in 11 days.

And then, subsequently, I think has not gotten enough -- or as much attention is the work we've done since, particularly with Egypt, which has been a critical partner in trying to ensure that we sustain the peace in Gaza.

And President Biden has had two calls with President Sisi, Jake Sullivan was in Cairo a couple of months ago, and we're in regular contact with our partners in Cairo and in Israel to make sure that we were able to sustain the peace coming out of that conflict.

I think we've also restored American contact with the Palestinians, which had basically been severed, and looking to build on that foundation as we look towards the future. And President Biden remains committed -- very committed -- to a two-state solution.

So -- but Israel is central to and the security of Israel is central to, obviously, our policies across the Middle East region, and Iran plays into that, which I will come to later.

In the Gulf: I think when we came in, we had a situation of pretty heightened tensions across the Gulf. I think it's fair to say now, the rift between Gulf States is pretty much healed. We saw -- we just saw a pretty successful GCC Summit in Saudi Arabia. And it's because of our web of relations in the Gulf that we were able to evacuate 120,000 Afghans out of Afghanistan in August. And without those partnerships and those platforms, that just really could not have been done.

We've looked, you know, pretty closely and have tried, as best we can, to encourage de-escalatory trends, not only in the Gulf, but outside. Channels of communication have opened up between Saudi Arabia and Iran; I think we're very realistic

about that process. But we do think it's better to have open channels of communication than not. It can reduce risk of miscalculation -- similarly between the UAE and other Gulf states and Iran. But also, I think, these countries are making clear to Iran that the only way, really, to have any sort of normalized trade, normalized relations is if Iran returns to the nuclear deal, because that's the only way that U.S. sanctions will come off.

President Biden, of course, has spoken with King Salman; he's spoken with the Crown Prince of UAE twice; spoken with the Emir of Kuwait, the Emir of Qatar; and has been quite involved throughout this process.

And, of course, human rights is central to all of these conversations, many of them quiet conversations. But, you know, our values are really front and center here in our relations with our Gulf partners, but also -- and we make clear to this publicly and privately -- very committed to the defense of our Gulf partners.

I think Saudi Arabia in particular, we have helped the Saudis quite a bit. When we came in, in January, the ability to defeat particularly unmanned aerial vehicles that were being fired from Yemen; we were having some difficulty with that. We put an awful lot of effort into that, and the Saudis are now defeating 9 out of 10 of those attacks. And we, of course, want to make sure that reaches 10 of 10. And that's an awful, awful lot of our work, day to day.

Just turning north, in Iraq: We've focused, really, since January on investing in Iraq's institutions and their electoral process through the United Nations. We had a successful unanimous vote in the U.N. Security Council to support an international monitoring mission for Iraq's election that was held in October.

That election, by all accounts, by the observers from the U.N. and also from the EU, was one of Iraq's most successful elections. There's really no serious question about its integrity. And the Iraqis are now in the process, of course, of certifying the results, and then they'll get on with government formation. But that took a lot of effort to ensure that those elections came off, and they came off -- they came off well.

Also focused on -- I talked about integration early on -- integrating Iraq into the neighborhood. And there was a Baghdad summit earlier this year, about two months ago, which brought nearly the entire region and heads of state from the Gulf, from Egypt, from Jordan, and the Foreign Minister of Iran, as well, together with the President of France, for a summit -- just making clear the importance of the stability in Iraq to the broader region, something we're very committed to.

We also inherited a situation in Iraq that really flowed from the military strike against Qasem Soleimani in January of 2020, in which attacks against U.S. facilities and personnel just dramatically accelerated. We're sometimes told that, you know, after that attack, the Iranians stood down and attacks against us stopped. That's just not what the facts show.

The strike against Soleimani was on January 3rd. In March, two American soldiers were killed, plus a British soldier, a member of our coalition. And those attacks kind of continued all the way through the beginning of the Biden administration.

In December of 2020, we had rounds falling on our embassy compound. We were flying B-52 bombers from North Dakota to the Gulf in a show of deterrence. And this is what we walked into. And so these attacks were continuing as we came in. And we've used a combination of deterrence, including two rounds of airstrikes, and also a lot of diplomacy to both deter and also de-escalate some of these tensions.

So, since July, we've had about five months of calm -- so, the longest period of calm we've had in Iraq, I think, really in three years. And we're looking for that to continue. But, of course, we very much anticipate -- heading into the first part of next year, there's just a number of -- there's the anniversary of the Soleimani strike, there's Iraq's government formation process, and a few other milestones that some of these attacks might start up again. But we'll, of course, be very ready for that and prepared.

In Syria, next door, another hotspot: Syria, in the last year, has seen -- what I think is fair to say -- one of the quietest years since the beginning of the civil war, over a decade ago. And that's something that we want to make sure that that

civil war violence, which has just convulsed the country year after year -- it was in a de-escalatory trend as we came in, and we've tried to lock that in with a lot of very quiet diplomacy to achieve commitments to ceasefires across the country.

And so, the civil war violence in the country, I think, is at, again, one of the lowest points in 10 years. And we want to maintain that.

We're also committed to maintaining our military presence in Syria because ISIS remains a serious problem, and the risk of resurgence of ISIS is there.

We have prison facilities in Northeast Syria with tens of thousands of people, including thousands of ISIS fighters and foreign fighters, and so that remains a very important objective.

The humanitarian situation in Syria: As civil war violence is down to one of the slowest points, the humanitarian situation is quite serious. We worked to secure unanimous U.N. Security Council resolution -- first time there was unanimous resolution on this -- to maintain cross-border access into Northwest Syria. There used to be three or four of these. Unfortunately, in 2020, the renewal closed ~~two~~ [three] of those access points. And the Russians were threatening to veto [the final one] as we walked in the door in January.

And so, we worked very close -- hard -- very hard with France and other partners and, of course, directly with the Russians, coming out of President Biden's summit in Geneva with President Putin, to secure that unanimous cross-border resolution.

We -- finally, we have not lifted or waived any sanctions on the Assad regime. In fact, we've added sanctions on the Assad regime for human rights violations twice. But we have also clarified through our Treasury Department that our sanctions do not cover the kind of daily activities of life for Syrians -- humanitarian activities, but also what we call early recovery activities.

It doesn't make sense, if we heard from the ICRC and others, that they can deliver water bottles to communities in Syria but they're prohibited, because of the chilling effects of our sanctions, from maintaining a water treatment plant, for example.

So, we've made clear that our sanctions do not cover those activities. Our sanctions are designed to pressure the Assad regime itself, not the Syrian people. And we've worked quite hard to clarify that.

Just across North Africa, I mentioned Egypt has a critical role in the Gaza conflict and to the security of Israel. We think our relations between Egypt and Israel are really at a high point.

We've also been, of course, very focused on the human rights dialogue with Egyptians. We had a strategic dialogue here between Tony Blinken and Egypt's foreign minister about a month ago. And for the first time, our administration did not issue a human rights waiver for \$130 million in FMF funding for Egypt.

Across North Africa: In Tunisia, we have seen some Democratic backsliding, but we've been working with President Saïed and other members of the Tunisian political establishment to at least now get in place a roadmap for a full return to democratic normalcy.

In Libya, we have invested in the electoral process with an election that is scheduled for later this year. And it may slip a bit as they're still finalizing about 70 candidates on the list for presidents. A few of them are quite controversial. And they're still finalizing that.

And we have Stephanie Williams now in place as the Secretary General's representative on the ground, a former U.S. diplomat now representing the U.N. on the ground. She's doing great job. She just got out there a couple of days ago to try to work the political process and keep the electoral process on track, which we think is quite important.

And Vice President Harris represented our administration in Paris a month ago at a summit on the Libya political process.

Finally, on Morocco and Algeria and the conflict in Western Sahara: We now have a U.N. Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, one of the world's most experienced diplomats. We worked closely with the parties and with the Moroccans to ensure Staffan was appointed to that post. And he is now hard at work, which we think is quite important for keeping that conflict in check and trying to find a political resolution.

Lebanon: One thing we want to try to make sure is that we don't have any more failed states in the Middle East region. Failed states open vacuums, and those vacuums are not filled by moderates, they're filled by extremist actors on all sides and become kind of proxy fights by regional powers.

Lebanon had all the signs of a potential failing -- a potential failed state. We worked quite hard, quite quietly, but Dorothy Shea, our ambassador in Beirut, and working with France and others, and to -- plus putting sanctions on particularly corrupt individuals of Lebanon's political system, because we're making clear that the only people that can save Lebanon are the Lebanese and particularly the Lebanese political leaders who have to make hard choices to save their country. So, a combination of carrots and sticks.

Lebanon has a new government now led by Prime Minister Mikati. We are in close touch with him. Our Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland, has traveled to Beirut. Our Senior Advisor on Energy at the State Department, Amos Hochstein, has traveled to Beirut, working on very important Egypt-Lebanon -- a gas deal with backing for the World Bank, which is getting underway and we think quite important for maintaining -- maintaining stability and trying to get Lebanon out of the crisis that it's in.

So, an awful lot of work is going on behind the scenes on Lebanon as we move forward.

Nearby, in Jordan, we had King Abdullah here visiting President Biden this summer. U.S. relations with Jordan, for reasons that are hard to understand, were quite strained over the last three years. We think that has been restored, and we feel very confident in our partnership with Jordan. We're doing an awful lot, of course, to help Jordan's stability, just given that it has been beset by crises, starting with the Iraq War and then the Syrian civil war, and over a million Syrian refugees that it has to house and care for.

And so we're very focused on our partnership with Jordan and making sure that it can maintain its stability as it faces these challenges.

And the relationship with Israel and Jordan also, we think, is reaching a high point, particularly with the new government of Prime Minister Bennett. And that's something also that we are continuing to encourage.

Across the region, the Abraham Accords: We've made clear from beginning -- I think when the UAE announced its Abraham Accord with Israel, President Biden was a candidate and issued a statement right away, noting his -- the importance of that event and his support for those new connections across the region. And we've worked to strengthen the existing Abraham Accords, and we are working quietly but quite assiduously to expand the Abraham Accords. And so, these things take some time, but they're very much a focus of ours.

Kind of stepping back -- and then I'll turn to Iran to end. But stepping back, this is a region beset by other problems: borderless problems, climate change, pandemics, migration. So, we're really focused on trying to encourage regional integration wherever we can and cooperation across borders. The Abraham Accords are a part of that, and a number of other initiatives are a part of that as well.

One thing we have worked on and is now starting to manifest itself is the initiative of Build Back Better World. With over a trillion dollars of investment in our own infrastructure at home, we're also focused on winning the future: investments in rare earth minerals, essential medicines, energy renewables, semiconductors, et cetera; ports across Africa, precious

resources, health, climate, technology.

And our Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs, Daleep Singh, and Amos Hochstein, our Senior Advisor for Energy at the State Department, and Don Graves, our Deputy Secretary of Commerce were recently in the Middle East talking about partnerships for the Build Back Better World Initiative, which I think will be a real theme as we head into 2022.

I'll finally -- I'll conclude with Iran, because Iran is a perennial challenge that has vexed multiple presidencies. In this case, we inherited a situation in which the United States of America was isolated when it came to the Iran challenge. And we had a theory of the case.

First of all, we believed that getting out of the JCPOA without any plan for what comes next led to exactly what I think would have been predicted: a rapidly escalating Iranian nuclear program; Iranian regional behavior that is even more aggressive than it was before, particularly in 2019, with a direct state-on-state attack between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and with no discernible U.S. response.

So, we wanted to rebuild the united diplomatic front, particularly with the P5+1 negotiating partners. And that took some effort, because to do that, we also had to demonstrate that we were prepared to return to compliance with our side of the deal.

And over the spring and summer, we did that. And we had about six rounds of talks in Vienna. And I think the Iranians, particularly now, are the isolated party. It's pretty clear that in return for its nuclear compliance with the JCPOA, we are prepared to return to compliance with our side. But the Iranians, to date, have not agreed to take the steps that it would need to take on the nuclear side, which is why we've been stuck.

The last two rounds with the new Iranian government -- I think the Iranians were surprised, two weeks ago, when they met what really was the united diplomatic front, not just the E3 and the United States, but also Russia and China. They went back to Tehran. We're in the middle of another round now in Vienna, which is probably going to take a pause after today. And I'll be getting a report from our Vienna team shortly.

But the bottom line is: Iran's nuclear program is rapidly accelerating. And I'm repeating myself here, but this should not have been a surprise to anybody that knows Iranian behavior and would have predicted exactly what would have happened if the United States just unilaterally left the deal without any plan or conception of what would come next.

So, we've been working diplomatically to get this problem back in a box, to return Iran to nuclear compliance with the deal. And we think we have very strong support in that regard, not just from the three, but also from Russia, in particular, and even China. So, we have a united front in Vienna, for the most part. And our partners around the world are also making clear to the Iranians that the only way for Iran to get out of the economic straightjacket that it's in is through a return to commitments of the nuclear deal.

So this is obviously a story that will play out over the first quarter of 2022 and perhaps beyond. And it is, I think, a central focus of ours, as we focus on this region.

So, with that, [senior administration official], I'll turn it over to you for any questions.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

Operator, please remind everyone of the instructions to ask questions, and then we will take our first question.

Q Thank you. Thanks. I had a couple of really brief questions, mostly about the Gulf. You spoke about how relations have improved, both among countries in the region and with the United States. On the F-35 sales to the UAE: The UAE has been pretty clear that it sees roadblocks in completing that sale because, by its account, the United States has not

agreed to certain technological add-ons to the planes that it feels are necessary. Could you talk about where those negotiations are now?

And with -- you mentioned the recent GCC conference, which was chaired by MBS. He said, at the end of those talks, that he felt like the Gulf region had been excluded from the Iran negotiations and that Saudi Arabia, in particular, deserved a seat at the table for it to continue. I wonder if you could address both those questions.

And finally, on Syria: I may be wrong, but I think the access renewal that was voted on at the U.N. technically expires this month. And what's required in order to make sure it continues? And have you presented the required report, and is it possible to make that public? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Karen. On the UAE and the F-35, again, I think we are -- we remain very much committed to that sale. This is a very complicated sale. Few partners around the world have the F-35 technology, and we're -- we feel proud that UAE can be one of those countries. But, of course, to conclude that, we have to conclude some arrangements.

I think there's some things that the UAE has asked for that were answered by the last administration. And so, we've been working through this with them. And we also have some concerns that have to be worked out.

So, you know, some of these sales -- UAE just concluded a sale of 80 Rafale fighters with France. I think that was negotiated over almost a decade to replace their Mirage fleet. The UAE has an excellent fleet of F-16s, and the F-35, of course, will give them just a second-to-none capability.

So, we're working through those issues. The UAE had a military delegation in town, two days ago, for meetings at the Pentagon that I think were quite constructive, and so we continue to work on that.

On the GCC, I didn't see those particular comments, but I would say: You know, we have been very clear -- and this is coming from a charge we have from President Biden -- we're not negotiating behind the backs of anyone.

And so everything we were doing is with full transparency to our partners in the Middle East region. In fact, Rob Malley and our negotiating team were in Saudi Arabia -- I think about two and a half, three weeks ago -- and met with the entire GCC, and they issued united statements on the path that we're on.

And also, I think there's recognition in the Gulf that getting back in the deal, given where we are, is probably the best course of action.

On Syria, the U.N. Security Council resolution, while it has to -- the Secretary-General issues a report about humanitarian access in the country generally. And after that report, I think the resolution continues through next summer.

Q Thank you so much for doing this. I hope you do more; we have so many questions about the Middle East. So, brief, Iran has doubled the IRGC budget for this -- for 2022, this year -- next year -- to reach \$22 billion, and also, it's increased its conventional military budget to \$8 billion. Do you see this as an escalation towards the region and more money to the proxies to cause more havoc?

On Iraq, you said that the election was a success. Do you see that the pro-Iran militias are trying to prevent the certification of the election results, and this will prevent a new government from being formed?

And finally, on Libya, you just mentioned that there was some controversial candidates. Do you encourage the election to be held -- held on time? Or do you think that it's better to have a better system that will allow the election to be more transparent and be delayed? Thank you so much.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Nadia. And I will -- I will commit to doing more of these -- and

[moderator] is on and nears me -- as we head into next year, because I think these are really important and complicated issues. And obviously, with everything going on in the world sometimes, it might not get the attention.

But I -- the one thing I will say: You know, the Middle East remains just a central focus of ours, just given the -- how it's so wrapped up with U.S.'s interest. I mean, I think, at least every day in the PDB, there's at least one or two items from this region. And this President reads the PDB every day. And so it's a -- it's a central feature of our foreign policy. Even as a global power, we're focused on issues all around the world.

Yeah, so the Iranians are coming out with their new budget. I think it takes a 20 percent hit from last year. So, I don't know -- it doesn't -- it is not signal that the Iranians are in great economic shape.

Of course, after the first round of Vienna, their currency collapsed to a record low. And I would say we have kept, you know, all the sanctions on.

What I think is different is that the last administration had sanctions on in pursuit of no clear, discernible objectives, whereas we have a very clear objective: Iran needs to return to nuclear compliance. And at least that set of sanctions that were tied to the JCPOA, we return to compliance as well.

You know, their investment in proxies -- the State Department has put out figures over the years -- they spend about \$2 billion a year on proxies. This is not a problem -- when it comes to Iran's regional behavior -- that sanctions alone are going to address.

So, I have not delved into the new Iranian budget and the line items, but I know it's almost a 20 percent hit from last year.

But, of course, they will continue to invest in proxies and IRGC and others. And, of course, we will continue to use tools that we can to deter and de-escalate. I mean, the themes of deterrence, integration, and de-escalation, I think, are pretty consistent across our approach to the region, particularly when it comes to Iran.

On Iraq -- yeah, so they had an election. [Redacted]. I was just in Iraq last week. And I think the vote will be certified by the Supreme Court at some point over the coming weeks. And then the Iraqis will get on with forming a government. I think that process often takes time. It sometimes leads to volatility.

We support Iraq's institutions, and we're very clear about that. And so, I think we'd leave it to the Iraqis to sort out the precise makeup of the -- of the next government.

What was most important to us with this election was -- it had the integrity and the -- met international standards, which it clearly did. And I think that was not a sure thing, if you go back to the spring and where things were headed.

But I think with a vote in the U.N. Security Council, the U.N. monitors, international monitors, and the work of the international -- the Iraqi Electoral Commission did together with the U.N. to set up a system that was almost fraud-proof I think is a real testament to the Iraqis and, frankly, their commitment to democracy, which is why they were a prominent invitee to the President's Summit on Democracy. And Prime Minister Kadhimi addressed that summit with the President on the first day.

Libya -- kind of similar. They had an election set for December 24th. It might slip a little bit. It is really an issue right now -- the final candidate list.

And here, too, I think there's great international support for this process. But what is most important are that Libyans have really led this. I mean, the registration for this election has been -- set by historical standards -- matches, I think, almost any country you can point to, with 2.5 million Libyans registered for this election.

And the Libyans have made clear they want this election to happen. And so, they're working out some final details, particularly on the candidate list

particularly on the candidate list.

Stephanie Williams is on the ground. Dick Norland, our ambassador, is doing a great job in coordinating with, you know, everybody in North Africa, our European partners, to try to do what we can to encourage and facilitate. But it's really ultimately up to the Libyans.

Over.

Q Hi, thanks so much for doing this. I was hoping I was going to get a question per country, but I'm going to follow the lead of my colleagues and just stick to two.

I want to ask you about Syria first, in particular where things stand with efforts to find solutions with the Russians. You talked about "very quiet diplomacy." I think you were speaking mainly about Syrian parties, but I wanted to talk about maybe the Russian element too, you know, sort of outside of your world in the Middle East.

Obviously, there's the situation in Ukraine right now, and the administration is obviously looking for areas where they can work with the Russians and find diplomatic, you know, kind of alternatives to what's happening there. And so, I was wondering if there's going to be greater emphasis on talks to have cooperation in Syria. That's my first question.

My second one is with regard to Yemen. You know, obviously, the President had committed to bringing peace to Yemen in his first year, and we're far from that. Efforts have been frustrating and frustrated, on the administration side, with regard to getting the Houthis to scale back attacks, but also the Saudis continue their airstrikes.

And so, you know, can you just kind of update us on where the talks stand there and whether or not you see any potential for breakthrough anytime soon? And what does the U.S. do? What's plan B if there is no breakthrough? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Vivian. On Syria, it's not so much looking for areas to cooperate with Russia; it's just -- I think going back to the theme of kind of the practical realities and dealing with them: The Russians are in Syria. They're a player in Syria. Our military is in Syria, in close proximity to Russia's military.

So, we have to have channels of communication with the Russians on Syria. And it was a topic -- agenda topic with President Biden and President Putin in Geneva. And it's really out of that meeting that led to some pretty constructive diplomacy between our diplomats and the Russians, which led to that unanimous U.N. Security Council resolution.

I will also say: I think we have reduced the tensions between the U.S. and Russia in Syria. That's something that is good, because we do not want the U.S. troops and Russian forces, you know, bumping into each other. We need to have channels of deconfliction, which we have, and also, you know, just some understandable rules of the road between us. So, that's quite important.

We also, of course, do support the U.N. Security Council process in Syria -- 2254. And while I think that process -- for anyone who's followed the Syria conflict -- has some ways to go. I'll put it there. And I was part of the group that put together 2254 some years ago.

We have worked, through the Russians and others, to try to get that process moving. And for the first time ever, the head of the Constitutional Committee of the opposition and the regime met face-to-face in Geneva. And we support Geir Pedersen's process.

But again, with the reality and the -- that -- again, that process is not going to lead to an outcome anytime soon. It's going to take an awful lot of work.

Yemen, too. I think we're very realistic about the Yemen conflict. The Yemen conflict right now is focused on one town in North Central Yemen -- Marib. The Houthis are determined to take it. And the Yemeni government is determined to hold it. And that battle has been going on for about six months. And every diplomatic initiative has basically run into the

it. And that battle has been going on for about six months. And every diplomatic initiative has basically run into the buzzsaw of the Marib Battle.

Most of the airstrikes are in that area. They are focused on military targets. But that has really been the focus.

With Tim Lenderking on our team, and Hans Grundberg, the new U.N. envoy, there's an awful lot of diplomatic activity through the Omanis and others -- first, to try to make sure the war is contained on that front, and also to ensure that humanitarian aid is reaching the Yemeni people.

And so, I'm not going to predict any diplomatic outcomes, but it remains a central focus of ours, even as we continue to work with the Saudis to ensure that they could protect their territory.

I'm told I have to run to the West Wing very quick, so maybe I can take one more?

MODERATOR: And this will be the final question.

Q Hey, thank you. Thanks very much. You said the Iran nuclear program is escalating rapidly. What is the current estimate of the breakout time for an Iranian nuclear weapon?

Secondly, what have you told the UAE in terms of skirting sanctions on Iran? And what did you tell the UAE to convince them not to let the Chinese build that military port? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, I don't want to get into precise calculations of breakout time. This is -- there's kind of a science to this, and I'm not -- I'm not the expert, and I defer to our proliferation experts.

But it is -- it's really short; I'd just put it that way, Steve, and it's unacceptably short.

And, you know, the Iranians made the decision when the U.S. got out of the nuclear deal -- they held back for a little while, but then starting in 2019, they just unleashed their nuclear program. And that has just continued apace. And for every day they spin centrifuges and for every day they stockpile uranium, the breakout time continues to shrink.

So, that's the whole reason we did a nuclear deal back in 2015, 2016. It is a very, very serious problem, and it's an international problem. And we have sought to keep that focus.

This is an international problem. It's not just a problem for the United States of America. It's not just a problem for Israel. This is an international problem.

It was a topic of the conversation between President Putin and President Biden just two weeks ago. Of course, Ukraine was a central topic, but Iran and the talks in Vienna was very much on the agenda.

So, I can't give you a precise timeframe on breakout, but it is -- it is alarming.

On UAE, I don't think I'll get too much into that, Steve. I'm sorry, but the China -- the China challenge, of course, intersects in the Middle East. We recognize that China is going to be the largest trading partner with many of the Gulf countries in particular. But there are certain areas of Chinese activity that would impinge upon our ability to continue particular activities in these countries and longstanding partnerships.

I think we have had a very, very good and very constructive discussion. My counterpart here in the NSC, [redacted], is [senior administration official]. I think our teams really work interchangeably about the conversation of China and telling the countries in my part of the world exactly what we're seeing and what to be careful of. And I think that's been a very fruitful endeavor and I think something unique thus far to the Biden administration.

On UAE and sanctions it's not so much the UAE government it is kind of private companies many of which will change

... and sanctions, it's not so much the -- the government, it's kind of private companies, many of which will change their names to facilitate a sanctions evasion.

Our Director of OFAC, Andrea Gacki, was just in UAE and really focused meetings in Dubai with private industry to make clear that sanctions are in place, we're prepared to enforce sanctions further, and that, you know, if you're evading sanctions, the U.S. will have its eye very much on you. There will be consequences.

So, I think Andrea's trip there was very important. But it's really a conversation focused particularly on the -- kind of the private companies and industry that are in the sanctions evasion game.

So, with that, I apologize; I could go on for some time. I hope this was constructive, because there's a lot of issues in the Middle East region that are worth -- that are worth the focus. And I'm happy to address your questions. But I have to run across the street, which I think exemplifies the fact that this region takes a great deal of our time, but mindful -- to go back to my first -- my opening -- back to basics.

We're not trying to achieve the unachievable; we're not trying to transform the Middle East. We're focused on the interests that impact Americans and our national security, and the national security of our friends. And we think those are achievable aims with deterrence, de-escalation, integration being three themes we're pursuing.

So, with that, I thank you very much. I hope to do it again soon.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Also, thank you all for participating this morning with our senior administration official. As our SAO has said, we will work to do more of these in the coming year in order to get to more of your questions.

With that, the call is now over and the embargo has lifted. Thank you.

11:51 A.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Yuriy Ushakov, Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Russia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 20, 2021 1:05 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Yuriy Ushakov, Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Russia

Today, Jake Sullivan spoke with Yuriy Ushakov, Foreign Policy Advisor to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. He indicated U.S. readiness to engage in diplomacy through multiple channels, including bilateral engagement, the NATO-Russia Council, and the OSCE. He made clear that any dialogue must be based on reciprocity and address our concerns about Russia's actions, and take place in full coordination with our European Allies and partners. He also noted that substantive progress can only occur in an environment of de-escalation rather than escalation.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on Senior Administration Official Trip to Israel and the West Bank
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 20, 2021 4:03 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on Senior Administration Official Trip to Israel and the West Bank

This week, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will travel to Israel and the West Bank, joined by Deputy Assistant to the President and Middle East and North Africa Coordinator Brett McGurk and the State Department's Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Yael Lempert. In Israel, Mr. Sullivan will meet with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and senior Israeli government officials to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to Israel's security and consult on a range of issues of strategic importance to the U.S.-Israel bilateral relationship, including the threat posed by Iran. Mr. Sullivan will also co-chair the fourth Strategic Consultative Group (SCG) with his Israeli counterpart, Dr. Eyal Hulata, capping a year of extraordinary engagement between our inter-agencies on a range of national security matters. Mr. Sullivan will also travel to Ramallah to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss ongoing efforts to further strengthen U.S.-Palestinian ties and advance peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, December 20, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 20, 2021 8:00 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, December 20, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:03 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi everyone. Happy Monday.

Q Happy, happy.

MS. PSAKI: Happy, happy. Okay.

One note for all of you at the top. President Biden has nominated and the Senate has confirmed the most diverse class of federal judges in history at a rate not seen since President Reagan.

As you may have seen Friday night and Saturday morning, the Senate confirmed dozens of historical and critical nominees. This included 9 district court judges, bringing the total for the year to 40 -- more than any President in his first year in office since President Reagan.

But it's not just the sheer number of people nominated and confirmed. As the President said at his commencement address last week at South Carolina State, he is proud to have appointed more Black women to the circuit courts than any administration in American history. We've confirmed the first LGBTQ woman ever to serve as a federal circuit court judge. And these 40 judges include people who have previously served as public defenders, labor lawyers, and civil rights lawyers, as well as prosecutors and government attorneys.

The Senate also voted to confirm 41 ambassadors to countries around the world, including critical allies such as -- including Japan, France, the European Union, and more. These qualified, competent leaders can now finally get to their important work representing America's interests abroad.

There's still a lot of work to be done, and we'll continue to work with the Senate to make sure we have the people in place so that we can continue to serve the American people.

Also wanted to note the Department of Justice announced today that they'll be awarding \$1.6 billion in grants to support a range of initiatives to reduce violent crime and make our communities safer.

This money will help address the surge in gun violence that we've seen over the last two years and will bolster steps that the administration has already taken to crack down on violent crime, including the President's Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gun Crime in June.

These grants will help advance community violence intervention programs, they'll support evidence-based police and prosecution strategies, they'll ensure that victims of crime get the resources they need, they'll help people returning from prisons and jails transition successfully back into their communities, and they'll support responses to crises like drug overdoses and mental health episodes.

This is just the latest example of the historic levels of funding that President Biden has made available to cities and states to address crime, including through the Rescue Plan; through investments in proven community violence intervention strategies that we announced in April; through the COPS community policing grants announced last month, which are helping to put 1,000 more police officers on the beat across 183 police departments this year; and through earlier DOJ awards, including \$1.2 billion for victim assistance and compensation programs and more.

With that -- I would say that since there's space in the back, why don't folks who are standing sit in some of the back seats, just because I know everybody is focused on the spacing of -- spacing in these days.

Go ahead, Colleen.

Q Okay, a couple things. So, on Omicron, cases are rising dramatically across the country. Americans are still traveling en masse. Biden is giving a speech that has been labeled "urgent" that the speech is tomorrow. The Vice President also was saying that scientists were caught off guard by the variants, and then there's been pushback from the scientific community on that.

So, can you help -- just talk a little bit about what the White House's message on Omicron is. What should the public be thinking? How -- should we be concerned? What should we do?

And then the second one -- I'm sorry, I'll ask you after. Go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely, Colleen. Well, let me first say that the President, as you noted, will be addressing the American people tomorrow, and he'll talk about what to expect as we head into the winter months and detail additional steps that he - we will be taking.

The President has been clear that while vaccinated individuals get COVID due -- he will restate tomorrow, I should say, that while vaccinated individuals get COVID due to the highly transmissible nature of Omicron, their cases will likely be mild or asymptomatic.

We continue to see and our health experts assess that you are 14 times more likely to die of COVID if you have not been vaccinated versus vaccinated.

Importantly, he'll restate we're prepared and that fully vaccinated individuals have the tools to protect themselves with a

booster shot and masking where CDC recommends.

For those who choose to remain unvaccinated, he'll issue a stark warning and make clear unvaccinated individuals will continue to drive hospitalizations and deaths. That is not trying to scare people -- or maybe it is trying to make clear to people in the country what the risks are here of not being vaccinated.

What is clear is that we're not in the same place that we were at -- and this is something he'll reiterate tomorrow as well -- at the beginning of the pandemic thanks to the President's extraordinary work to get over 200 million Americans vaccinated.

To be clear: COVID-19 is not the same threat to fully vaccinated individuals that it was in March 2020, and I outlined some of the reasons why. And again, as I said at the top, he will also announce additional steps.

So, he will outline this clearly tomorrow. He has been candid and he has been direct as he's provided updates to the American public throughout our steps to address what we know is an unpredictable virus and a once- -- in our fight against a once-in-a-generation pandemic. But that's what people can expect tomorrow.

Q Okay. Thank you.

On the negotiations over Build Back Better, we see Senator Manchin's version of events sort of differ from the White House's version of events in your statement on Sunday -- which, I guess, was yesterday; feels like a long time ago.

I just wanted to know if you could talk a little bit about like where the -- where the gap is -- if the negotiations fell apart over the Child Tax Credit issue, if the White House is prepared to go around legislation on -- on the CTC if necessary. Kind of, where are we with Manchin?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say I think the lengthy statement that I issued yesterday outlined pretty specifically the events of the last few weeks. And it was important to the President and to all of us to make that clear to the American people -- the status and the steps that had been taken.

But I'm not going to relitigate the tick-tock of yesterday from here today. I will say that, from the President's viewpoint -- and I saw him this morning -- he's worked with Senator Manchin over the course of decades. They share fundamental values, they're longtime friends -- that has not changed.

And what's most on the President's mind is the risk of inaction. And if we do not act to get this legislation done and the components in it, not only will costs and prices go up for the American people, but also we will see a trajectory in economic growth that is not where we want it to be. And we've seen projections from Goldman Sachs and others today on that front.

So, he's no stranger to legislative challenges, and we are going to continue to take steps -- work like hell to get it done.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President feel betrayed by his friend?

MS. PSAKI: I think our statement yesterday made pretty clear what we feel -- what was the factual depiction of events that happened.

But again, the President sees Senator Manchin as somebody who is a longtime friend, somebody he has worked well together on. And our objective and our focus now is moving forward.

Q And where do lines of communication stand at this point between either the President and Joe Manchin, Joe Manchin and the White House staff that you spoke about? Is there contact at all?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to assess or give you an update on specifics from here.

Q And just quickly, on COVID: Ahead of tomorrow's speech, should Americans expect any new restrictions?

MS. PSAKI: This is not a speech about locking the country down. This is a speech outlining and being direct and clear with the American people about the benefits of being vaccinated, the steps we're going to take to increase access and to increase testing, and the risks posed to unvaccinated individuals.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President still trust Senator Manchin?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I understand the questions here, but our focus is on moving forward. I think our statement yesterday made clear what the course of events were over the last couple of weeks; it was important for the American people to know and see that.

But he considers Senator Manchin a longtime friend, and our focus is on moving forward and getting this done.

Q Are you confident that all 49 other members of the Democratic Caucus are still on board with Build Back Better, since --

MS. PSAKI: I think --

Q -- we're looking ahead?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I understand, Ed. I can't, obviously, speak for all of them. But I think you saw quite a bit of unanimity yesterday in the response of people and their desire from across the Democratic Party and the desire to get this legislation done.

Q What would be his message to progressives who he asked to hang with him as things moved over to the Senate now that what many of them warned has happened?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, one, his message would be: We need to work together to get this done, and he's going to work like hell to get it done. And that would be his message. And January is an opportunity to do exactly that.

Q Quickly, on Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q The State Department issued a Level 4 travel warning today, saying, "U.S. citizens should be aware of reports that Russia is planning for significant military action against Ukraine.

Jake Sullivan spoke with his Russian counterpart again today. Apparently, over at the Pentagon, they've just said that they've conducted an assessment of air defense needs in the Ukraine.

Obviously, you've said you're monitoring this. Is U.S. intelligence picking up something new?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the travel advisory for Ukraine remains a "Level 4: Do not travel" due to COVID-19. The State Department updated it to include information on Russia's military buildup on Ukraine's border just to provide additional information. But it has been at a Level 4.

Go ahead.

Q So nothing new otherwise?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, they provided -- they -- the State Department provides additional information through travel advisories to make sure they are being transparent with American citizens who are in different countries. And that's exactly what they did in this case.

And we have historically seen large numbers of Americans and others, of course, traveling to Ukraine during this time of year in the holiday season, so it was just an effort to provide that information directly.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, your statement yesterday alluded to working more on Build Back Better next year. Is your expectation that President Biden and Senator Manchin will talk at all before the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to give you any updates on their engagements from here -- I wouldn't expect. And we're going to keep those private.

Q Got it. And do you regard his \$1.8 trillion proposal as a nonstarter given that it excludes the Child Tax Credit?

MS. PSAKI: I think the President has been clear about -- and I'll let Senator Manchin speak to the specifics of his proposal. I'm not going to confirm those details from here of what -- I know I've seen -- I know there have been reports out there, but I'll let him speak to that.

But I would say that the President, of course, wants to extend the Child Tax Credit. That's something he has spoken to. We know that it was a significant contributor to cutting in half the child poverty rate.

I'm obviously not going to negotiate from here. But, you know, he doesn't think "compromise" is a dirty word either.

Q One COVID question. On Sunday, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio asked the President to invoke the Defense Production Act because of a shortage of at-home tests, monoclonal antibody treatments -- and he also said that the Pfizer anti-viral pills should be fast tracked. Are any of those things under consideration at this moment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're in touch -- I will say first -- with the City of New York and the state, as well as other -- all officials across the country experiencing upticks. We've sent 30 ambulances to the state and an accompanying team of personnel to help balance patient loads among hospitals across the state.

We've already used the Defense Production Act and spent \$3 billion to greatly expand the number of at-home tests. So that's already something we have tapped into.

And as I noted earlier, the President will have more to say tomorrow in his remarks about our efforts to expand access.

Go ahead.

Q Senator Manchin, this morning, on a radio interview said, "This is staff. And they drove some things" that they put -- and they "put some things out that were absolutely inexcusable. They know what it is. And that's it." Do you know what he's referring to there? And do you have a response to the -- his comments about the staff?

MS. PSAKI: I don't. I would point you to Senator Manchin to outline further.

Q And then, can you walk through -- and I know you don't want to talk about yesterday's statement -- but the cost benefit of -- you guys have been so cautious, I think at the President's direction, of never speaking ill or laying out details of

negotiations -- what the calculation was by deciding to put out a 700-plus word statement being very clear about some palpable anger inside the White House related to a critical vote in the caucus?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think Senator Manchin had a strong statement yesterday, and we had a strong statement as well. And we're ready to move forward and get this done, and work like hell to do that with Senator Manchin, with members of the Democratic Caucus, across the Democratic Party. And that's our focus moving forward.

But that was our basis of our calculus yesterday.

Q And just one more quick one. My understanding is the -- what Senator Manchin put on the table, which you referenced in your statement, wasn't a final offer. It hadn't been rejected. It was kind of a process that was underway.

What is the process now? Are you working through proposals? Is staff dealing with policy issues? Where do things go from here in terms of the actual proposal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, clearly, the next couple of weeks will be important and pivotal and certainly involve high-level staff engagements, engage -- involve the President and his engagements directly with members. And we have been engaged with leadership, with members of the Senate and their staff over the course of the 24 -- the last 24 hours to talk about the path forward.

You saw, I'm sure, Leader Schumer's statement this morning, and we will stay in close touch and in close coordination with him and his team on the path forward in January.

Go ahead.

Q So, two -- one on COVID and one on --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- on Build Back Better.

On COVID, has there been an outbreak of COVID at the White House, the NSC, the State Department, and the Treasury? And has the President been in contact -- close contact with a COVID-positive person and thus in need of quarantine?

MS. PSAKI: The President has a full schedule today and is not in need of quarantine. We will provide information to all of you, as outlined with our commitment from just a few months ago about being transparent about close contacts. I don't have any updates for you at this moment in time.

But, again, we expect there to be breakthrough cases across the country -- right? -- and certainly in the federal government. And the most important thing to note for you and for others is that the -- 99 percent of the -- of the -- or more, at this point, of the White House staff is vaccinated. Boosters are strongly recommended and distributed. We have a very thorough process here that people abide by who are going to have close contact with the President -- and even beyond that. And those protocols go above and beyond CDC guidelines.

Q But you're going to say whether or not there's been a significant outbreak in the various different parts that I mentioned: NSC, State Department, Treasury?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I point you to different agencies to give any additional information. But I would just note that we do expect there to be breakthrough cases, as there are -- as there will be across government.

Q Okay. And then on Build Back Better: Did you see the Steve Clemons article today blaming the White House for "incivility" toward Senator Manchin -- and specifically, the statement that was released on Thursday -- I think, Thursday

evening -- in which this -- the read or the assessment was that the senator thought that that statement blamed him in a -- in a way that wasn't in keeping with the approach that he and the President had been dealing?

MS. PSAKI: I have not yet read his article. It's been a busy day. But I will tell you that our intention -- I think, if you look back to last Thursday -- was to provide an update on the future of Build Back Better. And I think it is not a secret where there was opposition to Build Back Better moving forward and where there is support, which is the vast majority of the Democratic Caucus. That was not intended to be directive or hurtful, but to state -- be a statement of fact.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thank you, Jen. In a press call this afternoon, Representative Jayapal, Chairwoman of the House Progressive Caucus, called on President Biden to pursue executive action to pass components of the Build Back Better legislation. Is this something that the White House would consider or even thinks is a realistic possibility to pass some of these elements?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't had a chance to discuss Representative Jayapal's call with our legislative team. I'm not aware of that being under discussion. Obviously, we have used executive authority and executive action for a range of steps to make a range of progress, and the President has not hesitated to do that.

The benefit of legislation is, obviously, it makes it permanent. So, there's a lot of value in that.

But I can see if that's something more under active consideration.

Q And real quick: Regarding communications with Senator Manchin, you've not said much on that. I mean, are you able to confirm that -- whether or not President Biden has reached out to the senator today?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to detail contacts further.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thanks. Just to drill down a little bit on that: Moving forward, you've already taken Senator Manchin to the woodshed. Are you going to invite him back into the fold? Are you going to try to reach out to him?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. And we conveyed, yesterday, that.

Q And secondly --

MS. PSAKI: And I would also note the -- the last sentence of my -- two sentences of the statement was: "But we will not relent in the fight to help Americans with their child care, health care, prescription drug costs, and elder care...The fight for Build Back Better is too important to give up. We will find a way to move forward next year."

It also made clear that we absolutely want to work with Senator Manchin and all Democrats to get this done.

Q And are you going to work with to bring -- try to bring GOP members into the fold?

MS. PSAKI: We would certainly welcome their efforts or -- whether their -- their support for lowering cost for the American people and driving up economic growth. We would.

Q And then a follow-up, if I may, on COVID. You said 14 times more likely to die -- unvaccinated. Is there a point in time where this administration -- I mean, what you said recently about, "Hey, for those who are vaccinated, it's mild or asymptomatic. For those who are not, death and destruction awaits you." So, are you pretty much done trying to be diplomatic on this? Is it over with?

MS. PSAKI: I think our responsibility and the President's responsibility is to continue to convey the risks, to continue -- continue -- excuse me -- to make sure we are increasing access for vaccines, access to information to the public, and that's what you'll hear him talk about tomorrow.

Go ahead, Jacqui.

Q Thanks, Jen. Did the White House share the Thursday statement with Senator Manchin before it was put out? And what was his reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to detail private discussions or private sharing of statements in advance.

Q Okay. And then, on his call-out to Democrats for badgering him, saying that they believe that he could be moved in his position somehow: Is there any regret within the White House or within discussions with Democratic leadership just about how this negotiation went, given that statement from him? And he feels that he's been badgered and beaten.

MS. PSAKI: Well, that certainly is not our objective, never has been our objective. But our objective is getting this legislation passed and reminding the American people and all people who could vote for it what the stakes are.

So, no, we don't have regrets about aggressively communicating about it and making sure people understand that if we don't pass this legislation, costs for the American people will go up and economic growth projections will not go in the right direction.

Q This shows, though, that Democrats just don't have a large enough majority to call off this kind of transformational legislation without these kinds of significant bumps in the road. But the President, you know, ran as a moderate. Joe Biden is asking for any major policy changes -- or excuse me, Manchin is asking for major policy changes to be bipartisan. So why are Biden and Manchin seemingly so far apart on this, where Manchin is wanting to bring Republicans in and the President has, you know, tried to work this out just within the Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: The President would welcome Republicans joining this effort to lower the cost of childcare, to make sure that families aren't paying thousands of dollars for insulin, to make sure people can afford care for their parents and loved ones. He would welcome that.

I think it's not a secret that opposition is driven by the concern by many in the Republican Party that they don't want to raise taxes on corporations and highest income. That's not a secret. But certainly, we'd welcome support or engagement from any Republicans in this effort to get this done.

Q And then on Omicron and the announcements coming tomorrow, one of the items that you guys have consistently said is on the table and is being evaluated is vaccine mandates for domestic air travel. Is that something that you guys have reached a decision on?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything new on that. I think we've said in the past that masking is something we know is effective and works. I would expect, tomorrow, you'll hear more from the President on what we're going to do more about making vaccines and testing accessible, and what the American people can expect over the next couple of months.

Q And real quick, on this ruling from the Sixth Circuit --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on the vaccine-or-test mandate. Obviously, this has been, you know, a bit of back-and-forth between the different circuits, and it's still caught up in the, you know, whole process. I understand that the White House has consistently said, you know, "Look to this deadline. We're going to continue pushing toward it."

But you're having some businesses -- like you know, Australia, last week, just said that they're going to have to put services

but you're having some businesses -- like, you know, Amtrak, last week, just said that they're going to have to cut service, and then a few days later said, "Just kidding, we're not going to." This, obviously, might change that calculus again. So, what's the message --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Amtrak didn't say that it was related to a vaccine mandate. They said it -- they gave other reasons for it.

Q I think they (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: And also, they had 94 percent or higher percentage of their employees vaccinated.

Q They did, but they also said on the Hill, in the hearing, that because they would need to hire qualified employees who met their vaccine requirements, that they anticipated having to cut service from, I think, January to March. And I know what you're referring to -- where they listed off some other concerns. I think it was related to hiring that was paused during the height of the pandemic. But --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, they talked about a range of challenges they were having. But also, I would note that 94 percent -- if not higher at this point -- of Amtrak employees are vaccinated. We also know that 60 percent of businesses -- if not higher at this point -- have put in place vaccine requirements or testing requirements because they know it's effective for the economy and it creates a safe workplace.

So, we are -- certainly welcome the Sixth Circuit's decision. We feel that the vaccination-or-testing rules will ensure businesses enact measures that protect employees, create more certainty to the -- for the economy. And we don't feel that this is a time for organizations to be backing away from these requirements.

Q You don't feel that this is a sort of back-and-forth, like businesses are getting whiplash, that customers are getting whiplash from announcements like this?

MS. PSAKI: I think what's clear is that if you have the vast majority of companies in this country putting in place restrictions and requirements -- testing requirements -- that it's an indication that this creates certainty in the workplace, creates -- ensures there's a healthy workplace. And that is outside of this OSHA requirement.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, the President's own medical advisors have suggested that if people are going to gather with family this holiday, that they try to do an at-home rapid test beforehand. But we're seeing such a lack of the supply at so many different stores. There are very long lines all across the Northeast.

So, what is the White House doing specifically right now to help Americans get access to these tests? And will the President speak to the frustration on that front many are feeling during his remarks tomorrow?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely he will. I would note that, to date -- and we've always said this would always be a building process -- our objective is to make tests accessible and free for Americans. There are a lot of ways to do that, and there are different ways that Americans are getting access to tests.

If you have health insurance, you can go to your doctor. If you -- everyone does not have health insurance; 150 million Americans obviously do. We've also made 50 million tests recently available to community health centers and rural health sites. There are 20,000 free testing sites across the country. And we are going to continue to build on that, and the President will talk about that tomorrow.

Q Does the White House feel like, right now, the administration is doing enough to get Americans access to these tests?

MS. PSAKI: We always feel we need to be doing more, and that's what the President will talk about tomorrow.

Q And just some quick housekeeping items. Given this surge and this spike right now from the variant, how often is the President being tested for COVID? And when was he last tested?

MS. PSAKI: He is regularly tested. I will get -- I will check for you when the last time he was tested.

Q And are there any other protocols on campus right now that are changing to accommodate? For instance, you talked about breakthrough cases. That's something you would expect that would be in fully vaccinated people. Are these staffers who also have been boosted? And is it the White House policy that if you're working on campus or in close proximity with the President, that you have a booster or a third dose?

MS. PSAKI: Our policy -- it is heavily recommended to get a booster. If you are going to be in close proximity with the President, you're required to be tested that day. That goes over and above typical protocols. Given the workplace we work in, that certainly is appropriate. But -- and, of course, we have masking requirements that are in place as well.

So there hasn't been a change. Obviously, we will continue to consult with our health and medical experts if any changes need to be put into place.

Q And are there any changes right now to the holiday receptions that were already altered that are open to some members of the public here at the White House? Or --

MS. PSAKI: The open houses?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: There are -- individuals who are attending those are required to be tested in advance.

Q And any changes to the President's holiday plans at this time, given the spike?

MS. PSAKI: Not at this time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Back on Build Back Better, just curious: What was the reaction among senior staffers here when Joe Manchin said that the President's aides alienated him and that's the real reason that he backed away from the bill?

MS. PSAKI: I think our statement yesterday speaks for itself.

Q But Joe Manchin said that that statement was a -- an example of retaliation by the White House. What's your response to that?

MS. PSAKI: The statement was a statement of facts of the events of what happened over the last few weeks, and it was simply an effort to make that clear to the American people.

Q What does this episode teach the White House about the prospects of voting rights? Joe Manchin has also said that he wants that to be a bipartisan effort. Is it going to become law by the time that this Congress is out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that is certainly our objective. And you saw, I think, in Leader Schumer's "Dear Colleague" that he put out this morning, that he plans to bring voting rights up when they get back -- when the Senate gets back in January. And we certainly support that, and we'll stay in close coordination with him and his team to get that done.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, in terms of the climate provisions in Build Back Better, does the President think that he can achieve the goals that he set out to reach by 2030 without legislation? And as a result of this, is the administration looking at additional executive actions that could be taken on climate to try to meet some of those goals?

MS. PSAKI: We're always looking at additional steps we can take. That has not changed.

As you know, I think there are multiple paths to reaching the President's climate goals. We have every intention of passing Build Back Better, which includes enormous climate provisions. I would note that there are a number of steps we have taken without legislation, and certainly, we'll continue to build on that, including setting a bold target to cut greenhouse gas pollution in America 50 to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030; tackling super-pollutants; phasing down HFCs and addressing methane leaks; rallying the world to focus on methane in Glasgow.

We stood with autoworkers and America's big car manufacturers to roll out plans to boost electric vehicles and create opportunities to save car owners money.

We put America on track for one of every two cars sold to be zero emissions within the decade. And we jump started offshore wind.

I share all that because that has been done without the benefit -- the vast majority of it -- of legislation.

There are also components in the infrastructure package and law that will also help take steps forward, including the largest investment in passenger rail; helping reduce GHG emissions; building a national network of EV chargers; electrifying thousands of EV school buses; investments in port and airport infrastructure to repair, maintain, and reduce congestion; largest investment in resilience; replacing America's lead pipes and service lines; and the largest investment in tackling legacy pollution.

So, I would say we are -- it is clear from the President's accomplishments and agenda to date that climate and the climate crisis is going to continue to be front and center for him.

We're absolutely going to -- working to get Build Back Better done. And we are not going to wait to continue to look at a range of options.

Q And just one on schools. Prince George's County, nearby, is going to virtual learning through mid-January. Does the administration have a view on whether local districts should revert to virtual learning, you know, in the next few months as the Omicron variant progresses?

MS. PSAKI: We continue to believe that local school districts will need to make the decisions that they feel are appropriate for their communities.

Our objective and the President's objective is to keep schools open, and 99 percent of them are open, have been open. And we believe we have the tools to do that.

One of the steps we've talked about a little bit is "test to stay," which is a proposal that's been out there by a number of health officials where if your kid is in school now -- and you probably know this, and I know this -- and they have a close contact, typically they have to quarantine or be out of school.

And there have been health experts who have recommended that there can be a contact tracing and testing regimen that can allow kids to stay in school. And that is very intriguing to the President. And that is what our focus is on.

Go ahead.

Q Can I ask, with regards to the speech tomorrow, whether the President has spoken with his health advisors at the CDC about whether they need to change their guidance on Omicron? Will this be part of the speech, in particular?

For instance, right now, we're seeing a lot of breakthrough cases right now with vaccinated people if they're not boosted.

But the guidance right now says you don't have to isolate if you've been exposed, if you're fully vaccinated. Should that change? Should the 10-day timelines change? Do we need to, like, pretty substantially overhaul these guidances -- guidance for the Omicron variant, given how fast it seems to replicate?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think the President's view is that if that is the guidance and the belief of his health and medical experts, who he engages with and is briefed by regularly, then he is looking to them for that guidance.

As you know, they haven't changed that guidance to date. But given the spread of Omicron, given the transmissibility of Omicron, of course, they're continuing to look at a range of steps.

Q But we don't expect that to be part of tomorrow's speech (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more to preview for you. But, again, the focus of the President's speech tomorrow is providing expectations to the American people of what they can look ahead to over the next couple of months and an understanding -- and an update on what he and his administration are going to do more.

Q Is the baseline expectation for the President right now that cases are going to continue to rise? Francis Collins retired and warned on the way out that we could see a fairly substantial rise in cases, like hundreds and hundreds of thousands of cases a day.

MS. PSAKI: And I think Dr. Fauci has referred -- has discussed that as well. As you know, Josh, I think some of it depends -- as they have both, I believe, spoken to -- on the steps taken by people in this country to get vaccinated, to take necessary precautions.

But certainly, we continue to believe that based on health -- based on science, that the boosters can protect people, can prevent hospitalization and death. And that's why we are going to continue to echo that out to the public.

Q And sorry, forgive me -- I know you --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- don't want to -- I know you don't want --

MS. PSAKI: You're fine.

Q -- bark too much up the tree of what happened in --

MS. PSAKI: Federal Reserve --

Q -- in the last 24 hours --

MS. PSAKI: -- or something else?

Q Yeah. No, no, no. (Laughter.) I'll be back tomorrow.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. (Laughter.)

Q The President, of course, spoke with Senator Manchin many times. Senator Manchin seems to be, essentially, blaming the White House, right? He's referring to comments made by -- or staff -- or actions taken by the President's staff. He hasn't necessarily specified what those are; they're indications that it's perhaps the statement from Thursday. Do you think that there was a misstep on the part of the administration here? Because it feels like if you can't sort out what ticked him off, then it's sort of difficult to imagine a path forward on whatever efforts to salvage this will be undertaken in

the next weeks and months.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I can't speak for Senator Manchin on what has upset him. I'll let him speak to that himself with more specifics if he -- if he chooses to, and he may or may not choose to, and that's his prerogative.

All I can convey is that, you know, we continue to focus on how we're going to get this done. The door remains open; the President considers him a longtime friend, someone he's worked with on a range of initiatives and objectives over the course of the last several years that they've known each other. And that's really where we're coming at this from.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Earlier -- I wanted to ask: Is the President's speech -- will it also talk about life with COVID, beyond a few months?

The President talked in the past about ending COVID, but experts certainly seem to say that COVID may be here to stay much longer than that. Does the President share those views? And will that be discussed tomorrow in any way?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're still finalizing the speech, so I can only really give you a preview of what we know to date, which is what I've already outlined here. I understand that certainly is a question out there on what it looks like, and we will continue to consult with our health and medical experts on that.

Q Does the President still feel like COVID can be ended?

MS. PSAKI: His objective is to continue -- continue to make vaccines available, reduce cases around the country -- reduce hospitalizations and deaths across the country, and do that through making vaccines, testing, and a range of utilities available.

Q On tests: You talked about the Defense Production Act being used to boost tests --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and that there is going to be some conversation tomorrow about increasing use of -- increasing availability of tests. Should we expect an announcement about the DPA being used to help bring more tests to the country?

MS. PSAKI: We're already using the DPA, so that's already happening. But I'm not going to get ahead more of the President's -- I know he's been meeting with his COVID team while I've been out here, so I can't -- there's not much more I can preview at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I've got a question about Build Back Better and then a question about the coronavirus.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q On Build Back Better -- returning to Josh and Phil's questions about Senator Manchin blaming White House staff: Steve Ricchetti was reportedly a top liaison with Senator Manchin. Is Mr. Ricchetti or any other West Wing staff being reassigned as a result of Senator Manchin's complaints?

MS. PSAKI: No. And Senator Manchin hasn't even outlined more detail.

Q Okay. And on the coronavirus: Last week, I asked President Biden, on the Lawn, about 800,000 American deaths. When I asked him why he hadn't done more to press China to be transparent on the origins of the pandemic, he smiled and

walked away without giving a verbal answer. I'm wondering why was that his reaction. And can you give us an update on anything he has done to press China for transparency, especially to ensure that there isn't another pandemic?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we put out an extensive statement from the President on the 800,000 deaths, which I'm sure many of you noted.

And again, I would just reiterate -- what we've said many times is that we are going to continue to press China to be more transparent, to participate in the global community's effort to push them to do more to get to the origins of the virus.

As you know, we've also tapped into all of the resources we have here through our intelligence community, through working with our partners and allies, and we will continue to press to do that.

Go ahead.

Q Does the administration regret the earlier guidance on booster shots where not everyone was eligible and they weren't made to look like they were an essential part of protecting people from the pandemic?

MS. PSAKI: That was a decision made by our health and medical experts, so I would point you to them.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah. Hi, Jen. Does the administration have any plans to lift the travel ban on several Southern African countries, given the fact that Omicron is clearly already here and is kind of spreading pretty rapidly?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, our objective is to not -- this is not a permanent ban at all; it is temporary. And we are continuing to assess day to day the decision to lift that ban. But, yes, that is our intention to lift the ban.

Q Okay, got it. And then also --

MS. PSAKI: And I don't have a timeline on that at this point in time, to conclude my answer there.

Go ahead.

Q Okay. And then second question for you, just because -- a follow-up on the vaccine mandates for large employers: Those guidelines currently don't include anything about booster shots. Is there going to be any sort of update to those requirements that will include further guidance on, you know, whether boosters will be included as like a -- as a requirement towards being fully vaccinated, essentially?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, it's a good question. So, we would -- first, the CDC has not changed their evaluation of what being "fully vaccinated" means. I think Dr. Fauci has said it's not a matter of "if" but "when." And then, obviously, we base any of our policies from the federal government on the CDC guidance.

So, that would be the first step if and when they were to change that.

Go ahead.

Q Can you bring us up to speed -- I just have two questions: one on Russia, one on Afghanistan.

Can you bring us up to speed on conversations between the White House and the Kremlin over the weekend?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q And can you clarify the administration's stance on some of the specific demands that Russia made? For example, most importantly, the one that Ukraine not be allowed to join NATO.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me first say -- I know we put out a readout, I believe, of -- or if not, it will be coming soon. But: "Today, Jake Sullivan spoke with..." Yuri Shakov [sic] -- Ushokov [sic] -- Ushakov -- I m sure I m butchering his last name, apologies -- "...Foreign Policy Advisor to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. He indicated U.S. readiness to engage in diplomacy through multiple channels, including bilateral engagement, the NATO-Russia Council, and the OSCE. He made clear that any dialogue must be based on reciprocity and address our concerns about Russia's actions, and take place in full coordination with our European Allies and partners."

That is consistent with our ongoing outreach and engagement with the Russians, with the Ukrainians, with the Europeans as well that happened through the course of last week.

As it relates to NATO membership or joining NATO, as -- as we ve talk- -- said many times but I ll just reiterate, given I know it was raised through their proposal: The President s view, the administration s view is that the right of sovereign nations to choose their partnerships and alliances is a core principle of European security and has been agreed to and reaffirmed many times over the years. This remains U.S. policy today, mean- -- it is -- we support the aspirations of countries to join NATO and meet specific requirements.

It -- NATO s relationship with Ukraine is a matter only for Ukraine and 30 NATO Allies to determine.

Q Thank you. And then on Afghanistan: What s the administration s take on this letter from 46 members of Congress asking the Treasury to unfreeze or ease Afghanistan s access to foreign reserves, and to do more to allow financial institutions and aid groups to operate in Afghanistan?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a number of reasons why the Afghan reserves remain inaccessible, including, first and most immediate, the status of the funds is the subject of ongoing litigation brought by certain victims of 9/11 and other terrorist attacks who hold judgments against the Taliban. And these letal [sic] -- legal proceedings obviously cannot be disregarded.

We also -- the second reason is, we continue to face difficult fundamental questions about how it might be -- we might be able to make reserve funds available to directly benefit the people of Afghanistan while ensuring that the funds do not benefit the Taliban.

And finally, the Taliban remains sanctioned by the United States as a "specially designated global terrorist group." That certainly has not changed.

But this is, of course, complicated by the ongoing litigation over those funds.

Go ahead. Hello.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the President think Senator Biden is -- Senator Biden -- Senator Manchin is going to --

MS. PSAKI: He always thinks of himself as a senator. (Laughter.)

Q Does the President think Senator Manchin --

MS. PSAKI: There you go. You re not wrong.

Q Does the President think Senator Manchin has been negotiating in good faith?

MS. PSAKI: He has said that from the beginning. He continues to consider him a friend. And, obviously, our statement yesterday over -- about the events of the last few weeks, I think, speaks for itself.

Q The reason I ask is that some progressives are alleging -- alleging that Manchin was always going to be a no and, in effect, bamboozled the White House into believing that he was negotiating in good faith and was going to pull the plug at the

end of the process.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I know there's a lot of theorizing out there; we certainly understand that. But the fact remains that we only have 50 votes in the Senate -- that has not changed. You need all of those members to support legislation moving forward.

And I know one of the arguments out there is that we should have waited on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. Look, the President has said from the beginning and continues to believe today -- and is committed to today to getting both done -- obviously, the Infrastructure bill is now law -- to getting Build Back Better done.

But if the question is whether we should have delayed and not moved forward with replacing lead pipes for millions of communities -- of people in communities across the country, we disagree with that.

Or if you're -- the argument is that we should have waited and delayed replacing broadband, we disagree with that.

And if you believe that we should have delayed in putting many, many union workers to work, creating many, many good-paying union jobs, we disagree with that. We're going to get both done.

And we certainly understand there's a lot of theorizing about what happened or what's going to happen moving forward.

Go ahead, in the middle.

Q Thanks -- thank you, Jen.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q I want to ask you -- I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: We can go to both.

Go ahead.

Q Oh, thank you so much. I want to ask you about that statement that you put out yesterday.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Very harsh statement. It's very rare that I see a President, through a statement, criticizing a member of his own party in the manner in which that statement was written. And I want to ask you as to whether or not you believe that harsh rhetoric coming from the White House, the harsh rhetoric that I've seen coming from fellow Democrats, progressives in particular, may push Senator Manchin out of the Democratic Party.

MS. PSAKI: Senator Manchin has spoken to that. And the President continues to believe that they share a range of values. They share a commitment to helping working people, to helping lower costs for the American people.

Our intention yesterday was to provide specific details to the American people about the events of the last few weeks.

And our statement followed a statement by Senator Manchin.

Q The other thing I wanted to ask you about are the comments of Senator Manchin. Over the course of the past several months, the comments that I've paid a lot of attention to -- you have as well; the op-eds that he's written for both the Washington Post and his hometown newspapers; the interviews that he's done with a West Virginia radio host named Hopy Kercheval -- all of them, from my perspective, seemed to indicate that he was not going to support the Build Back

Better bill. And yet, your statement indicated utter surprise, in terms of the statement that he made on Fox News yesterday. Why were you so surprised?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, as my statement very clearly outlined, because there were private conversations and private discussions and commitments made. And so that's why we were surprised.

Go ahead, in the middle. Sorry, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, given the current state of the pandemic, does the President anticipate giving an in-person State of the Union next year, or where are you on those conversations?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has changed about our intentions or our plans, but we don't yet have a date set at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you so much, Jen. Due to the difficulties around testing, do you think public health officials in the United States are getting a correct picture of how Omicron is spreading today in the country?

MS. PSAKI: That's a very good question. I mean, I would say that, you know, the President -- and obviously, as I said, in response to Monica's question earlier, you'll hear the President talk tomorrow about his commitment to continuing to expand access to free testing for the American people.

We have taken a lot of steps over the last few weeks and months: We've quadrupled our testing capacity over just a few months.

But really, I think that's a good question -- a very good question that I think you could ask -- you should ask the health and medical experts and team at the next COVID briefing.

Go ahead, Shelby.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask a follow-up on the COVID testing.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I know you've detailed what the administration is doing already to ease some of these problems, but we're obviously still seeing them across the country. So, is there anything new that the administration is considering to ease some of these COVID testing issues?

And then, more broadly, you know, how are we in a position, nearly two years into a pandemic, where we're still dealing with issues like a lack of access to testing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Shelby, on the first, we're dealing with a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic that has been very unpredictable, and I think everybody would acknowledge that. And what we've done on testing is to continue to increase access, make it affordable and accessible. That's important morally; it's important substantively and policy-wise to the President.

Obviously, there weren't any [at-home] COVID tests available ~~or approved by the FDA~~ earlier this year, so now there's eight. And we've taken steps to quadruple our testing capacity over just the last couple of months. And we've also taken steps to make them widely available at -- by sending 50 million to rural health clinics and community health centers, making sure there are 20,000 pharmacy locations across the country.

But, obviously, with the transmissibility of this variant, we're going to continue to build on that. And that's what I think the

people -- the American people will hear from him on tomorrow.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have two foreign policy questions.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You have seen the review that indicated the killing of 1,300 civilians in the Middle East since 2014 by drones. I know there was successive administrations, not just the Biden administration. It gives reasons like "fluid intelligence" and "faulty targeting" and "little accountability."

Since the President (inaudible) on these drone attacks, does that mean that the White House is looking into reviewing the decision itself, in parallel to what the Pentagon is doing? And I have another question.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, that's a great question. I know the Pentagon is doing a review, as you noted, and I would certainly point you to them. I can certainly talk to our national security team and see if there's anything in addition. Obviously, the Pentagon is part of the administration, as you well know. But I will see if there's anything in addition.

Q Okay, great. And on Iran -- the Iranians said that they're not going back to the talks. Does that mean that economic sanction is inevitable now? Do you still hope that there's another round before the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, another great question, Nadia. I mean, as we've said: Because of the way that the Iranians approached and participated in the last round of talks, we -- the President -- we did take a number -- asked us -- the national security team -- to be prepared in the event that diplomacy fails and to take a look at other options. And that has been work that has been ongoing, including in consultation with a range of partners around the world.

In terms of what next steps -- it looks like, I don't think I have anything at this point to preview for you.

Go ahead.

Q Rahm Emanuel was just approved as ambassador to Japan. And following Afghanistan -- Japan hosts 50,000 American troops, the largest in the world. There's a concern as to the ongoing trust of the Security Treaty. So, can you -- a little bit of assurance to the Japanese people that our treaty will be honored?

And then also, a follow-up on Afghanistan.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of any planned changes.

Q And then, on Afghanistan -- the situation for the people that worked with us: Any progress on bringing them back?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have put out updates over the course -- and I would really point you to the State Department -- and reiterate that our efforts have continued -- to continue to bring American citizens out of Afghanistan who wish to depart and have wished to depart since August, as well as our allies and partners. That's why we've been working so closely in coordination and cooperation with the Qataris. But the State Department really oversees that effort, so they would have any up-to-date numbers for you.

I can do one or two more. Why don't we go all the way to the back? Go to the middle. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Two questions -- one on politics and one on foreign policy.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Today, two Democratic members of the House of Representatives -- Representatives Murphy of New Jersey and Sires -

- Murphy of Florida and Sires of New Jersey -- both announced their retirement, bringing to 22 the number of Democrats leaving the House for one reason or another. Is this something the President talks about? And does he have an opinion on the exodus of members of his own party?

MS. PSAKI: I have learned my lesson in not talking too much about politics from here. But it is true that there are retirements. That happens typically every cycle. The President, as the leader of the party, obviously, I'm sure, will be out there next year. We'll have more to preview for you for that -- on that when it's an appropriate time.

But I would note that as it relates to the Democratic agenda and what people are going to be talking about out there, we'd rather it be us than them and have an agenda to talk about and an agenda that is about putting -- creating millions of good-paying union jobs; an agenda that's about ensuring we are, you know, lowering the costs of childcare, healthcare, eldercare; an agenda to address the climate crisis. And that's what you'll hear people talk about next year. But I'll leave the politics out of the podium.

Q Turning to Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- the -- President Zelenskyy has charged that the wealthiest man in Ukraine, Rinat Akhmetov, is part of a Russian plot to overthrow him. Is the U.S. considering Magnitsky-style targeted sanctions against Mr. Akhmetov?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything in terms of considerations of sanctions to preview for you. Obviously, we are considering a range of sanctions as we're looking at the buildup of Russian troops and bellicose rhetoric. But beyond that, I don't have anything to preview.

Let's go -- just Ebony in the middle, and we'll -- then we'll wrap it up.

Q Thank you. Just two quick questions. I know that the White House has said in the past that they're -- don't want to go back to a shutdown. But with the increase of --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. And we have no intention to.

Q Okay. Because I was going to ask, with the increase of Omicron --

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Q -- are we going to see that.

The second question is: This morning, Representative Ocasio-Cortez said that the President hasn't used the full extent of this presidency, kind of echoing what many activists on the ground are saying. What is the response to that in terms of -- she's talking about Build Back Better and also voting rights. What's the response to what she said?

MS. PSAKI: I didn't -- well, let me say first, on your first question, which is a very good one: I think the reason we're not going back to a shutdown is because we are now at a very different place we are in -- we were in a year ago, which is important for people. And you'll hear the President talk about this tomorrow. Two hundred million Americans are vaccinated now. That is a stark difference from where we were a year ago. You'll hear the President again talk more about that.

I did not see the full context of the congresswoman's comments, but what I would say is that if you -- as we look back to the last year, what we know we have accomplished to date is -- working with her and a number of members -- is getting the American Rescue Plan done, a step that helped put in place -- extend and increase the size of the Child Tax Credit, cutting in half child poverty in this country; making sure we could keep 99 percent of schools open in this country.

We also passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill -- something that, again, will make sure that we're replacing lead pipes across the country; make sure we're expanding access to broadband and creating tens of millions -- or not tens of millions -- let me remedy that -- millions of good-paying union jobs. And we've also vaccinated 200 million Americans.

Is there more work to do? Absolutely. Of course, there is. We're not even a year into the President's presidency. And voting rights is front and center at the agenda -- on the agenda next year. You heard Leader Schumer say that. The President reiterated that, I think in his speech at South Carolina State. And we'll look forward to continuing to work with the congresswoman and others to get things done.

All right. Thanks, everyone.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: We'll do this again. Merry Christmas Week.

Q Might we hear directly from the President about what happened yesterday, this week?

MS. PSAKI: I think you will hear from him on how we're going to get the agenda done.

Q Will he take questions on it?

MS. PSAKI: He takes questions multiple times a week. So, depends on what you ask.

Q From here? This room?

MS. PSAKI: Depends on what you ask.

3:55 P.M. EST

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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials On National Security Advisor Sullivan's Upcoming Travel To The State Of Israel And The West Bank
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2021

**Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials On National Security Advisor Sullivan's
Upcoming Travel To The State Of Israel And The West Bank**

Via Teleconference
(December 20, 2021)

5:15 P.M. EST

MODERATOR: Thanks a lot. And, everyone, thank you for joining us today. Apologies for the delay.

Again, this call is with a senior administration official. It is about senior administration official travel to Israel and the West Bank.

Today's briefing will be on background, attributable to a "senior administration official" and embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

For your awareness only, our speaker today is [senior administration official]. But for the purposes of this call and from this point on, our speaker will be referred to as a "senior administration official."

Now, with that, we will turn it over to our senior Administration official for opening remarks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, [senior administration official]. I'm here to offer some observations on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit this week to Israel and the West Bank.

And just to step back, Jake's visit to Israel -- really, a long-planned visit -- is the culmination of a year of what's been really

extraordinary engagement and consultation between Israel and the United States. And that's coming -- a charge from President Biden to us in the earliest days: to ensure that we were constantly engaged with our -- with our Israeli partners on the host of security threats that they face, but also opportunities throughout the Middle East, including expanding and strengthening the Abraham Accords.

So, I think if you step back -- if you look at the first half of this year, of course, the singular event was the 11-day Gaza conflict. And the last Hamas-Israel war went on for almost 57 days. We think the conflict, earlier this year, really had all the same ingredients. And it was quite a lot of quiet diplomacy, hands-on diplomacy, led directly by President Biden, that the war wound down in 11 days. And I think that was due to a lot of relationship-building that we had done in the earliest months of the administration.

Since the Gaza conflict, we've been working very closely with Israel, Egypt, Qatar, other stakeholders to ensure that we can sustain the peace in Gaza. And as we said at the time, so that Gazans can rebuild, but without allowing Hamas to simply restock. And a lot of work is going into that.

President Biden had two calls with President Sisi at the time. Jake, who was in Cairo a few months ago -- and we're in truly regular contact with officials in Cairo and in Jerusalem to make sure that we can sustain the peace coming out of that -- that conflict earlier this year.

The second half of this year, of course, the main event was having a new Israeli government with Prime Minister Bennett taking office in June. And President Biden called him almost right away -- I think within -- almost within a half hour or so of the Prime Minister being inaugurated.

And we've been quite pleased by the relationship we've built with Prime Minister Bennett, with Foreign Minister Lapid, and really senior officials across the new Israeli government.

The centerpiece, of course, President Biden hosted Prime Minister Bennett here at the White House in August. The leaders had a very long one-on-one meeting, I think established a very good personal connection. And the Prime Minister heard directly from the President about his deep, lifelong personal commitment to Israel and to Israel's security.

And if you just review some of the other engagements -- even over what's been a difficult year with COVID and everything else that's made face-to-face diplomacy a little more challenging than normal:

We had Secretary Blinken, who was in Israel in May. He, of course, also met Foreign Minister Lapid in Rome in June.

And Foreign Minister Lapid was here with the UAE Foreign Minister, Abdullah bin Zayed, in October for, I think, a pretty historic meeting anchoring some new initiatives, really, to the Abraham Accord between UAE and Israel.

Foreign Minister Lapid also saw Vice President Harris when he was here in town. Secretary Austin -- on the security side, Secretary Austin was in Israel in April.

We just had Defense Minister Gantz here. We've had the Chief of Defense, Kochavi, here in June. And those meetings have really been kind of continuous, both by civitates and personal engagements. And Minister Gantz was here in Washington just two weeks ago.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield was in Israel in November. And if you just look at the kind of the pace of visits, it's really -- I think the pattern speaks for itself.

Toria Nuland was just in Israel, I think, last week.

And, of course, I think one thing to highlight from this visit is what -- and I've been involved in this -- I think, a pretty extraordinary partnership between Jake Sullivan and his counterpart -- Eyal Hulata, the Israeli National Security Advisor

-- just -- I mean, regular engagement and discussions about incredibly difficult policy questions.

And Eyal Hulata has been to Washington three times since he took on his role in August. And that's why we've been really looking forward to scheduling this visit so Jake can meet face to face with Eyal, in addition to Prime Minister Bennett and the other leaders on the ground in Jerusalem.

But the two are in regular -- really, weekly contact. And having been a part of these discussions, I mean, I can say the dialogue has been honest, constructive, open. I mean, these are two officials exchanging -- these are not officials exchanging talking points. It's truly a genuine dialogue between partners.

And I think it also reflects the charge from President Biden -- just the unwavering commitment we have to working together with allies, as we just face these very difficult challenges in the Middle East region.

Central to that, obviously, is Iran. And Iran will be very high on the agenda for Jake's visit to Israel this week. The discussion will be a continuation of our ongoing consultations on the threat posed by Iran, particularly its nuclear program, but also its destabilizing activities in the region.

We share, with our Israeli partners, a deep concern about the advancements in Iran's nuclear program -- something I've discussed with many of you before.

Following the previous administration's withdrawal from the JCPOA without much thought or plan as to what would come next -- and we've just seen this dramatic acceleration of Iran's nuclear program since then. The U.S. and Israel are totally aligned in our determination to ensure Iran can never acquire a nuclear weapon. And we've had a very active dialogue about our approach on that. And that will, of course, we discussed face to face with the Prime Minister, the national security advisor, and others in Israel this week.

Jake and Eyal will also host -- it was really the fourth Strategic Consultative Group. And that is a meeting between our inter-agencies -- between our Pentagon Minister of Defense, our Intelligence Community, our State Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Security Councils to discuss a range of issues.

And I think it's really quite something; I've been discussing with, you know, former officials who -- or, current officials who've served in multiple administrations, who've been engaged in these types of meetings.

And I think the level of -- the level of dialogue, trust, and candor by which we approach these issues with our Israeli partners is really quite extraordinary and has helped us navigate through some pretty difficult issues and also just kind of gaming out next steps as we look ahead over the coming months in the Middle East.

Finally, I want to highlight that Jake will go to Ramallah to meet with President Abbas. Jake was with President Biden in May when President Biden and President Abbas spoke. It was a very constructive call.

And since then, Secretary Blinken, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, as I mentioned, Tori Nuland have all visited the West Bank meeting with President Abbas and representatives of Palestinian civil society.

And, of course, these were ties that were nearly severed when we entered office in January. And we feel good -- the fact that we have redeveloped these patterns of interaction, and now we're looking to strengthen them.

So, I think, with that, I can turn it over to questions. And I'm happy to address what's on your mind.

Q Thank you so much for doing this. Nadia Bilbassy with Al Arabiya Television.

Can you address the much-reported disagreements between the administration and Israel vis-à-vis a military strike against Iran?

And on the Palestinian issue, can you update us on a potential date for reopening the consulate in East Jerusalem, and whether that's been sorted with the Israelis and now it is a fact that it's going to be open, it's just a matter of time? Thank you so much.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, when the Minister of Defense was here meeting with Secretary Austin and our military teams last week, talking about the real dangers that -- it's a danger to not just Israel, but danger to the entire international security -- of Iran's rapidly advancing and accelerating nuclear program. We are, I think, both committed to ensuring that Iran -- as I mentioned, totally aligned on the fact that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon.

With that, I'm not going to get into, obviously, discussions between our military teams. And also, Nadia, I also have nothing to add on the on the matter of the consulate.

Q If you could address: What do you want to talk to Prime Minister Bennett about as it relates to Iran? And should we take away anything about the timing of this visit since the Iran talks seem to be teetering on the brink of collapse?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Steve. I think I would not take too much into the timing because this was actually a long-planned engagement.

Jake has -- particularly has done many calls with Eyal Hulata -- promised that we would visit Jerusalem for a face-to-face in Israel's capital, just as Eyal has visited here three times, and the Prime Minister visited the President shortly after he came into office.

So, the timing is a long-planned trip and the culmination of a year of close engagement. But I think it will be a very good opportunity for a face-to-face with Prime Minister Bennett.

And I should also add, of course, we have our ambassador on the ground, Tom Nides, who has brought a wealth of experience and has had very good engagements from the Prime Minister on down.

But for Jake Sullivan to sit face to face with the Prime Minister and kind of just talk about exactly where we are, what we're seeing, hear from Prime Minister Bennett and the Israeli side exactly what they're seeing -- it's always better at face to face than the video conferences, although we've all gotten used to the video conferences -- nothing like a face-to-face engagement. And I think talking about exactly what we're seeing and then, you know, looking ahead over the coming months.

And, you know, the Vienna talks -- they -- after President Raisi and his administration came in in June, we had four almost five -- one paused -- in those talks. They have resumed. We've had two rounds.

But as you said, Steve, I wouldn't characterize "on the brink of collapse." But I think, as we have said, given the rapidly accelerating pace of Iran's nuclear program, its stockpiling of highly enriched uranium day after day, this is a very serious situation. And it's something that both, I think, we and the Israelis very much agree on.

And we'll talk about where we are and kind of where we see the coming weeks -- how we see them unfolding.

Q Hey, there. Thanks. So, I want to actually follow up on Nadia's question in terms of -- I want to -- could you tell us a little bit about the conversations with the Israelis insofar as trying to defuse their escalating rhetoric with regard to Iran?

On the one hand, you all talk about Israel's right to defend itself against threats. I mean, this has been something that you talk about with Gaza, you talk about it with Iran as well.

And so, you know, with this tiny, tiny window -- although it appears to be closing -- this tiny window of possible hope with the Iranians, as far as talks go, is there an effort to sort of establish some level of patience or just something with the Israelis that will de-escalate the situation versus them wanting to kind of go forward and take measures into their own

Israelis that will be escalate the situation versus them wanting to kind of go forward and take measures into their own hands? That's first.

The second is, if you could just kind of update us on U.S. efforts -- humanitarian efforts with regard to Gaza, and whether or not there's going to be any discussions with the Israelis and the Palestinians about stepping that up, given some concerns that, you know, if the situation does not improve dramatically soon there could be some discontent, you know, some uprisings in Gaza and threaten security again.

Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, those are big questions. I think, on the second one, Vivian, we've really focused quite a bit on -- after the conflict -- on working on the post-conflict. And I mention Egypt's role.

I mean, Egypt's role has been quite critical -- and particularly at the Rafah Border Crossing, to make sure that, you know, crossing is open to humanitarian supplies while it is not open to restocking of weapons and materiel that can help Hamas retrigger a new round of fighting.

And the cooperation with the Egyptians on that particular issue has been, I think, quite strong and extraordinary. And we saw Prime Minister Bennett was in Egypt meeting with President Sisi, I think, about two or three months ago, and Foreign Minister Lapid was in Egypt about 10 days ago, I believe, talking about the series of issues.

And that cooperation between Egypt and Israel has been just quite essential to ensuring that we got the post-conflict -- you know, about as right as we can; I don't want to under- -- I don't want to -- there's no -- I don't want to overemphasize this because it's an incredibly difficult situation in Gaza -- the humanitarian situation, the risk of renewed fighting. This is something that we're focused on every day.

We've also focused -- from other regional partners -- on getting support into Gaza for the people of Gaza. So, a lot of that is ongoing.

And I think, given where we were in May, we feel pretty good about the progress, but it's never enough. So, there's more to do. But that'll be a good topic of conversation.

Look, on Iran, I think I've kind of addressed this. We're totally aligned on the goal. We will talk about, I think, where we see the state of Iran's nuclear program and some of the timelines. And some of this is an art more than a science, in terms of looking ahead.

But I think it'll be just -- it'll be a good opportunity to sit down face to face and talk about, you know, the state of the talks, the timeframe in which we're working. And I think, just to re-emphasize what Steve noted, it's true: We don't have much time.

And that's not just coming from United States of America and Israel. This is very important.

This point about the rapidly accelerating Iranian nuclear program being a threat to international peace and security is a common position of the United States, of the E3 -- the UK, Germany, and France -- and Russia, and China, in the talks in Vienna.

So, we've kind of built the united diplomatic fronts. And I think the Iranians are in Tehran now kind of sorting out, you know, how they plan to approach a new round of talks. And we'll see.

But I think these consultations with the Israelis -- as I mentioned, this is a long-planned visit, but I also think it's a very well-timed visit for all those reasons.

Q. Thanks so much for doing this call. We appreciate it. One of these points, it seems, in the Israeli-American

Q I thank so much for doing this call. We appreciate it. One of those points, it seems, in the Israeli American relationship has been the export of cybersecurity products by private Israeli companies. We've seen a response by the State Department, by the Commerce Department, other agencies.

Months ago, it seemed the Americans had reached out to the Israeli Government for clarifications on the export process. And, you know, the -- obviously, the result -- it would lead one to believe that that issue has not been resolved to any extent.

Can you give any overview whatsoever on the process between the American government and the Israeli government insofar as these private cybersecurity licenses and how this might go about being resolved in an amicable way?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, thanks for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to address it. And it's a complicated issue like everything. But as a matter of policy, I think we take a global approach to these issues; it's not an approach aimed specifically at Israeli-based companies. And the purpose of adding certain companies to the entities list was made clear, I think, when we announced the listing. And we did have consultations with the Israeli government on that.

But we remain engaged with the Israeli government about the importance of ensuring that foreign governments are not able to misuse these tools to target human rights defenders, journalists, U.S. officials, you know, others who should be protected. And I think, on that principle, we have agreement.

But again, it's really important, as a matter of policy, this is a global approach. It's not an approach aimed specifically at Israeli-based companies, certainly. And I think any suggestion otherwise that would just be false.

But I appreciate the question.

Q Hey, thanks for doing this. I'm going through what you said from time running out on Iran and working on getting humanitarian aid to Gaza, nothing new on the consulate and Chinese exports.

I'm trying to find something new here. Is there a new message that you're trying to send to Israel on this trip, or just a review of everything that's kind of already happened?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, no, as I mentioned, it's a visit that was long-planned, the culmination of a year of very close consultation. So, there's not -- you know, there's not a new deliverable or anything. This is part of a face-to-face engagement with close partners.

And also, I think, importantly, meeting President Abbas face to face because, as I mentioned, we came into office in January -- those connections between the United States and the Palestinians had been almost severed.

So we think it's important. And I think -- I know, again, responding to the charge of the President -- our boss -- ensuring that we are, you know, fully engaged with our friends and partners in the Middle East.

And I think Jake is really looking forward to the opportunity to meeting face to face with the Prime Minister and with Eyal and with other senior officials, because we do so much of this, you know, by secure video or by phone.

So, the face-to-face engagements -- just nothing beats face-to-face diplomacy. And that's what we're looking forward to.

So -- but no, there's no new initiatives to be announced on the trip.

Q Hi, thanks for doing this. Something you haven't talked about really is settlements. And that's really been a real kind of public flashpoint between this administration and the new Israeli government in ways that other potentially touchy issues have been sort of dealt with on the sideline.

So, is that something that you guys are going to be addressing with the Israeli government on this upcoming visit? And are you planning on maybe stepping up the pressure even more than has been done before on this front? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I think we've been pretty consistent in emphasizing over the last 10, 11 months, you know, the need to avoid steps that can increase tensions on the ground, and that includes settlement activity. And we've been engaged with the Israeli government at senior levels on this issue, and, we think, in a fairly constructive and honest manner.

And I think -- I think I'll leave it at that. But it's obviously an issue that is discussed in our engagements with the Israeli side and our partners in Israel. And I think the engagements, particularly with the Bennett government, on the settlement issues have been honest, constructive -- but obviously, there's more to do. So that will be a topic of discussion.

Q Hello, thank you for doing the call. Two questions on Iran. So, U.S. officials have said that "plan B" to the JCPOA can be worked on and potentially implemented while Vienna talks are still continuing, just given how slow diplomacy has been there. So, I'm wondering if there's any expectation that the pieces of "plan B" -- at least in terms of what the U.S. and Israel could do together -- would be fermented on this visit or if, you know, any agreement between the U.S. and Israel on joint action is actually a ways off.

And then my second question is: What level of enriched uranium is acceptable to the U.S. for Iran and their program right now? Is it, you know, the 90 percent, which is weapons-grade uranium? Or is it a threshold -- is the threshold lower than that? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Iran's level of enriched uranium spinning through advanced centrifuges -- all of which were prohibited under the JCPOA -- is not consistent with a civilian program, just given the extent of stockpiling of 60 percent, 20 percent highly enriched uranium, which the IAEA is documenting. So, I'm not divulging anything; this is all documented.

So, we want to see a return to compliance with the JCPOA in which there's no question that the level of enriched uranium is only -- solely for civilian usage. And so, that is what we're trying to get back to.

We've made clear -- and I think our negotiating partners in Vienna have seen this, which is why we built this united, diplomatic front, which I think that the Iranians now fully expect that -- you know, we are prepared to comply on our side, but not unless the Iranians return to full compliance with their nuclear program.

So, that's the formula. And it's actually pretty simple formula: They return to nuclear compliance; we will return to our compliance with the JCPOA.

And compared to the alternatives, that is the best way forward. And that is why the President has committed to giving diplomacy a chance here.

But as the Iranians are hearing from, again, not just us, but from our European partners, also the Russians and the Chinese in Vienna -- the time very much is running short.

I'm sorry, what was your second question?

OPERATOR: I'm sorry, their line has already been released.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Okay. My apologies.

Q Yes, hello. Thank you for doing this. You mentioned the fact that the line is open again with the Palestinians since January, but the Biden administration is basically focusing on economic developments for the Palestinians and not on any

political ambition to resolve the conflict. Is this because you consider that nothing will move on the Palestinian side as long as Mahmoud Abbas is around?

And the second question regarding Israel: Have you sent -- about Iran, sorry -- have you sent any warning to Israel regarding the current talks in Vienna on the JCPOA? Something like, "No cyberattacks against Iranian facilities in order not to jeopardize the diplomatic efforts."

Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think, on the first question -- I mean, look, I think President Biden has been clear his entire career and as President: Believes a negotiated two-state solution is the best way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

And I think we've made clear on numerous occasions that Israelis and Palestinians alike equally deserve to live in security, prosperity, and freedom.

And so, our focus is doing everything we can to significantly improve the quality of life for the Palestinian people and to improve Israeli-Palestinian relations.

And I also fully recognize -- and I think it's kind of assumed in your question -- that there's a lot to do to build the foundations for restoring a political horizon.

And so, this will be a topic of conversation on the visit. I think those engagements have also been constructive. We want to, in the first instance, reduce the flashpoints, reduce the risk of a new flare-up of conflict, and build from there.

And so, this will be a topic of conversation with President Abbas and the Prime Minister and the Israeli leadership. And I think it's central to President Biden's agenda.

Look, on your second question, we support Israel's right to defend itself. I think that's quite clear. And so -- but I don't want to get into any, you know, internal discussions about -- particularly when it comes to their own self-defense needs or activities that they might undertake to advance their own self-defense.

Q Hi, good evening. Thanks for doing this. So, if I hear you, I would say subtext during this conversation, it seems -- that's at least my impression -- that maybe the goal of the visit is to improve the image of the U.S. here in the Middle East because you probably (inaudible) the critics of (inaudible) came from Israel. But it looks like the U.S. is weak, especially after the result from Afghanistan. So, would it be right to say that one of the goals is to improve the image of the U.S. here and still active in the Middle East, and try to be -- look, at least, strong here?

And connected to that, are you worried from the talks, the -- looks like coming close between the UAE and Saudi, as well, with Iran. Are you worried from this new direction, new momentum in the Middle East again between the Emirates, the Saudis, and Iran?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I would just -- I think if you went through the outline of what I put up front, I just think there's no question our level of full spectrum engagement in the Middle East, but in Israel in particular, which is the topic of this call, I think it's quite a record over the last 10 or 11 months.

I think -- look, this question on Afghanistan, we get it a lot. Afghanistan is sui generis. Related to Afghanistan, that had nothing to do with our commitment to the Middle East, our partnerships in the Middle East, our commitment to helping our partners defend themselves.

We are focused on deterrence, de-escalation, and integration. And I think that all kind of -- it all comes together in this visit.

Deterrence: We want to deter the Iranians from taking provocative measures that can threaten our friends and partners. We want to de-escalate wherever we can. Where there's an opportunity for diplomacy, we're willing to pursue it while being very clear-eyed about who is across the table.

But that also goes in the region. If there's an opportunity to de-escalate tensions that have existed for years -- recent years or even longer -- that's something that we will support. We support, for example, the Emiratis engaging again with Turkey -- which has been a rivalry which has kind of spawned, I think, proxy conflicts around the region -- and, of course, I think the channels that have developed between the Gulf States and Iran.

I think it's important to keep in mind something happened in 2019: The former administration pulled out of the JCPOA. They engaged in a maximum pressure campaign. And I think anyone who has dealt with the Iranians for some time would have predicted that Iran will react, and they did react. And one of the ways they reacted was attacking Saudi Arabia and others in the Gulf -- direct state-to-state attacks. And not only did the United States not respond, the President at the time tweeted that we shouldn't really be in the Middle East at all.

So, you know, that spoke volumes, I think far more so than anything here in the 11 months of the Biden administration. I think it's quite the opposite. I think we've quite worked to restore those partnerships' trust, confidence, and predictability of U.S. actions and diplomatic engagement.

I mean, diplomacy is day-to-day engagement. And I think just laying out the patterns of interactions between us and Israel -- that's the topic of this call; if I was talking about another country, I could give a similar narrative. And this visit, this face-to-face engagement, is part of that.

So again, I would not characterize it as trying to improve the image or kind of -- as was framed in the question; quite the opposite. I think it's the culmination of a year, a very deep, full spectrum engagement with the Israelis from the President on down. And we're ending the year here with an important face-to-face engagement between the President's National Security Advisor and the Prime Minister of Israel and senior leaders.

Q Hi, thank you so much for taking my question. I'm going to follow up on Kylie's question, because I don't think she got it answered -- along the lines of: Is Israel part of the plan B to the JCPOA? And will that be cemented in this visit with Jake Sullivan?

And then, if I just may, what are going to be some of the topline of the meetings in Ramallah with President Abbas? Are you going to talk about martyr payments to (inaudible) the Palestinians who were killed or imprisoned by Israel over alleged terrorist attacks? Are you going to talk about the crackdown on some of the -- on Palestinian civil society by security forces? And will the U.S. be calling for the Palestinian Authority to hold elections? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sorry, I was writing fast. (Laughs.) Let me just -- following up on last question: I think deterrence, integration in the region, and de-escalation -- these three themes.

I think the focus on Israel, where we're heading, the integration and building on the Abraham Accords has been a central focus of ours. And that will be an important topic of conversation.

Of course, we saw recently the important solar and water deal signed between Israel, UAE, and Jordan. Those types of things that we are working on will be a topic of discussion, particularly over the course of the visit this week.

I'm not going to discuss plan B because that's -- I see this characterized a lot. That's really not how we think about it. It's a fluid situation, and there's no kind of, you know, plan A, plan B. There are different things you do at different times.

I think you've seen it's been reported our director of OFAC was just in the region talking about -- mainly talking to private companies about sanctions evasion, making clear that those who might think they can evade U.S. sanctions can't. They're

going to be caught, and they'll be called out.

So -- and other things we can do in terms of making sure that Iran can never get a nuclear weapon -- the key principle on which the Israelis and the United States are fully, totally aligned. And I think there will be a pretty constructive and detailed discussion about this issue as we head into Israel this week.

I think there was one more question. I'm sorry. I'm looking at my notes here, so let me just --

Yeah, you asked about President Abbas. Yeah, so I think -- look, we expect this to be a very constructive meeting, and I think it's following on a -- Jake is looking forward to it -- it's following on a number of recent high-level engagements by U.S. officials. I think I've mentioned them, but at risk of repeating myself: Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield was just there in November. Toria Nuland, our Under Secretary for Political Affairs, was in Ramallah just last week.

And I think Jake will make clear that it's the aim and a policy of the Biden administration to strengthen ties with the Palestinians and ensure the strength and stability of the Palestinian Authority.

On the question of payments, we've had a clear and consistent position on this: that we're fundamentally opposed to those payments. And so, I'm sure that'll be a topic of discussion as well. But that's been a clear and consistent position here in the administration, and that's something that won't change.

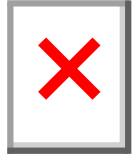
MODERATOR: And with that, ladies and gentlemen, we again truly appreciate you being on with us this evening for today's call with our senior administration official on travels to Israel and the West Bank. This is the conclusion of the call, and the embargo is now lifted.

END 5:50 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Joint Statement on Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 22, 2021 10:46 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2021

Joint Statement on Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Israeli National Security Advisor Dr. Eyal Hulata led a December 22 meeting in Jerusalem of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group. The U.S. and Israeli delegations included senior officials from across their respective foreign policy, defense, and intelligence agencies.

The officials discussed the exceptional level of engagement and consultation between the U.S. and Israeli governments this past year on issues of vital strategic importance to the region. Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed the United States' unwavering commitment to Israel's security and self-defense and underscored the importance of continuing to expand bilateral cooperation on the challenges and opportunities in the Middle East, including expanding and strengthening the Abraham Accords.

The delegations discussed the need to confront all aspects of the threat posed by Iran, including its nuclear program, destabilizing activities in the region, and support for terrorist proxy groups. They agreed that Iran's rapidly advancing nuclear program poses a grave threat to the region and to international peace and security. Mr. Sullivan updated the Israeli delegation on recent developments in the Vienna talks and the two sides exchanged views on the way forward. The officials affirmed that the United States and Israel are aligned in their determination to ensure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon. Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Hulata agreed that they will continue to deepen their close dialogue on all matters of regional security in the new year.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Hornum on Senator Administration Official's Travel to Israel and the West Bank
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 22, 2021 3:51 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2021

Readout from NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on Senior Administration Official Travel to Israel and the West Bank

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan traveled to Israel and the West Bank December 21-22, and was joined in his meetings by U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides, Deputy Assistant to the President and Middle East and North Africa Coordinator Brett McGurk, and the State Department's Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Yael Lempert. In Jerusalem, Mr. Sullivan met with President Herzog, Prime Minister Bennett, Foreign Minister and Alternate Prime Minister Lapid, Defense Minister Gantz, and National Security Advisor Hulata to reaffirm the strategic partnership between the two countries and discuss the major regional and bilateral policy issues on their shared agenda. Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Hulata also led the fourth meeting of [the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group](#) to continue the intensive consultations between the two sides on the challenges and opportunities in the region.

In his meetings with senior Israeli officials, Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed that the longstanding partnership between the United States and Israel is built on shared interests and values and highlighted the United States' unwavering commitment to Israel's security. He re-affirmed President Biden's commitment to ensuring Israel has the resources necessary for its defense, including for the Iron Dome. The U.S. and Israeli delegations held detailed consultations on Iran, with Mr. Sullivan underscoring the U.S. administration's determination to confront all aspects of the threat Iran poses to regional and international peace and security. He also reaffirmed the firm commitment of the United States to ensuring Iran never gets a nuclear weapon.

Mr. Sullivan commended the Israeli government's achievements in strengthening relations with partners in the region and highlighted U.S. support for the Abraham Accords. The U.S. and Israeli delegations discussed efforts to deepen and expand peaceful relations between Israel and countries in the Arab and Muslim world and agreed to cooperate closely on this common goal. The two sides also exchanged perspectives on the current situation in the West Bank and Gaza and discussed steps to strengthen the Palestinian Authority and improve the lives of the Palestinians. Mr. Sullivan stressed the need to avoid steps that can inflame tensions on the ground and encouraged efforts to promote calm and advance towards the goal of a two-state solution.

In Ramallah, Mr. Sullivan met with Palestinian Authority President Abbas to highlight the U.S. administration's interest in strengthening engagement with the Palestinian Authority and deepening ties with the Palestinian people. They discussed the steps the U.S. administration has taken this year to benefit the Palestinians, including the resumption of significant levels of economic and development assistance and contributions to UNRWA. Mr. Sullivan reaffirmed President Biden's commitment to achieving a two-state solution and discussed the importance of actions to build trust, enhance stability and security, and foster a more hopeful vision for the future.

Mr. Sullivan's trip to Israel and the West Bank represents the culmination of a year of intensive U.S. engagements with partners across the region and demonstrates the U.S. administration's commitment to building on this strong foundation in the year ahead to advance U.S. enduring interests in the Middle East.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2021

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, December 22, 2021

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:38 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi everyone.

Q Hello.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I know we've done -- hello -- a lot of news in your inboxes this morning, so a couple of other notes for all of you and for those of you who haven't caught up with everything quite yet.

As you may have seen already, today the President announced that his administration is extending the pause on student loan repayments for an additional 90 days, through May 1st, 2022. This is an issue both President Biden and Vice President Harris care deeply about.

While the jobs recovery is one of the strongest on record -- with nearly 6 million jobs added under President Biden, the fewest Americans filing for unemployment in more than 50 years, and overall unemployment down from 6 percent to 4.2 percent -- we know some student loan borrowers are still coping with the pandemic and need some time before resuming payments.

So this pause gives the administration time to manage the ongoing pandemic and further strengthen our economic recovery. In the meantime, the Department of Education -- and they also issued a statement that hopefully you will have seen -- will continue working with borrowers to support a smooth transition back into repayment and advance economic

stability.

I would also note, for all the student -- those who have student loans out there -- the President also renewed his call for all student loan borrowers to do their part as well by taking full advantage of the Department of Education's resources, considering income-based repayment plans or public service loan forgiveness, and getting vaccinated or boosted.

I was thinking -- I was looking at what Trevor was looking at behind me, but -- yes, this is another note. Don't worry, I'll get there in just a moment.

Also, just wanted to note: The President, of course, just met with a number of business leaders and industry leaders about efforts to address bottlenecks in the supply chain. I think you all saw him give his -- give remarks on that as well.

But, as the New York Times said today, Christmas gifts are arriving on time this year. Good news. We've saved Christmas. And that is because President Biden recognized this challenge early, acted as an honest broker to bring key stakeholders together, and focused on addressing practical problems across the global supply chain.

Here are just a few key points of progress:

The number of containers sitting on the docks at the Ports of LA and Long Beach for over eight days have fallen by nearly 50 percent.

The average amount of time containers sit on docks has fallen by a week.

The price of shipping a container between Asia and the West Coast has fallen by more than 25 percent since its peak in September.

And as the President also referenced, the stocks on shelves is at about 90 percent -- retail stocks on shelves -- at about 90 percent inventory. It's about -- it was about 91 percent pre-pandemic, just to give you a sense.

So, people can go purchase -- purchase presents even -- even at this point if they haven't done their shopping.

And also we announced, as a part of the Port Action Plan, \$230 million in Port Infrastructure Development Grants.

And then, finally, we're up to the graphic. Today, we also announced that, since November 15th, a record-breaking 13.6 million people have signed up for health insurance during Open Enrollment, with 4.6 million people gaining health insurance through the Affordable Care Act since the President took office.

The Rescue Plan reduced premiums by an average of \$50 per person per month, meaning 80 percent of consumers can find a plan for \$10 or less -- for \$10 or less per month.

Okay. Last piece I just wanted to give you an update on -- sorry, I guess we're getting a lot of news out before the end of the year: The Department of Treasury also announced broad authorizations that ensure that NGOs, international organizations, and the U.S. government can continue to provide assistance and support the Afghan people.

And we've talked a bit in here before about what additional steps we can take. So these authorizations build on earlier authorizations issued in September. They are consistent with the resolution adopted by the U.N. Security Council earlier today that established a carveout for humanitarian assistance in the U.N. 1988 sanctions regime to ensure urgently needed aid can reach the Afghan people.

This resolution was drafted by the United States and unanimously adopted by the 15 members of the U.N. Security Council. The resolution also requests periodic updates by the U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure assistance is reaching the intended beneficiaries.

I would just remind all of you: We're the single-largest provider of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

In addition, we're going to provide the people of Afghanistan 1 million additional COVID-19 vaccine doses through COVAX, bringing our total commitment to 4.3 million doses to date.

Hopefully that's enough news for you for the moment.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I have a question on your favorite topic: Joe Manchin. Senator Mitch McConnell and John Cornyn are two Republicans of a few trying to get him to switch parties. What's the White House response to that? And is the President doing any sort of countereffort to keep him in the Democratic Party?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know Senator Manchin has been asked about this himself and has spoken for himself, as I assume he will continue to do.

I would just note that the President considers him a friend. He believes they share values about a range of things personally, but also about why they're in public service -- which is to make life easier for working people across the country; to give people more breathing room; to lower costs of childcare, of healthcare; to fight for good-paying union jobs.

That's been a common topic of discussion, of course, between the President and Senator Manchin, but I would really point you to Senator Manchin to speak to that.

Q Sure. And then, the Secret Service announced that up to -- there's been nearly \$100 billion, at a minimum, stolen from the pandemic relief funds. Can you talk a little bit about how this happened and if -- you know, now that the administration sees this problem, if you're ramping up any efforts to crack down on this kind of fraud?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would note, first, that we expect them to clarify -- this was also a concerning headline we saw ourselves -- but there is no new research, data, or analysis of fraud here.

So just to give you the specifics, what happened is there was just an adding up of two old IG reports of well-known challenges at small -- of small-business loans in states getting out UA -- UI payments in 2020. And there's been a lot of reporting, I know, from the Associated Press and others about issues with some of those earlier programs.

So, it's also important to note that even those two older analysis-combined payments that include mistakes in over- and underpayments, but it was a reference to two older IG reports.

Q Okay. And then one more on COVID. The administration is working to gather 4 million doses of COVID-19 treatments by the end of January. Is that accurate? Is that accurate that --

MS. PSAKI: You mean 500 anti-va- -- which would piece are you talking about here?

Q COVID-19 treatments, monoclonal antibodies --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- that kind of thing.

MS. PSAKI: Got it. Yes.

Q So now that the FDA has cleared Pfizer's COVID --

MS. PSAKI: Let me give you the exact numbers. Well, continue your question, and then I'll give you the accurate numbers.

Q My question is: Why is it just 4 million? I mean, is that enough, considering we are now seeing some of these pills get cleared by the FDA, vaccine hesitation is still a big problem, and we're seeing shortages in monoclonal antibodies nationwide? I mean, why not focus on surging production of these treatments?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that I know one authorization has happened. We have purchased 10 million Pfizer doses, 3 million Merck, and we'll be prepared to distribute them as another of our treatment options around the country as soon as supply is ready.

I think Doc- -- I know there's going to be a COVID briefing later this afternoon, and I know that Dr. Fauci has spoken to this before, and I expect that he will be asked about this again -- on the difficulty of producing some of these antiviral treatments. And so, we, of course, want to ensure that we are bringing to market and making available as many as we can. But that is a reality in the production of these, as well, we also want people to be aware of.

Tr- -- oh, go ahead, Phil. Trevor is like, "I've asked all my questions." (Laughs.) "I'm done." Go ahead.

Q No, no, go ahead. I'll come after.

Q No, I'm just -- I'm excited I beat you, Trevor. That's a big day for me.

I'm not trying to be flip with this question, but can you characterize where Build Back Better talks actually are right now? Like, are they back on? What's the process here in the weeks ahead, given some of the optimism we heard from the President last night?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. And I think you heard optimism as well, Phil, from a number of senators who came out of a meeting or discussion of the members of the Democratic Caucus last night.

And I think what's important to note there is that there is agreement by the vast majority of members that we absolutely need to move forward, and the cost of inaction makes it so that we don't have -- we -- there's no other option, I should say.

And I would say at this point we expect there to be ongoing and continued conversations at a staff level. Certainly, the President will be engaged with members and could be over the coming days, and we are looking forward to moving forward in January, as Leader Schumer has announced.

Q And have there been any more contacts with Senator Manchin or his office since the President spoke to him on Sunday night?

MS. PSAKI: We have been in touch with his team and his office, and I expect we will continue to be in touch with him as well, but I'm not going to outline all those specifics from here.

Q And then, just one more. Obviously, you laid it out and the President laid out in his statements, but what led to the -- was there a specific thing that led to the shift on student loans? And I think the administration had been pretty clear for several months that February was going to be the last -- was the end. Was it Omicron? Was it a compilation of factors?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think a compilation of factors is certainly accurate. But I think, Phil, as much as we know that there's been a lot of progress in the economy, we know that, as was noted in the President's statement, that a number of people -- millions of people across the country are still struggling with the ongoing threat of the pandemic. Many of them are student loan borrowers. This is something the President has thought a lot about over the last several days in coordination and, of course, conjunction in discussions with the Vice President, and it led to the decision to extend until May.

Go ahead.

Q So, for the 500 million testing kits that you announced yesterday, when are you expecting that those will be kind of fully disbursed?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. So, let me give you a bit of an update on the process and kind of how it's working.

So, as you mentioned, half a billion tests bought by the U.S. government will be distributed for free. Right now, the Department of Defense and HHS are executing on what's called an "accelerated emergency contract." This means the first delivery for manufacturers will arrive in January, and we anticipate having the full timeline of delivery of all 500 million in the weeks following.

So they will start to be delivered in January, and then we will start to make them available, and we will make the website -- an easy and accessible website -- available at that time when people will be able to go on and actually request them.

Q Okay. And do you know when all of them will be, kind of, out there?

MS. PSAKI: It will be in the weeks following. Obviously, you know, January is when they will start, given -- thanks to this accelerated emergency contract. But I can't give you an assessment of that at this point in time.

Q Okay. And then, are there any plans by the President in any way to commemorate January 6th?

MS. PSAKI: I don't want to speak on behalf of the President quite yet. We're still finalizing plans, but I think it's safe to say that the American people will hear from him on that day. But we'll have more to say, I would expect, as we get closer.

Go ahead, Major.

MS. PSAKI: A couple on Joe Manchin. The senator has said that he has been consistent in his objections to Build Back Better. Does the White House agree?

MS. PSAKI: I think -- in terms of what? Give me more context of what he said.

Q He said he's been consistent about either cost, inflationary concerns -- some things being permanent and some things not; some things being one year, two year -- it varies on that. He said he's been consistent on that. I'm just quoting him.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Does the White House agree that he has been consistent in his communication with the White House about his concerns?

MS. PSAKI: We have -- we believe that Senator Manchin has been engaging with us over the course of time and months in good faith. I think the statement we put out on Sunday made clear that we didn't feel that his announcement on Sunday was aligned with what he'd committed directly to the President on, in terms of the framework of what he might support.

So, I don't want to characterize further than, you know, the President believes they're friends, they can work together. We need to work together to get this done. They have some disagreements, but there's a lot of things they want to get done. And our focus is on moving forward.

Q I know you're not going to negotiate from the podium, but one thing he has said is: Whatever is in there should be there for a fixed number of years, and if there are things in it that are high priorities, they should become permanent. In general, does the White House agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that the President has been clear that he wants anything that is in this package to be paid for, and he wants the package to be paid for.

Q That's a different priority.

MS. PSAKI: He wants the package to be paid for. There are components of this where there would need to be decisions made over the course of time about extending them. The President has been clear about his intention of paying for that.

Beyond that, I would note that there's been a lot of negotiations leading up to this point -- there will be more negotiations, no doubt about it; everybody stayed tuned and settle in -- to continue to discuss.

And as a part of that, there was agreement on the length of time of different components of the package. You know, obviously, "compromise" is not a dirty word. We're going to continue discussing it. But beyond that, I don't -- I don't think I have anything more to dig out for you.

Q On the supply data that you provided at the top: What do you believe the implications are with that success, as you described it, for inflation in the country?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think part of our hope here, Major -- and economists will tell you this -- is: As you address the bottlenecks in the supply chain, more goods are able to travel, more on the shelves. That will hopefully help lower costs. And that is certainly what our objective and our focus is on.

Q But does the White House believe, from an economic perspective, that was the central driver of inflation, or are there are other aspects of the economy that you still have to deal with to bring inflation down?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a number of areas of different industries that we have seen price increases, right? And as we talk about inflation, the way the American people consume that is: How much does a used car cost or a new car cost, or a pound of meat? And so, what we have been trying to do is attack every issue in each of the industries as they are coming up, right?

If you look at oil and gas and that -- and the issue of oil and gas, part of that has certainly been about ensuring there's enough supply in the global marketplace. That's something the President has been pressing OPEC Plus members on. They've, obviously, abided by their commitment to release the necessary supply they committed to.

But we've also taken steps to tap the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. That's not about, of course, addressing bottlenecks; that's a different issue.

So, point is: We have certainly taken -- a lot of our focus has certainly been on addressing bottlenecks, and we believe that will have a positive impact -- as we're already seeing -- on ensuring goods are flowing, working to bring down prices, because more things will be on the shelves. But we also are working to address issues that we're seeing in different industries that are leading to increased costs.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Following up on one of Major's questions: We know that the White House and Senator Manchin have sort of been at loggerheads about some of the programs and priorities of Build Back Better, but we now know that he ultimately pulled the plug in that interview on Sunday because he was upset with White House staff naming him singularly in the Thursday statement from the President. And we've been told about some of his objections to that that were shared with the White House.

Has the staffer who is supposedly responsible for putting his name in there -- have they faced any retribution for this or have been spoken to about it?

MS. PSAKI: You know, Jacqui, I haven't seen all of the comments that Senator Manchin has made on this. I know that there's been reporting on this, but I haven't seen him speak in depth about the specifics of what has upset him. I can dig further, if that exists out there, beyond the reporting.

But what I would tell you is that we have been working with Senator Manchin for months now. The President has known him for years. Many of the White House senior staff have known him for years as well.

It doesn't mean that there aren't moments of disagreement or frustration; of course, there are. This is legislating. That's the nature of -- of sometimes how it gets done.

But our objective and our focus now is moving forward, both with our relationship with Senator Manchin and our efforts to get Build Back Better done, to have discussions with other members of the Democratic Caucus. And we're going to spend less time looking in the rearview mirror and more about looking forward.

Q Is there going to be a softer, I guess, approach in dealing with Senator Manchin and some of the other, you know, Democrats in the party who have been very vocal about being disappointed in him? Is there sort of a shift in strategy since this all blew up over bullying?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I wouldn't characterize it that way, Jacqui. But I would tell you that Senator Manchin is somebody who has won many tough -- tough fights -- fights in West Virginia. He is -- comes proudly from a coalmining family. He's a pretty outspoken advocate for the things he believes in and the things he doesn't, and I would doubt he's a withering flower on the side of the road. So --

Q Is Build Back Better being dead in the water the reason for extending the student loan moratorium?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we would disagree with that characterization, as I think nearly every member of the Democratic Caucus would as well, and we're forging ahead to get it done.

I just gave you an overview of why the student loan extension. Obviously, we're still battling a pandemic. We know that borrowers across the country, even as the economy has made progress, are still grappling with them, and this will give them a little bit more relief. And that, hence, is why the President and the Vice President made this decision.

Go ahead.

Q Continuing on Build Back Better: Up until last week, when Senator Schumer was moving toward a vote by the end of the year, you had been deferential, saying the White House supported the strategy outlined by the Majority Leader. He convened, obviously, a caucus meeting last night in which he laid out the next steps that he intends to take, including a vote to move forward in January and potentially a vote -- and potentially rules changes as it relates to voting reform. Has Senator Schumer been coordinating that strategy with the White House? Is that something you support at this stage?

MS. PSAKI: We -- we coordinate very closely with Leader Schumer and work with him on legislative agendas, when -- how to get things done, when to get things done, and work in partnership.

And what the President's belief is on voting rights is that if the Republicans continue to obstruct, then we are going to look at what needs to be done to get it done. We're not quite there yet, but we, of course, will continue those discussions with Leader Schumer.

Q Do you support the idea of moving ahead with a vote in January, even as talks with Senator Manchin might still be in an

early stage of trying to build it back together?

MS. PSAKI: We re -- we re -- oh, that was good. That was good there. We -- (laughs) -- we are, of course, continuing to press forward, working in close coordination with Leader Schumer. He hasn't called the vote yet, but we agree with and support his effort to get this done.

Q On COVID, we heard the President do something we don't hear often, yesterday, which is speak approvingly of his predecessor. He mentioned the fact that President Trump had gotten his booster shot. He also praised -- gave his administration credit for getting the vaccine on line.

Can you talk about the strategy of invoking him there? Was this an attempt by the White House to speak to a population that maybe hasn't been listening to this President as it relates to COVID?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it was an acknowledgment that the former President sent an important signal to many Americans about the importance of getting boosted. And we can't assess what that will mean or how people will digest that or if it will change their behavior, if they were opposed to getting boosted or opposed to getting vaccinated, but we certainly hope so. And I think it's a reflection of the President's belief that the enemy of the American people is the virus and this shouldn't be a political battle.

Now, it doesn't mean we are not going to call out misinformation or steps or actions that are being taken by any leader that we feel are detrimental to the health and wellbeing of communities around the country.

But we can also call out actions that we think are positive and send a good message to people who may not be waiting for President Biden to tell them what to do.

Q And then, a housekeeping question. You mentioned a lot of news coming in just today. The week ahead schedule that we had didn't go beyond today. Will we see the President for the rest of the week? And can you give us a sense of how he will spend his first Christmas as President (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So, he -- you will see him tomorrow. We are still finalizing the details of his schedule, but he will be here at the White House tomorrow, working through -- through the course of the day.

He will be, of course, spending -- he will be spending Christmas at the White House with members of his family over the course of the weekend. And he'll be spending some time in Delaware between Christmas and New Year's. We'll have the final details of that exact balance as we get a little bit closer.

Q Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Ken.

Q Jen, on Iran, Jake Sullivan is in Israel to meet with Prime Minister Bennett. What's the administration's level of confidence that the U.S. and Israel can find a common strategy on the best approach to containing Iran's nuclear ambitions? And what's the level of concern that Israel may seek some kind of military solution if there -- if these nuclear talks break down?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Ken, I would say that, as you noted, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is in Israel. It's the culmination, in our view, of a year of very close engagement between our government and the Israeli government. Iran is obviously high on the agenda for the visit; it's not the only topic on the visit. And we expect the conversations to be a continuation of ongoing consultations on the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program and Iran's destabilizing activities in the region in support for terrorist proxies.

So, we have -- we briefed them, as you know -- but we briefed them -- we've briefed them throughout the course of many of these talks and discussions. We certainly share with our Israeli partners a deep concern about the advancements in

or these talks and discussions. We certainly share with our Israeli partners a deep concern about the advancements in Iran's nuclear program following the previous administration's withdrawal from JCPOA.

I would note on that that there have been a number of Israeli officials who have recently come out and spoken about their concerns about the impact of the prior administration's withdrawal from the JCPOA.

I would also note that we talked a few weeks ago about our disappointment with how the Iranian members of the delegation had come to the last round of talks and the fact that the President had asked his team to prepare a range of options in coordination with our partners and allies out there, and -- of contingency options.

So, part of that is something we're continuing to discuss with partners and allies -- including Israel, including many other countries -- and expect that will continue as the talks are stalled currently.

Q And just on Russia, Putin yesterday blamed Europe and the U.S. for tensions in the region. He warned that in the event of hostility from the West, Russia would take retaliatory steps. What is the level of concern over those comments? And does the administration believe that the threat of a potential invasion has diminished in recent weeks at all?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the good sign is that there is an open line of diplomatic discussion and engagement that is happening and that we expect to continue -- we hope to continue.

Ken, I would say that, in terms of the comments, I would remind you that President Putin has his own audience. It is not the United States of America or the people who live here, I don't think, for the most part.

But NATO is a defensive alliance. We don't have aggressive intent with Russia. The United States doesn't, neither do NATO partners. And certainly, the aggression we've seen at the Ukrainian border -- the bellicose rhetoric -- has been coming from one side. So -- and I think anybody can see that pretty clear as day.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You promised Fed picks first in "early December," then "before Christmas" --

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.)

Q -- and still haven't done so. Did the President have to backtrack on a selection after vetting?

MS. PSAKI: I wish they were going to walk out here. Wouldn't that be a moment for Bloomberg?

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: It would be a big financial wire day here in the briefing room. I don't have any update. I will tell you that what often happens is that the President has a packed schedule. He needs time to consider it, wants to finalize. So I don't have an update for you on exact timing. We are eager to get the next round of nominees out and, of course, to get them confirmed.

Q And then on -- another question on Senator Manchin. He's demanded that the Trump tax reform bill's rates be lifted in his latest counteroffer. Is the administration engaged with Senator Sinema on this to revisit this issue?

MS. PSAKI: We're engaged with a range of members, including all of those mentioned and more, about the path forward. But I'm not going to detail any more specifics from here.

Q One last question on COVID. P.G. County schools, outside of D.C., has closed -- shut down for a month. Do you all think that was the right call? And is there -- is there concern that the U.S. is entering a lockdown against the President's objections?

objections:

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President laid out very clearly yesterday in his speech his view and the view of our health and medical experts that we do not need to head toward a lockdown. We are in a different place than we were a year ago. Two hundred million people are vaccinated. We have the tools, the supplies, the resources we need, and that includes the equipment at schools to protect people from the virus.

I would say that different school districts are going to make their own decisions. Obviously, 5- to 11-year-olds are now eligible to be vaccinated. We certainly encourage parents to go take their kids to get vaccinated, but school districts will make decisions about what they need to do to keep their kids safe.

I would note that in terms of the President's view, he wants schools to stay open and he wants to make sure kids are learning, and we -- he wants to do that in a safe way. He thinks we have the tools to do that.

One of the things he's talked about is "test to stay," which is -- would be -- allow for -- I mean, if your kids go to school. I know there's some people here who have kids in school, as do I. Typically, you might need a 10-day quarantine for a close contact. Different schools have different policies. And this policy would recommend both contact tracing and testing so that kids could stay in school.

So, that's one of the policies that he's talked about and we've been recommending.

Go ahead.

Q If I could go back to the 500 million tests.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You talked -- you talk a lot about being prepared. I think you've talked about Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts yesterday.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q So I just want to make sure I have this right: You don't yet have a contract, or a contract to announce. You can't say when the website is going to be up, but sometime in a matter of weeks. You can't say how many tests people are going to be able to order at a time or whether there will be a limit on them. You can't say when they're going to receive the test or how quickly they will be shipped, but that all of that will happen in a matter of weeks, and it will be clear.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so -- so here's --

Q Is that -- I mean, is --

MS. PSAKI: -- here's my -- so what people should know across the country: Right now, there are 20,000 testing sites that are available. We have quadrupled the size of our testing program in the last four months; that's not including the announcement yesterday. We are also working with FEMA to open up testing sites -- one of the first will open up in New York City before the end of the week.

So, "accelerated emergency contract" means they're working to finalize the emergency contract, and it would be -- applicable to that would be all of the FDA-approved testing. They would all be options for it -- testing kits. Right? We're not going to put the website up until we have the first batch of the 500 million, which we expect to get in January, because we don't want to create confusion for the American people out there.

This is the biggest purchase that we have done to date. It certainly represents a significant commitment and a recognition by the President that we need to be doing more. But that's the status of where things sit.

Q And is the website designed yet?

MS. PSAKI: The web- -- the website will be ready to go when we have the -- when we have supply to be able to distribute because we don't want to create confusion for the American people.

Q Okay. Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Yeah. Thanks, Jen. Couple questions -- and going back once again to Build Back Better. Senator Manchin's last counteroffer -- I guess, that was early last week -- included many of the priorities of the President, as well as the topline -- funding them -- number, but according to multiple reports, excluded the Child Tax Credit extensions. This is obviously one of a key priority of the White House.

But as you now kind of reignite negotiations here and try to get something done soon, would the White House be willing, would the President be willing to exclude that policy from the Build Back Better package?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Major, you know, said earlier, I'm not going to negotiate from here, but I will say that if anything is broken off, you would need 60 votes to get it done. Right? Because the reason why we can do a Build Back Better package with every Democrat is because it's through a reconciliation process, and that would require 50 votes. Now we only have 50 votes to get, so we need every single one of those votes from the Democrats unless there's a Republican who has a moment over Christmas where they decide they want to lower costs for people across the country. We will see.

But that is a key, important component to know here. We know that the Child Tax Credit is a priority to the President. It's a priority to many people in the Senate whose votes we need as well. It's also a priority to millions of Americans who benefited from it. It helped cut the cost of child -- cut -- help cut child poverty in half last year.

So, I'm not going to negotiate from here, obviously, but I just want to give the context of some of the factors.

Q So it sounds like the Child Tax Credit's extension will remain in the negotiations on what the White House (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think there's a lot of discussions to happen over the next couple of weeks. But on the question of "Could we just move it forward alone?", you'd need 60 votes to do that.

Q Then I have a totally different question. USA Today reported this week that an employee of the press corps -- peace -- sorry, the Peace Corps. No, no, not the press corps. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh, I was like, I don't speak for all of you.

Q No, sorry. The Peace Corps.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q We all know the Peace Corps. Struck and killed a street vendor after a night of drinking in Tanzania in 2019. Embassy officials rushed him home before he could face charges and continued paying him for more than a year after the incident. Does the administration feel this was handled appropri- -- handled appropriately, including paying for the -- this worker to fo- -- paying this worker to stay home and keeping him on staff for 18 months?

MS. PSAKI: That sounds like an incredibly sad story. I would point you to the State Department, who would be the right source for any information about this particular case.

Go ahead. Okay. I got to wrap it up in a second here. Sorry.

Q Jen, a couple questions on COVID. I know, yesterday, the President was basically suggesting folks who are vaccinated and boosterized can celebrate Christmas travel as needed and as they had been hoping to.

I just wanted to understand, though, the disconnect between what he is advising and what the WHO has been saying, which is suggesting that folks should cancel their holiday plans and rethink some of that. And can you just explain to me what the administration's thinking is?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we abide by the CDC guidance and what their recommendations are, which continues to be -- and I know there'll be a briefing later this afternoon -- that if you are -- if you are fully vaccinated -- ideally, boosted -- that, you know, you can gather with your family members. And that continues to be the guidance we're providing to the American people.

Q Do you have any advice for the parents of young children who are under the age of five who cannot get their children vaccinated -- what they ought to do this holiday season?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand that as a parent of a child under five myself. And we understand one of the steps we're obviously trying to take is to make testing more available. We understand the frustration with that. We're trying to boost that as quickly, certainly, as we can.

If individuals are not, in families, there are cases where wearing masks is something that the CDC has recommended. But really, we would advise anyone with children to go to the CDC website, to get guidance from there and abide by it as you consider your travel and gatherings.

Q (Inaudible) can feel, I guess, comfortable to travel as (inaudible) -- since the CDC guidelines --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think we continue -- that is what we abide by, that is what we listen to, and that is what guidance we follow from here.

I can do one more, and then I got to -- I got to run here. Ed, go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The President talked about the economy today. In the last Fox Business poll that was released on Friday and on Monday, registered voters were asked if the economic policies have helped them: 38 percent of registered voters said it hurt them; 43 percent said it made no difference at all. Also, 22 percent of registered voters said the President's policies are putting inflation -- are getting inflation under control is only 22 percent. Half is saying that it's hurting inflation. At what point do you look at poll numbers like this and change course on the economic policies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think our economic policies are driven by economists, not by polls. And what economists and our policy experts think will help to continue on the record of job creation, the record of economic growth, the greatest in 50 years for any President that we've seen over the last year.

We also, though, are human beings here. We're empathetic, and we know, too, the challenges people are going through, which is that we're still battling through a pandemic. Life doesn't look like what it looked like a few years ago. That is our number-one priority: continuing to work to address that, making sure we're getting more people vaccinated, getting more masks and getting more tests out there to the American public.

But we're going to be driven by policies. We're not going to be driven by the ups and downs of the polls.

Thanks, everyone.

Q Jen, and one on supply chains, from the President's meeting, real quick?

MS. PSAKI: I m happy to talk to folks later. I got to run into a meeting.

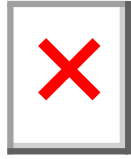
But thank you so much. We ll see you later.

1:12 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Head of Presidential Office Andriy Yermak of Ukraine
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 23, 2021 4:23 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 23, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Head of Presidential Office Andriy Yermak of Ukraine

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Head of Presidential Administration Andriy Yermak of Ukraine. They discussed their shared concerns and common approach regarding Russia's military build-up near Ukraine's border. Mr. Sullivan welcomed yesterday's OSCE announcement regarding the "strong determination" of Ukrainian government forces and Russia-led forces in eastern Ukraine to fully adhere to the July 2020 ceasefire. He underscored the United States' unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement on NSA Jake Sullivan's Call with Polish National Security Bureau Chief Pawel Soloch and Head of the International Policy Bureau Jakub Kumoch
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 27, 2021 4:49 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 27, 2021

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Polish National Security Bureau Chief Pawel Soloch and Head of the International Policy Bureau Jakub Kumoch

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Poland's National Security Bureau Chief Pawel Soloch and Head of the International Policy Bureau Jakub Kumoch. They exchanged views on Russia's military build-up near Ukraine's border and affirmed the importance of Allied unity in diplomatic and deterrence efforts. Mr. Sullivan reiterated U.S. support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Article 5 and underscored the United States' readiness to support our Eastern Flank Allies as they defend their countries. Mr. Sullivan also conveyed President Biden's appreciation for Polish President Duda's veto this morning of a controversial media amendment, noting that this sent a positive signal just before Poland takes over the Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on January 1.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call on President Biden's Call with President Putin of the Russian Federation
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 30, 2021 7:29 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 30, 2021

Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on President Biden's Call with President Putin of the Russian Federation

Via Teleconference

5:41 P.M. EST

MODERATOR: Thank you. Good evening, everyone. And thanks for joining us. A reminder that this call will be on background, attributed to a "senior administration official," and the contents are going to be embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

We will have an official readout of the call out shortly, attributed to Jen Psaki. But for now, we'll go ahead and begin the background portion of our readout.

Our speaker today is going to be [senior administration official].

[Senior administration official], over to you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks very much. And thanks, everybody.

So while this call took place at the government of Russia's request, it's consistent with our view that head of state engagements, particularly between these two countries, and particularly going into the intensive period of diplomacy that is to come, not next week but the week after, is appropriate and the best way of moving forward on the very serious situation that we face.

The tone of the conversation between the two presidents was serious and substantive. They each framed their positions as

they've done in previous calls and also as they have done publicly.

President Biden laid out two paths, two aspects of the U.S. approach that will really depend on Russia's actions in the period ahead. One is a path of diplomacy leading toward a de-escalation of the situation, and the other is a path that's more focused on deterrence, including serious costs and consequences should Russia choose to proceed with a further invasion of Ukraine. And those costs include economic costs, include adjustments and augmentations of NATO force posture in Allied countries, and include additional assistance to Ukraine to enable it to further defend itself and its territory, as we've laid out previously.

The leaders agreed to the sequence of Strategic Stability Dialogue starting on the 9th and 10th in Geneva, a NATO-Russia Council conversation on the 12th, and an OSCE meeting on the 13th. They both discussed the importance of pragmatic, results-oriented diplomacy. And I think President Biden very much saw this call as seeking to set the conditions for that.

President Biden was very clear that the United States will be operating on the principle of "nothing about you without you": no conversations about issues that are of ultimate concern to our partners and allies without the full consultation and participation of our partners and allies -- which President Putin said that he understood.

Both leaders acknowledged that there were likely to be areas where we could make meaningful progress as well as areas where agreements may be impossible, and that the upcoming talks would determine more precisely the contours of each of those categories. That's what diplomacy is. That's what negotiations are for.

Over the next week to 10 days, in advance of these talks, we expect to continue what has been a very intensive period of consultation on the U.S. side with our allies and partners, including providing an account of this conversation to those allies and partners, and in particular, of course, to the government of Ukraine, as well as to NATO Allies and partners.

In recent weeks, we've been engaged in extensive diplomacy along these lines, including by the State Department, the Defense Department, the Treasury Department, and here at the National Security Council.

President Biden has spoken with leaders across Europe. Secretary Blinken met with his counterparts at the G7, at NATO, at the OSCE ministerial meetings earlier this month. Secretary Blinken spoke with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine just ahead of this call, and -- as well as speaking with his European Quad counterparts. Secretary Austin has spoken with several of his European counterparts in recent weeks. Our newly confirmed ambassadors to both NATO and the OSCE have begun active outreach to their counterparts. And we expect that those conversations will continue to be the focus of U.S. diplomacy over the course of next week -- again, in advance of the sequence of diplomatic meetings that'll begin on January 9th.

With that, I will turn it back over to the moderator.

MODERATOR: Okay, we're ready to go to questions.

Q Yeah. Hi, thanks so much for doing this. Was there -- I was wondering, is -- this seems like it was a call where both leaders were trying to shape the frame, the diplomacy that was coming up. But was there anything else that was a sort of obvious reason for Putin to request this call? Anything else that came up that he wanted to talk about, apart from the upcoming diplomacy?

And then, I guess, the other question I have is: How are you going to parcel out the issues between, you know, the actual bilateral talks versus NATO-Russia Council versus OSCE? And is there any risk of sort of Russia wanting to discuss some of those issues in a bilateral format that perhaps the U.S. doesn't want to?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Paul. So, I agree with your characterization. I think the call's primary purpose seemed to be to set the, sort of, tone and tenor for the diplomatic engagements to come.

I think it was also, on the Russian side, part of a series of, kind of, end-of-the-year calls that President Putin has been engaged in. But this was not some mere pleasantries; this was a serious, substantive conversation.

And in terms of, you know, how the different issues will be divided among the different formats that we've described, I think one of the things that's important is that there are issues that are more appropriate for each of these specific formats -- some U.S.-Russia bilateral issues that are more appropriate for the Strategic Stability Dialogue; issues that relate to NATO Allies and that implicate the interests of the Alliance, obviously much more important to discuss in the NATO-Russia Council; and then broader issues of European security that go beyond merely NATO and Russia, in the context of the OSCE.

I'm not going to get into exactly which of the issues fit where on this call. I will say I think there will be some degree of overlap among the different conversations. But more important than that is that there will be very careful and very intensive coordination and transparency among our partners and allies and the United States.

We will make very clear and come to a very clear understanding, and have already set about to doing that, as to exactly what the agenda of each set of conversations will be. And that is going to be some of the focus of the diplomacy over the course the next week or 10 days.

Q Thank you for doing this. Can you hear me?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yep.

Q You've laid out a lot of it -- I just was wondering if you guys can shed any more light on who was with the President today in Delaware, or were others chiming in from D.C., or sort of anything else about his preparations for this.

I know, as you said, it was kind of one of the standard series of calls they've been having ahead of those talks (inaudible), but give us a sense of who was there and whatever else you can.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yeah, sure. So, I guess what I'll say is -- and I'll leave it to our press team to determine whether they want to put out exactly who was, you know, in the various conversations -- but the President has been preparing for the last few days with members of his senior foreign policy team, and you know who they all are, but principally the Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan.

There were others who have been involved in the prep. But I'll leave it to our team to decide whether they want to put all that out or not.

Q Thanks so much for doing this. I was wondering if Putin had provided any other, you know, details on -- or given you any additional sense on whether he had made a decision on whether to invade or not. Some have indicated -- some have suggested that he's been conciliatory in the last few days, that maybe he's looking for an escal- -- an exit ramp. I was curious about your feelings on that.

And second of all, I did want to know: Is there anything that the United States and allies could provide or offer Putin that's less -- less than a written guarantee about NATO expansion? Is there somewhere in between what President Biden has said so far, in terms of, you know, obviously supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine -- but also he has not, you know, offered a fulsome, "Hey, come into NATO. We're going to totally back you on this" -- versus between that and what Putin wants? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. So, on your -- on your first question, you know, I'm -- we're not going to draw conclusions, and there were certainly no declarations as to intentions, from this conversation.

But, regardless, our focus is really on actions and on indicators, not on words, at this point. So we're going to continue to monitor very closely the movement and buildup of Russian forces on the Ukraine border and prepare ourselves for

whatever decision ultimately is made by the Russian president. But I don't have anything more to say about that.

You know, in terms of your second question, I think it does, unfortunately, get into territory of starting to negotiate in public. And again, whatever the Russian side has decided is its best tactic and strategy in terms of its public pronouncements, we really believe based on past precedents that it is most constructive to have these conversations privately with our partners and allies, and with the Russian side.

You know, on the issue you raised related to NATO, our position is very clear that these are decisions to be made by sovereign countries, obviously in consultation with the Alliance, and not for others to determine.

But beyond that, I'm not going to get into any of the substance.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you all. That concludes the call. And with that, the embargo is lifted.

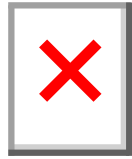
A friendly reminder that we are on background, attributed to a "senior administration official." Thanks.

5:53 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Nordic Counterparts
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 4, 2022 6:07 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 4, 2022

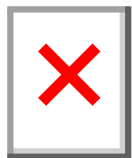
Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Nordic Counterparts

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with his counterparts from the five Nordic countries to consult on ways to strengthen Transatlantic security. Mr. Sullivan and his counterparts discussed their readiness to impose severe consequences on Russia if it engages in further aggression against Ukraine. They also underscored the importance of diplomacy to de-escalate the situation, including through the Strategic Stability Dialogue, NATO-Russia Council, and OSCE. They emphasized their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Mr. Sullivan commended the Nordic countries' commitment to the values and principles that underpin European security. Participants reaffirmed the right of each country to choose its alliances. Countries participating in today's call were Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 4, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 4, 2022 8:00 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 4, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 4, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:05 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy New Year! I hope everyone had nice time with family and friends.

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

I just have two items for you at the top.

I just wanted to highlight that yesterday President Biden, Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, and Attorney General Garland met with family and independent farmers, ranchers, independent processors from across the country to discuss the challenges they have faced as large conglomerates have absorbed more and more small processors, significantly reducing competition in the meat and poultry processing industry.

This is just one example of a broad suite of executive actions being taken by agencies across the economy that will promote competition, protect consumers and workers, and lower prices.

When dominant middlemen control so much of the supply chain, they're able to increase their own profits at the expense of both farmers and ranchers who make less for their product and consumers at the grocery store who pay more.

So, just to be clear: Farmers, ranchers, and poultry growers -- of course, they are growing the meat -- or overseeing the meat. It goes to the meatpackers and processors -- that is where we see the middleman; goes to grocery stores, restaurants, and other retailers; and then to consumers. And our concern is about where prices are being elevated and they should not be.

Many farmers and ranchers now have little or no choice of buyer for their product and little leverage to negotiate, causing their share of every dollar spent on food to decline.

Fifty years ago, ranchers got over 60 cents of every dollar a consumer spent on beef, compared to about 39 cents today.

Similarly, hog farmers got 40 to 60 cents on each dollar spent 50 years ago, down to about 19 cents today. So that, obviously, is a significant concern. If you see the wholesale of beef value and the cattle value, that should not be how the lines -- the gap between the lines.

I just wanted to highlight again: We announced we're investing up to \$1 billion in new and expanded independent meat and poultry processing capacity, workforce development, and other assistance. All of that was included in the American Rescue Plan. We're continuing to strengthen rules to protect farmers, ranchers, and other producers. And we're enforcing existing competition laws vigorously and fairly. And our new White House Competition Council will make sure agencies work together as appropriate.

Finally, we're bringing greater transparency to the industry. The USDA announced steps on that back in August, and we'll continue to build on that.

I also just wanted to highlight that, yesterday, the Department of Justice announced two important new steps to address gun violence and keep guns out of the wrong hands.

First, they issued a final rule making clear that federally licensed firearms dealers must sell safe storage devices that are compatible with the firearms they sell. Individuals who choose to keep a firearm have a responsibility to safely store their firearms. This rule will make it easier for gun owners to purchase a safe storage device and keep guns from being stolen and used by criminals, accessed by children, or obtained by other people who shouldn't have access to the weapon.

Second, the Department of Justice issued a best practices guide to federally licensed firearms dealers to make sure they understand their obligations to comply with the federal laws and keep guns out of the wrong hands.

And, of course, this announcement builds on the work the President and the administration did over the course of 2021, which represented more action on gun violence prevention -- the executive authority -- than any President in his -- in a first year in office in history.

With that, Darlene, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks, Jen. Happy New Year to you and your team.

MS. PSAKI: Happy New Year.

Q I just wanted to start off with getting an update on the 500 million at-home test kits that you all are supposed to be sending out at some point this month. Can you say if the contract has been signed yet? And if not, when do you expect that to be signed? And also, the website -- what is the status of getting that up and running?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Let me give you an update of where we are in the process.

So, as Jeff Zients said last week, the Department of Defense and HHS are already executing on an accelerating -- accelerated contracting timeline. This is the largest, of course, over-the-counter purchase of tests to date. And the RFP --

the Request for Proposal -- that has been sent out to industry allows us to best understand logistics, timing, and manufacturing considerations.

So, where we are now is that the RFP has been closed as of today and we are currently evaluating the responses to it, which means we are finalizing the contracts.

While I expect we can share additional details with all of you soon -- and, certainly, we hope to do that -- we're on track to start seeing movement on some of the awards through the RFP this week. So, the first deliver- -- delivery for manufacturers will start later this month. That's our expectation.

When we have those deliveries in hand, we will put the website up, make it available so that people can order tests at that point in time.

Q And then, secondly, do you have anything to share on what the President's message will be on Thursday when he goes to the Hill for the anniversary of 1/6?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Absolutely. I can give you some highlights at this point in time. And obviously, the President is still working through and reviewing his own remarks.

But on the afternoon -- what you can expect, I should say, is that the President will speak to the historical significance of January 6th and what it means for the country one year later.

As a reminder, on the afternoon of January 6th, the President called what was happening at the Capitol then "an unprecedented assault on our democracy" and an attempt to subvert our Constitution and interfere with the peaceful transfer of power.

So, on Thursday, the President is going to speak to the truth of what happened -- not the lies that some have spread since -- and the peril it has posed to the rule of law and our system of democratic governments -- governance.

He will also mark that day -- commemorate the heroes of January 6th, especially the brave men and women of law enforcement who fought to uphold the Constitution and protect the Capitol and the lives of the people who were there. Because of their efforts, our democracy withstood an attack from a mob and the will of the more than 150 million people who voted in the presidential election was ultimately registered by Congress.

And he will also speak to the work we still need to do to secure and strengthen our democracy and our institutions, to reject the hatred and lies we saw on January 6th, and to unite our country. And obviously, we'll have more to preview as we get closer to the speech.

Q Just one more.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Since the President didn't take questions from us either today or yesterday, can you tell us whether he can live with a smaller Build Back Better package, or a package that doesn't have the Child Tax Credit in it, or with only employed people qualifying for the Child Tax Credit, which is what Senator Manchin says he wants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can tell you that the President absolutely wants to get Build Back Better done, is committed to get it done because it will lower costs for Americans across the country -- childcare, eldercare, healthcare -- a lot of the areas that are impacting American families' budgets across the country.

I can tell you that that's -- those are conversations he and many members of our senior team will continue to have with a range of senators who are involved in this process in the weeks ahead and that we're not going to outline them in more

detail from here.

And I would also just reiterate that the President sees and recognizes and values the contribution of the Child Tax Credit and what it did to help reduce -- lower the -- prevent 30 percent of kids from being -- from being in poverty last year. And it's something that he advocated for, he introduced, and he called for himself. So, he absolutely wants to see an extension of the Child Tax Credit.

I would note -- this doesn't answer your question, but I thought this was an interesting thing someone shared with me this morning -- that the way it was designed is that payments are going out one -- every month for six months. As soon as people file their taxes, they will get the other half. So, we absolutely want it to be extended. We're going to fight for that. But there is also additional payment that will come to people who are eligible when they file their taxes.

Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. Happy New Year.

MS. PSAKI: Happy New Year.

Q And since the President didn't take questions from us, we weren't able to clarify. He said to the -- to the vaccinated and boosted, quote, "You can still get COVID," but it's very "unlikely" you'll be "seriously ill" -- roughly what he said.

Have we reached a point in the pandemic now where he's basically saying to Americans, "Accept the fact you may get the virus, but if you're vaccinated, it won't be that bad"?

MS. PSAKI: I think what he's saying to Americans is: We know there are going to be breakthrough cases. We've had them at the White House. We are seeing them across the country and, certainly, elevated rates of cases in certain communities across the country, including in Washington, D.C.

But the step that's most important that people can take to prevent -- reduce the potential for hospitalization and death is to get vaccinated, get boosted. He's not telling anyone to accept anything. He's just conveying to people what they can do to protect themselves.

He's also said very clearly -- and I think he's illustrated that -- this in what he said publicly, as have our doctors -- that we're going to be direct and straightforward with the American people. We know cases are going up. But we also know that if people are boosted, it is going to significantly reduce their potential to be hospitalized and certainly prevent to -- to die. And that is what we're conveying to the public.

Q Okay. So, let's -- let's be straight here for a second: Cases are rising across the country; tests are hard to come by in many places, or there's long lines for them; schools are closing again or having to go virtual -- and that's not just because of the weather in some parts of the country, but because of the pandemic.

There is a sense among many that the country has lost control of the virus. Would the White House agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: We would not. And here's why: We're in a very different place than we were a year ago, Ed. Two hundred million people are vaccinated. Those are people who are protected -- seriously protected from illness and death from the virus.

We have also just purchased the largest over-the-counter purchase of tests in history: 500 million tests. That builds on the fact that we have already distributed 50 million tests back in December to rural health centers, to community health centers; the fact that we have 20,000 sites across the country where you can get free tests; the fact that, next week, people can get reimbursed for their tests. And we are going to continue to build on that.

It also -- on schools, I would say: Ninety-seven percent of schools are open across the country. And the President wants school to be open. That's why, months ago, even when people questioned his advocacy for this funding, he advocated for \$130 million in the American Rescue Plan and \$10 billion to cover testing, even when many people said that was not necessary and was not needed.

That has all been distributed to states. If states have not used it -- and some have not -- and if school districts have not used it, now is the time to use it.

So, I would note that we have taken steps to prepare for any contingency, any moment. And we're working to implement and build on that from here.

Q He mentioned -- you just mentioned outbreaks here at the White House. Is it a large number? Is it anyone -- I know there's a policy that you're only really going to let us know if it's the top four individuals in the government or their spouses, but has there been a wide outbreak here in the West Wing or across the White House campus?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our policy is that -- which I think is important for the public to know, because it is in the public interest to know --

Q Sure.

MS. PSAKI: -- and, of course, your interest: If there is anyone who has a close contact, as deemed by the White House Medical Unit, with the President, the Vice President, the First Lady, or the Second Gentleman, we will make that information available, as we have done, as those instances have occurred.

And I was only conveying there are breakthrough cases here. There's 2,000 people who work on the White House complex, right? The -- 99 percent of them are vaccinated, and there will be breakthrough cases here. Thanks to the vaccination, those cases have been mild.

But again, there are -- there are rising case numbers across the country, and we expect to be in line with that.

Q And just on another topic -- and you kind of discussed this with Darlene -- but Senator Durbin today suggested that Build Back Better has kind of taken a backburner spot -- to add the B's.

MS. PSAKI: There's a lot of alliteration there.

Q -- a lot of "B's" there -- as voting rights pushes ahead, as we near the MLK holiday.

Is that the White House's stance right now -- that voting rights is, sort of, issue number one up there, or should be?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working -- and you've seen, I'm sure, the "Dear Colleague" letter that Leader Schumer put out just a couple of days ago, and we're working in lockstep with Leader Schumer on that, on getting voting rights done. He's obviously put a timeline for that. We're going to work with him on getting that done.

But that doesn't change our commitment to Build Back Better.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Why hasn't the CDC revised the definition of what it means to be "fully vaccinated" yet, given that the President has spoken about boosters for months now?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. It's a good question, Jacqui. I don't speak for the CDC. Obviously, they speak for themselves, given they are -- they make decisions based on data and science.

So I would point you to them. I know they have a COVID briefing tomorrow.

Q Well, we've had the President, you know, emphasizing the importance of boosters for months. And, you know, people have to ask the question, or a lot of people are asking the question, you know: Would revising the guidance cause some sort of logistical or political or economic consequence that the White House isn't ready to embrace -- something like, you know, not being able to go to restaurants or people go to offices or industries that have suffered labor shortages?

MS. PSAKI: We have boosters -- we have boosters available for every American. They can get boosted now, regardless of what the CDC guidance is, whether you were just approved for the booster or you were approved weeks ago.

Q So do you expect, then, that that guidance will change eventually?

MS. PSAKI: It's up to the CDC, and they make those decisions based on data and science.

Q Will we have any update on when they might make a decision on that, given that there's been so much time?

MS. PSAKI: I encourage you to ask them that question when they participate in the COVID briefing tomorrow.

Q Okay. And then, similar line of questioning --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but this time about the FDA.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q There have been some decisions by the FDA over the last few months that have happened without consulting the panel of independent experts that we saw for authorizations for the vaccines themselves. We haven't seen that with boosters.

A couple examples: On the 19th of November, FDA authorized the booster for all adults; 29th, the CDC announced people 18-plus should get boosters. December 9th, they -- the FDA authorized boosters for 16- and 17-year-olds. Then, just yesterday, the FDA amended the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer booster for kids ages 12 to 15.

So, I guess my question is: Why has the protocol been different with the boosters than it was for the emergency use authorization for the vaccine itself?

MS. PSAKI: Jacqui, the FDA makes their own decisions, not driven by what the White House is telling them what to do. So, I would point you to the FDA to get any comment on that.

Q So, it doesn't -- I guess, then, the White House is not -- or the FDA is not getting rid of its independent panel of experts by any White House guidance?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely not. And again, I think they would confirm that themselves. And I think what's important to step back here is -- recognize we're still in the middle of a pandemic. There are still far too many people who are not vaccinated. There are still kids who are at risk because there are not enough people -- adults vaccinated. And I think what we're all collectively trying to do here is protect more people and save more lives, whether you work here or at the CDC or the FDA.

Q Is the President, then, okay with the FDA making these authorizations without calling their panel of experts?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I would point you to the FDA, and they can speak to their decision-making process.

Q Okay. And then, real quick, on the Florida surgeon general and testing: What's your reaction to his comments that the U.S. needs to "unwind" its "testing psychology," where people are planning their lives around testing? Is that sound medical advice, in the White House view?

MS. PSAKI: I would really point to our own health and medical experts on when tests should be administered and utilized and our focus on making them more available, accessible, and free to the public.

Q And then, real --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q -- real quick: Is there any reason why the CDC did not include a testing component when it revised its guidance for isolation? Given that there is such a scarcity of tests, there's been some criticism that, you know, the CDC couldn't tell people they should get tested when they emerged from isolation because then people would try to get tests and they're not available, and it might blow back onto the administration.

MS. PSAKI: Again, the CDC makes these decisions. I expect they'll have an updated guidance if it hasn't already gone out.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Can you --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, sorry, Kaitlan, I'll come back to you.

Q Can you give us an update on the President's selection -- you'll be shocked to hear me ask this --

MS. PSAKI: The Fed!

Q -- the Fed, yes -- you know, and, in particular, whether he's made the decisions? Is it a question of the announcement not having been done but the decisions are made?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you at this moment. I expect we will have more soon, and I will let this President speak to his decision and whom he will select.

Q My colleague, Katia Dmitrieva, and Jennifer Jacobs -- they were reporting that economist Philip Jefferson is likely to be nominated for one of the seats. And he would be just the fourth Black man to hold a position on the central bank's board in its history.

Can you comment on Mr. Jefferson's candidacy or whether -- or what role equity will be playing in the President's determinations for all these seats?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I can't speak to an individual name. I can say that it has been a priority for the President to ensure that there -- that equity and making sure there are diverse choices and diverse leaders representing different roles in the Federal Reserve. Just as it has been a priority for him in other points -- in parts of his government, it is an important part of his decision-making process.

Q And could we just go back to the testing issue?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Do you have a sense of how long the 500 million will be, you know, spread out in terms of timeline? They'll start in January, but --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- when will all 500 be available?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on that at this point in time. Certainly understand the question. I expect as we finalize the contracts, which we're in the process of doing, we'll have more information on that.

But, again, we expect the first shipment from manufacturers to come soon.

Q And on testing: One of the -- some of the biggest retailers -- Walmart and Kroger -- have raised the price of Abbott's BinaxNOW test. They've been selling it at cost because the detail -- deal -- excuse me -- with the White House that expired. They are now about 19, 20 bucks, and they were at about 14 per box of two tests.

I'm wondering whether there are any talks ongoing with retailers to bring that price back down to an at-cost level or whether you're confident that the increasing supply of tests will more or less work itself out in the market.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't give you an update on any conversations. I can tell you that our objective is, of course, to increase and scale up access to free tests. Hence, next week, people who have health insurance -- 150 million Americans -- will be able to get those tests or get reimbursed for those tests, hence making -- ordering of -- sending 500 million tests for free out to Americans -- 20,000 free testing sites, 50 million tests that we've already given out.

So that is our focus from the federal government. Obviously, we want a competitive market out there that will lower the cost of tests over the course of time as well.

Q And, sorry, one more: The President's announcement today on the therapeutics -- the ordering of more Pfizer courses -- has he ruled out ordering more of Merck's pill, which was easier and quicker to make but had less effective results in its clinical trial?

MS. PSAKI: He hasn't ordered -- he hasn't ruled anything out. I would say this is -- just as you've seen with any of our steps on COVID, whether it's the antivirals or other steps that have been approved out there in the market -- the monoclonal antibodies -- we're going to continue to build on the orders we have done to date. So this is just the recent step to expand what we have in our medicine cabinet.

Q All right. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks so much, Jen. With the CDC expected to update its guidance on isolating today and the confusion that the agency generated over that guidance last week on what you should and should not do after you've tested positive, I'm wondering if the President himself thinks that the CDC has been clear on that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I can tell you, Kaitlan, is that CDC is offering its updated guidance in real-time of a fast-moving and changing pandemic environment. And we've seen them change guidance and update guidance on other occasions. They made this recommendation last week based on science.

The vast majority of transmission, infectiousness occurs in the first five days after diagnosis with COVID-19, somewhere in the range of 85 to 90 percent. If people are asymptomatic, five days of strict mask-wearing will prevent future transmission.

Obviously, they are expected to update that today. I'm not sure if any information has gone out on that at this point in time, so I won't speak to that ahead of them.

But they are just continuing to assess every day, every week what information can -- they can update on based on the science. And sometimes that means changing recommendations, that means adding to recommendations. But that's what happens when you lead with the data and the science and not -- lead with a clear communications plan.

Q Well, last week, Director Walensky did say that it wasn't just the science, it was also what people can tolerate. And I don't really think that much has changed in the last week. So I just am wondering if the White House thinks that the CDC is doing its best to offer the clearest guidance possible to people, because it seems like they're generating a lot of confusion when they do offer guidance.

MS. PSAKI: Well, our objective is to provide clarity and help provide clarity on their decisions whenever we can. And so that's why I just listed out why they made the recommendation, based on the science, on the 5 days -- the change to 5 days from 10 days.

Q On testing and the rule that's going to go into effect next week, where private insurers will reimburse people for the tests that they're buying at home, you still have to file a claim for each test. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have -- that's a good question. I don't have the details of exactly how it would work. I would assume some version of filing a claim or filing paperwork, but I can get you more specifics on it.

Q Has the administration done the math and added up the cost of what it would be to just make these at-home tests either one dollar, like some other countries have done, or free for everyone?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've looked at a range of options. I would say that what -- when -- they're free for everyone. They're actually -- a lot of countries have done what we're about to do -- right? -- which is, for people who want tests, they can request them online and get them for free.

I don't know of countries -- maybe there are some -- that have sent them to every person living in their country. This is about making them free and accessible to the people who want them, and we want to do that. And there are some countries who have done that -- some who've had to stop doing that because they haven't had enough access to tests to continue programs like that.

Q Right. But we're still waiting on the details for that.

I do want to switch subjects just for one more question. Why has the President not nominated an ambassador to Ukraine yet? And does he plan to do so soon?

MS. PSAKI: He absolutely plans to nominate an ambassador to Ukraine. Just like any position, he's always looking to find the right person to nominate to fill the role -- an important one.

Q Has he interviewed people for that position?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into more details about a personnel process.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Jen, Happy New Year to you.

MS. PSAKI: Happy New Year.

Q So, Senator Manchin -- he presented a proposal to you on December 14th, an outline of a Build Back Better framework

Q So, Senator Manchin -- he presented a proposal to you on December 14th, an outline of a Build Back Better framework that included \$1.75 trillion in spending. Is -- to your knowledge, is that still available as a fallback position?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to get into private discussions or conversations with any members of the Senate from here. I know that's maybe a change, but we feel that's the best way that this is going to work to get this done.

Q Got it. Okay so -- and just on -- I mean, if -- had you taken that framework and put it through the legislative process, we could have text the Senate could be moving towards a vote this week on something that Senator Manchin supports. Why is it that you haven't decided to --

MS. PSAKI: Have you done a vote count on the former proposal?

Q I have not. Please correct me if that's -- if that's wrong. But why not -- if he's, kind of, the major stumbling block to getting legislation passed, why not go with something that he endorsed a month ago?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Trevor, it's important to note that -- and I think as Senator Manchin noted earlier today -- we have a very slim majority in the Senate. That means you need every single senator from across the spectrum of the Democratic Party agreeing to what a package looks like moving forward.

We're not naïve about how challenging that is and how challenging it can be, but we feel good about the possibility of getting something done. What the final package looks like, I can't outline that for you at this point in time. I would note that when he spoke earlier today, he also said he saw a lot of good things in the package and a lot of good basis for discussion. And there's agreement among Democrats about lowering costs for Americans, about lowering the cost of healthcare, lowering the cost of childcare, lowering the cost of eldercare. That's a very strong basis.

We've got to work through the details, and we'll keep having those conversations privately.

Q But you don't think his framework would pass?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to give you a vote count or whip count from here, but I think it's important to note that you need 50 votes in order to -- you need every single Democrat to support a package in order for it to move forward, even through reconciliation.

Q And is there any plan to reengage with him at any point on this?

MS. PSAKI: We're going to keep those engagements and conversations private.

Q Okay. Then, another topic. Back in the summertime, when OPEC said that it was going to boost production of crude oil by 400,000 barrels per day, Sullivan said it's "simply not enough" during a "critical moment in the global recovery."

Today, OPEC stuck with that decision to keep the exact same amount of oil production increase. Why is the White House's reaction different this time?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first, since you gave me the opportunity: We do appreciate the close coordination over the recent weeks with our partners -- Saudi Arabia, UAE, and other OPEC Plus producers -- to help address price pressures. We welcome OPEC Plus decision to continue increases in production.

And together with our recent release from the SPR, we believe this should help facilitate the global economic recovery. We'll continue to monitor prices in the context of global economic growth and engage our OPEC Plus partners as appropriate.

And obviously, as we said at the time, our objective is ensuring that the supply out there meets the demand. Obviously, we took our own steps in coordination with others as well.

LOOK OUR OWN STEPS IN COORDINATION WITH OTHERS AS WELL.

Q But they haven't made any changes to their -- what they're doing. So why -- why is the message different?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we took steps on our own. Right? We have taken steps in coordination with other countries around the world. And our objective is to ensure that the supply out there meets the demand. We'll continue to have conversations if we have ongoing concerns.

Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, I just jumped around there. It was a confusing pen point.

Go ahead.

Q Okay. Well, Happy New Year to you.

MS. PSAKI: Happy New Year.

Q Yes. So, the President, he's making remarks on Thursday, as you said. And he has often denounced the January 6th events. But could you talk a little bit about why he refrains, to the extent that he does (inaudible), from condemning ex-President Trump personally, not just for January 6th, but for his ongoing campaign -- which is very persistent, almost daily, maybe at least weekly -- to discredit Americans' faith in the election process?

So, in short, does President Biden think that his predecessor is acting normally, or does he think he's a threat to democracy, which is what some people would say?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I have to say, I don't think we've held back on this front. I mean, President Trump's role in subverting our Constitution, attempting to block the peaceful transfer of power, and defending a mob that attacked our Capitol and law enforcement has been well documented. And it's something obviously the President spoke about in terms of that being one of the worst days in our democracy.

And he'll speak to -- as I noted a little bit earlier, he'll speak to the historical significance of January 6th -- what it means for the country one year later; the importance of the peaceful transfer of power, which, obviously, the prior administration and the prior President weren't a part of.

And -- but I think there's a larger message here to the country about who we are and who we need to be, moving forward.

Q Does he consider ex-President Trump to be a threat to democracy?

MS. PSAKI: I think he's spoken to this in the past.

Q Okay. On the same issue, but a little more broadly: The polls keep showing, again and again, that something like 70 percent of Trump voters think the election was rigged, that President Biden is not legitimate, and so on.

Is there anything that President Biden feels he should have already done or is there anything he feels he still can do to actually talk directly to those people and try and get, you know, people's reality to match a bit more in this country?

MS. PSAKI: I think what he's going to continue to do is speak to everyone in the country -- those who didn't vote for him, those who may not believe he is the legitimate President -- about what he wants to do to make their lives better. And he sees that as his responsibility as the President of the United States. That's what he will continue to do.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Happy New Year. So, Senator Schumer just said that he and Senator Manchin talked numerous times during the break, mostly on voting rights but also on Build Back Better. And he also says that the White House will be having more talks, with Manchin's, quote, "participation and cooperation" on Build Back Better.

So can I ask: Did the President and Senator Manchin talk at all over the break?

MS. PSAKI: We obviously confirm the conversation they had two weeks ago. I don't have any more conversations to confirm for you.

Q Thank you. And given what Schumer said about more talks in the future, do you know the next time they'll talk about this (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I am not going to predict that for you, but I can assure you that the President and members of our senior team will, of course, be in touch with a range of senators who care deeply about moving Build Back Better forward.

Q Can I clarify something on the --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- testing delivery timeline?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You said the first deliveries go out later this month, then the website goes up, then people can sign up. So probably, those tests -- people can expect end of this month, early February to their home?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what I was trying to convey, perhaps not as articulate -- articulately as I meant to, is that we will put the website up when the tests are available to be sent -- right? -- as to not cause any confusion.

So, I think the timeline I provided was that -- for the first delivery for manufacturers will start later this month. And obviously, then we will work to get it out the door as quickly as possible.

Q So given that a lot of experts are saying, "If Omicron follows the surge it did in South Africa, it could be peaking here as early as next week and probably start declining by the end of the month," is there some concern that these tests are being provided too late, when the worst is already behind us?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that there's unprecedented demand -- we know that -- right now for tests; there was in advance of the holidays for understandable reasons. People wanted to see loved ones. They wanted to ensure they tested before they saw loved ones. And we were not where we needed to be; we're still not.

What we've done is try to do this as quickly as possible through an expedited, accelerated contracting process to ensure that tests are available for free to people across the country as quickly as possible.

Now, at the same time, we know that online and in retail stores across the country they are restocking shelves with tests. That is a good thing. We are continuing to open more federal testing sites, as we have done in New York and different cities that have been hardest hit across the country. And we continue to have 20,000 free sites across the country.

So, we're not working on one channel. We are doing it as quickly as we can to get these 500 million tests in our hands, doing it through an accelerated expedited process, but we've also taken a number of additional steps to ensure -- the federal testing sites, just to note, are in New Jersey, D.C., New York City, and Philadelphia. Those are some of the places, just to

give you a sense. And we'll continue to build on that, which we have the capacity to do.

Q Given the surge that we're seeing now, is it fair to say if those free tests had been made available earlier -- before the holidays, before people traveled and where contacting gatherings occurred -- would we not be seeing the same numbers we're seeing today? Wouldn't it have prevented some of that spread?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know that we can make a prediction of that. It's a good question to ask the doctors.

Look, I would say though and again reiterate, as the President said before Christmas: We were not where we needed to be. What he did do is he quadrupled our testing capacity from the summer to December. He made 50 million tests available at rural health centers and community health centers in December to expand that access. We opened these federal testing sites in December.

So, these were steps we took to, as quickly as possible, expedite our capacity, even in December, as the demand -- the unprecedented demand was rising, and doing everything we could at an accelerated pace.

Of course, you know, we would've liked to have more in our hands earlier.

Q Can I ask a --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- follow-up quickly on the Child --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q -- just Child Tax Credit question. We know those aren't going to hit families' accounts this month -- right? --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- even though there's relief down the line. But for families who were relying on it month to month, is there any talk of executive action or anything from the White House to provide more relief for them?

MS. PSAKI: We are always looking at how we can help provide relief to American families and the American people. If you -- if Build Back Better were to pass in February, there is an option of doing retroactive checks. But I would note that our objective is to get this passed. The President wants to see the Child Tax Credit extended.

Go ahead.

Q To follow up on testing then, if it's going to take that long.

MS. PSAKI: I should say in January -- sorry. In January to do February, if that makes sense.

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, go ahead.

Q Along those same lines, for people who see those long testing lines -- you have more sites, but it's cold out; people don't want to wait in that. You swing by CVS, there are no tests.

While waiting for all this expanded capacity, what is your advice to people who may be going back to college and want to take a test or they want to go see their grandparents, or whatever it might be? If their workplace says, "We want you to

take a self-test before you walk in,” what can people do in the meantime until that capacity does get built up?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it depends on the person, which is a hard question to answer. But I would say that there are still many doctors’ offices that are administering tests. If somebody has health insurance, that’s something that you can go do.

Everyone does not have health insurance. There are community health centers, rural health centers. You can go look online and see if there is one near you and go to that.

We have just opened a number of federal testing sites in New Jersey, D.C., New York City, and Philadelphia. We will continue to expand those -- big federal testing sites -- and we have 20,000 free sites across the country.

Different communities and states are doing -- taking different steps. Some libraries are providing tests. Some community buildings are providing tests. It really depends community to community.

If tests are required, there’s a number of steps and we’re -- that people can take, and we’re working to expand that as quickly as possible.

Q And lastly, you had mentioned rising cases, the President mentioned rising cases a little while ago -- every doctor has said that. We’ve also heard from Dr. Fauci and other doctors saying, “That’s not the number to look at. We know they’re going to go up, but maybe hospitalizations is a better case.”

MS. PSAKI: I think -- yeah, that’s an important point.

Q What’s the President’s barometer? Is there one number that he kind of gauges to get an idea of where the country is right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I was trying to say in response to Ed’s question -- again, maybe not as articulately as I’d like -- is, as Dr. Fauci said, one of the areas that we are concerned about and focused on is hospital capacity and that -- how that is impacting medical professionals and the capacity for hospitals to take people in. So, we look at a range of metrics, but we certainly look at that as we see rising cases.

It is fortunate in many areas that the vast, vast majority, if not all of the people, who are going to hospitals -- are unvaccinated -- not in every community; it depends community to community. So that’s why we are also continuing to echo and advocate for people to get vaccinated, to get boosted to protect themselves. That’s the most important step they can take.

But certainly, as Dr. Fauci said, we are looking at and concerned about hospitalizations -- or capacity given hospitalizations.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Back to testing: How can employers be obligated to test unvaccinated workers when there’s such a shortage right now? And what will OSHA do when it starts enforcing this rule in a few days when employers say, “Well, sorry, we can’t comply because we can’t find any tests”?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that two thirds of employ- -- of companies -- almost two thirds of companies have taken steps to put in place either vaccination requirements or testing requirements. They’re all implementing it in a different way. And the leadership of these companies is making a decision about what works best for their workforce.

Giving that option is something, certainly, we support. Obviously, getting vaccinated -- they’re free across the country, available across the country -- is also a very easy option for many people, and many companies are opting to do that.

As OSHA works to implement and work with companies to do that, our objective and what we’re continuing to focus on is continuing to increase capacity of free tests that are targeted more though at individuals and households, less than companies. And obviously, to work, there’s now nine tests that are approved to go to market that different companies and

different school districts and others can have direct contact with.

So, there's a range of ways to get access to tests, and we're working to increase capacity to make them free and accessible to households and individuals across the country.

Q So, are you saying it's up to workers to find tests themselves if they must be tested to go to work rather than their employer providing them?

MS. PSAKI: Actually, I'm saying -- and I think what I said pretty clearly -- is that different companies -- about 60 percent of them have already implemented -- are implementing the test or vaccine requirements in different ways -- company to company, employer to employer. So -- and many of them have done it extremely successfully, including many of the airlines, a number of huge hospital systems.

And this has helped make -- remember what the objective is here. The objective is to make workplaces safer, to provide more security to people.

If you look at the data that just came out this morning, JOLTS -- that was a shout-out to Bloomberg; they'll get that -- they'll get that reference -- data that came out today -- there are still many people who are fearful about going back to work. That is one of the reasons why it's important to put in place these requirements and why employers have taken the step to provide that certainty to people in their workplaces as well.

Q I want to ask one more question related to the workforce. The White House labor task force, led by Vice President Harris, was supposed to release a report in October about how the federal government can boost unionization in this country in a variety of employers. It's January 4th and that report has not come out yet. What's going on? And does the -- do the President and Vice President still care about this initiative, given everything else that's going on?

MS. PSAKI: I would say the President has been an advocate for collective bargaining rights, for the rights of workers, for the strong unions, for six -- five decades of his career, and I think that speaks for itself. And the Vice President, while a little younger -- not in public office quite as long, but has also been a strong advocate for the rights of workers.

And so, I think that speaks for itself. Of course, this is an initiative they initiated -- they put forward. I am certain I can check on the status of the report.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A couple of topics, if you don't mind.

As you know, the anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo Bay detention facility is next week.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The President promised to close it. You reiterated that in February. What's taking so long?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the National Security Council continues to work closely with the Departments of Defense, State, and Justice and other departments and agencies to do exactly that.

I would note -- and I know this was put out during a very crazy, holiday period of time, but in the President's statement on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, he outlined that:

"Section 1032 of the Act continues to bar the use of funds to transfer Guantánamo Bay detainees to the custody or effective control of certain foreign countries, and Section 1033 of the Act bars the use of funds to transfer Guantánamo Bay detainees into the United States unless certain conditions are met.

It is the longstanding position of the executive branch that [those] provisions unduly impair the ability of the executive branch to determine when and where to prosecute Guantánamo Bay detainees...In some circumstances these provisions could make it difficult to comply with the final judgment of a court that has directed the release of a detainee...In addition, the limitations in Section 1032 of the Act constrain the flexibility of the executive branch with respect to its engagement in delicate negotiations with foreign countries over the potential transfer of detainees."

There are only 39 remaining individuals at Guantanamo Bay, but I just wanted to highlight that piece that was in the NDAA statement because we feel it's obviously creating a burden and a hindrance to our progress here.

Q So it's the foreign -- the transfer to foreign countries that's causing delays essentially?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think I listed three cur- -- three car- -- clear pieces there and limitations on how funding can be used, and how this -- this Section 1032 also limits, at times, how an individual can be released, as well as, three: how we can negotiate and communicate with foreign countries about it.

Q But some of them have been awaiting trials for years. What -- what's causing -- why is that taking so long?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I would say this is what we see as one of the major, if not the major hindrance. Beyond that, I would point you to -- point you to the Department of Defense.

But there are 39 remaining individuals there. And obviously our commitment continues to be to close Guantanamo Bay.

Q One other topic. The Iranian president said yesterday, as the talks begin in Vienna again, that President Trump -- former President Trump should be put on trial for the killing of General Soleimani. I'm wondering if I can get your reaction to that and whether that hinders discussions around the -- Iran's nuclear future this week.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that I don't have any direct comment on his comments. I would note that he has his own politics and his own audience that he speaks to, just as many country -- leaders in other countries do.

But, right now, Special Envoy Malley is currently leading an interagency delegation to the eighth round of talks in Vienna, which resumed on January 3rd. There was modest progress in talks last week, and we hope to build on that this week.

What is clear is that if we do not soon reach an understanding on mutual return to compliance, Iran's accelerating nuclear steps will hollow out the JCPOA. So, our priority remains reaching and implementing a rapid mutual return. And I expect those negotiations will focus on those topics at hand, not comments of any leaders around the world.

Go ahead.

Q A couple of different topics here as well. First, from the administration's point of view, given what we've learned from the January 6th Select Committee, does it appear the Capitol riot played some kind of role in an overall coordinated effort to overturn the democratic process? So, something longer perhaps and more than just one day.

MS. PSAKI: Just so I understand your question, are you saying -- talk a little bit more. Tell me a little bit more about what you're trying to ask.

Q Yeah, sure. So, there's the isolated events of that day --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- but there's also the investigation that goes back much further and spans more time. Does it appear that there's that sort of longer throw there than just what occurred on January 6th at the Capitol, based on what we know from the select

committee?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to speak for the select committee. And obviously, they will speak for when the conclusion of their report will be and what details.

I would note that we have conveyed our concern in the past about the fact that many Republican members of Congress have stood by the "Big Lie" since then. They were outraged at the time about -- many of them -- about the events that happened on January 6th. Who could not be who was watching them? And since then, they have done nothing to help support the work of the committee, to help argue against the "Big Lie." And, you know, that sort of lack of action, inaction, silence, you know, is something that is irresponsible as well.

Go ahead.

Q And then --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q Sorry, another from Todd Gillman, a fellow (inaudible) seat --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- rotation at the Dallas Morning News. Does the White House have a reaction to Senator Cruz saying President Biden may be impeached if the Republicans take back the House next year, specifically for the border policies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our reaction is: Maybe Senator Cruz can work with us on getting something done on comprehensive immigration reform and putting in place measures that will help make sure smart security is what we see at the border, taking a more humane approach to the border instead of name calling, accusation calling, and making predictions of the future.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have questions about voting rights and also about political appointments. On voting rights, the midterm elections are 10 months away. Is the President concerned that the window is closing to pass legislation that could have an impact on how people vote in the midterm elections?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make a prediction of that. What I will say and what the President will talk about in his speech on Thursday is also that, you know, people came out -- the American public came out in record numbers last November and participated in our democracy, and we shouldn't underestimate the role of the movement and -- grassroots movement of the public to have their voices heard.

But he absolutely feels that getting voting rights done is fundamental, it's essential. He's going to work in close lockstep with Leader Schumer and others in Congress to get this done.

But I'm not going to make a prediction at this point on the timeline. It's obviously a first priority for them in the Senate.

Q Is it a first priority for the President?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he's working with Leader Schumer on it.

Q In December, he said at South Carolina State University, "We're going to keep up the fight until we get it done." What does that look like? What does the fight look like for voting rights for President Biden?

MS. PSAKI: It means getting it passed into law and signing it into law.

Q So what steps is he taking over the next several weeks to make that happen?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would -- I would first say that the President has -- you can expect to hear more from him soon, and I'm not going to get too far ahead of that.

But the President has taken a range of steps within his own authority on voting rights, whether it is signing a historic executive order early in his presidency, supporting the efforts of the Department of Justice to increase funding for the protection of people's fundamental rights across the country. And he also spoke to his commitment or openness to making changes to the process to protect people's constitutional rights, should that be the point we get to.

This is obviously going to be front and center on the Senate's agenda when they return, and he's looking forward to being a part of that.

Q On political appointments, the President, right now, has had 266 political appointments confirmed by the Senate. That is roughly on par where President Trump was in his administration at this time. It's about 100 less than where Presidents Obama and Presidents Bush were at this time in their first years in office. Is that lower number of political appointments impacting how President Biden can govern and implement his policies within the executive branch?

MS. PSAKI: Well, so, just for the specific numbers -- and you gave a number of these -- but we ended 2020 -- 2021, I should say, with more than 300 of President Biden's nominees for Senate-confirmed positions pending confirmation by the Senate. Approximately half were on the executive calendar and awaiting a floor vote -- just to give you all a sense -- meaning they could have moved forward; more of these could have moved forward.

Many of our nominees have received overwhelming support and majorities from Democrats and Republicans. And the process, for most of the time in the Senate, was wound up in lengthy debates when, really, there could have been unanimous consent votes and moved many of them forward.

So, our -- the President's view is, of course, having the people that he has nominated, selected -- highly qualified individuals -- leading departments, running different parts of agencies -- small, large agencies that impact people's lives across the country -- is important and imperative to getting his agenda done and moving things forward.

Obviously, there are career employees who -- ensuring effectively that agencies are running. But, of course, he wants to have his team in place -- his people leading these agencies to continue to move his agenda forward.

Q Does he want the Senate and Senate leadership to spend more floor time on pushing nominations through?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there's a way to move them forward without consuming hours and hours and days of floor time. We've seen some agreements. And we were -- we were encouraged by the agreement that happened right before the winter holiday to move a number of nominees forward. And we're hopeful we can push more forward in the weeks ahead.

Q But there are still 141 positions where there has been no nominee put forward. Why is that?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think the President, one, is eager to have these nominees he has nominated confirmed; that's something the Senate can do -- Congress can do. And there are nominations. He wants to find the right person to fill the position.

Go ahead. Last one.

Q Thank you, Jen. And Happy New Year.

MS. PSAKI: Happy New Year.

Q I have two questions. One for a colleague who couldn't be here.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q My first one is that Tesla opened an electric car showroom last week in Xinjiang, just days after President Biden signed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act into law. Does the White House have any comment? And will it do more to discourage American companies from doing business in Xinjiang?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Yes. So, I can't speak to the specific situation of one company, but as a general matter, we believe the private sector should oppose the PRC's human rights abuses and genocide in Xinjiang.

The international community, including the public and private sectors, cannot look the other way when it comes to what is taking place in Xinjiang.

As we've said before, companies that fail to address forced labor in the supply chains -- in their supply chains and other human rights abuses face serious legal, reputational, and customer risks, not just in the United States but in Europe and around the world.

And we've been clear about our views on the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang. We will continue to hold the PRC accountable.

I would also note that we're committed to taking action to assure -- ensure our supply chains are free from forced labor, including with the bipartisan Uyghur Forced [Labor] Prevention Act the President signed last month and, obviously, our continued leadership on the world stage.

Q Great. And one more is on -- in light of the surge of Omicron variant and many events like the 2+2 security talks going virtual, is the U.S. considering shifting this month's U.S.-ASEAN Summit to a virtual format, or will you still do in person?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any changes to the format to preview at this point in time, but we'll check and we'll keep you all updated.

Thanks so much, everyone.

3:56 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Iranian Threats and Provocations Against American Citizens
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 9, 2022 11:19 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 9, 2022

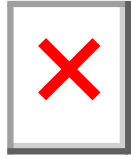
Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Iranian Threats and Provocations Against American Citizens

Yesterday, Iran purported to impose sanctions on 52 Americans. They do so as Iran's proxy militias continue to attack American troops in the Middle East, and as Iranian officials threaten to carry out terror operations inside the United States and elsewhere around the world. Make no mistake: the United States of America will protect and defend its citizens. This includes those serving the United States now and those who formerly served. As Americans, we have our disagreements on politics. We have our disagreements on Iran policy. But we are united in our resolve against threats and provocations. We are united in the defense of our people. We will work with our allies and partners to deter and respond to any attacks carried out by Iran. Should Iran attack any of our nationals, including any of the 52 people named yesterday, it will face severe consequences.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 10, 2022 3:45 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey

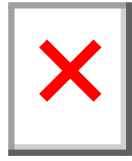
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey. They discussed the ongoing efforts in coordination with Allies and partners to avoid further Russian aggression toward Ukraine and de-escalate tensions through diplomacy. They exchanged views on a range of regional issues, including the situation in Kazakhstan. They agreed on the importance of maintaining stability and unity in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and on working toward de-escalation and normalization in the Caucasus. Mr. Sullivan also noted the critical need to support efforts to end the conflict in Ethiopia.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FACT SHEET: U.S. Diplomatic Engagement with European Allies and Partners Ahead of Talks with Russia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 10, 2022 6:29 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10th, 2022

FACT SHEET:

U.S. Diplomatic Engagement with European Allies and Partners Ahead of Talks with Russia

“We are absolutely committed to the principle nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine, just as we are fully committed to the principle nothing about Europe without Europe.”

Secretary of State Tony Blinken, January 7, 2022

The United States, along with its Allies and partners, has underscored its readiness to impose significant costs on Russia if it takes further military action against Ukraine. At the same time, we have stressed our preference for de-escalation through diplomacy. The United States laid out clear principles ahead of talks with Russia. First, we will not commit to anything about Europe without Europe. Second, any discussions must be reciprocal. Third, genuine progress can only take place in a climate of de-escalation.

The United States has approached this week’s diplomatic engagements with Russia – in the bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue, the NATO-Russia Council, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – closely aligned with our European Allies and partners, including Ukraine, after extensive consultations. In recent weeks, President Biden has spoken to leaders across Europe. Officials across the U.S. government – including at the National Security Council, State Department, Defense Department, Treasury Department, Energy Department, and U.S. Agency for International Development – have engaged frequently with their European counterparts.

Highlights of the Biden Administration’s close coordination with Allies and partners in recent weeks include:

- *President Biden has spoken with 16 European leaders to discuss European security issues and to develop a coordinated and comprehensive transatlantic approach.*

- *Secretary Blinken has held more than two dozen calls and meetings with foreign leaders and foreign ministers to discuss our coordinated response to Russia's military buildup along Ukraine's border. In addition, he has participated in ministerial meetings at the G7, NATO, and the OSCE as well as engaged with the EU and Ukrainian leadership.*
- *Secretary Austin has spoken with eight of his European counterparts about security issues in Europe and Russia's destabilizing actions in the region. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley has similarly engaged military leaders across Europe.*
- *National Security Advisor Sullivan has coordinated extensively with his European counterparts, having made dozens of calls to bilateral counterparts across Europe from the EU and Turkey to Finland and Romania. He has also convened calls in multilateral formats, including with the Nordic countries, eastern flank Allies, and France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and the UK. He has also been in regular contact with his Ukrainian counterpart.*
- *The Biden Administration is in constant contact with Ukrainian officials. In the last few weeks, President Biden has spoken twice to President Zelenskyy. Secretary Blinken has spoken twice with President Zelenskyy and twice with Foreign Minister Kuleba. National Security Advisor Sullivan has spoken seven times with Head of Presidential Administration Yermak. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley has spoken four times with Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Zaluzhny. In addition, senior officials at the State Department and Defense Department engage regularly with their Ukrainian counterparts.*
- *The Biden Administration has sought close consultations with NATO's eastern flank Allies given their security concerns, including calls both bilaterally and in the Bucharest Nine (B9) format by President Biden, Secretary Blinken, National Security Advisor Sullivan, and other Administration officials.*
- *The Biden Administration continues to work closely with the European Union. President Biden hosted EU Commission President von der Leyen. Secretary Blinken spoke with European Council President Michel and High Representative Borrell. Senior officials in the State Department and National Security Council have held numerous calls and meetings with their EU counterparts, including in Brussels. The Administration welcomed the [December 2021 European Council Conclusions](#) that expressed the EU's readiness to impose severe economic consequences if Russia further invades Ukraine. Officials from the Treasury Department, State Department, and National Security Council continue to engage with EU counterparts to coordinate our sanctions response.*
- *In addition to extensive consultations at NATO, the Biden Administration has engaged with NATO partners – including Georgia, also a victim of Russian aggression, as well as Sweden and Finland – to discuss their views on European security.*
- *Senior Administration officials remain in regular contact with their counterparts. In addition to the interactions listed below, scores of calls have also been made by Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Jon Finer, Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried, and other officials across the U.S. government. Our recently confirmed ambassadors to NATO and the OSCE, Julianne Smith and Michael Carpenter, have also worked closely with their counterparts.*

OVERVIEW OF DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

Below is an illustrative list of consultations undertaken by the Biden Administration in advance of talks with Russia. This list is not exhaustive or comprehensive, as there have been extensive calls and meetings at all levels of governments and across numerous agencies, but it demonstrates the Administration's commitment to remain in lockstep with Allies and partners.

Engagements with Ukraine

- [November 10: National Security Advisor Sullivan's meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba and Head of Presidential Administration Yermak](#)
- [November 10: Strategic Partnership Commission meeting in Washington, including Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Kuleba](#)
- [November 18: Secretary of Defense Austin's Meeting with Ukraine's Minister of Defense Reznikov](#)
- [November 19: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Zaluzhny](#)
- [November 22: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Zaluzhny](#)
- [November 26: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Ukraine Head of Presidential Administration Yermak](#)
- [December 2: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba](#)
- December 2: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Ukraine Head of Presidential Administration Yermak
- [December 6: Secretary Blinken's call with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy](#)
- [December 9: President Biden's call with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy](#)
- [December 11: Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried travels to Ukraine](#)
- [December 13: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Zaluzhny](#)
- December 17: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Ukraine Head of Presidential Administration Yermak
- December 23: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Ukraine Head of Presidential Administration Yermak
- December 30: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Ukraine Head of Presidential Administration Yermak
- [December 29: Secretary Blinken's call with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy](#)
- [January 2: President Biden's call with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy](#)
- January 5: Assistant Secretary Donfried's call with Ukraine Head of Presidential Administration Yermak
- [January 7: Secretary Blinken's call with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba](#)
- January 10: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Zaluzhny

Engagements with NATO

- [November 16: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with the Chair of the NATO Military Committee Adm. Bauer](#)
- [November 17: Director of National Intelligence Haines meets with NATO Allies in Brussels](#)
- [November 30 - December 1: Secretary Blinken attends NATO Ministerial meeting](#)
- [November 30: Secretary Blinken's meeting with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg](#)
- [December 6: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's virtual meeting with NATO Military Committee](#)
- [December 8: Secretary Blinken's call with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg](#)
- [December 16: North Atlantic Council meeting and statement on Ukraine](#)
- [December 15-16: Assistant Secretary Donfried consults with NATO Allies in Brussels](#)
- [December 23: Secretary Blinken's call with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg](#)
- [December 31: Secretary Blinken's call with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg](#)
- [January 6: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with NATO Deputy Secretary General Geoana](#)
- [January 7: Secretary Blinken participates in NATO Foreign Ministerial meeting](#)

Engagements with the European Union

- [November 10: President Biden's meeting in Washington with European Commission President von der Leyen](#)
- [November 17: Director of National Intelligence Haines' meetings with EU officials in Brussels](#)
- [December 1: Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Finer's meeting with European External Action Service Secretary General Sannino](#)
- [December 2: Deputy Secretary Sherman's meeting with European External Action Service Secretary General Sannino](#)

- [December 8: Secretary Blinken's call with President of the European Council Michel](#)
- [December 15-16: Assistant Secretary Donfried consults EU partners in Brussels](#)
- [December 22: Secretary Blinken's call with EU High Representative Borrell](#)
- [January 6: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with European External Action Service Secretary General Sannino](#)
- [January 8: Secretary Blinken's call with EU High Representative Borrell](#)

Engagements with the OSCE

- [December 2: Secretary Blinken joins OSCE ministerial meeting in Stockholm, Sweden](#)
- [December 30: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with OSCE Secretary General Schmid](#)
- [January 7: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with OSCE Secretary General Schmid](#)

Engagements with Bucharest Nine (B9) and NATO Eastern Flank Allies

- [November 24: National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with Polish National Security Bureau Chief Soloch](#)
- [November 25: Deputy Secretary of Defense Hicks addresses the B9 Defense Ministerial](#)
- [November 30: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Latvian President Levits; Latvian Foreign Minister Rinkevics; Latvian Prime Minister Karins](#)
- [November 30: Secretary of Defense Austin's Call with Polish Minister of National Defense Blaszczak](#)
- [November 30: National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with Romanian Presidential Security Advisor Oprisor](#)
- [December 8: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's meeting with Polish Chief of the General Staff Gen. Andrzejczak](#)
- [December 9: President Biden's Call with B9 leaders](#)
- [December 13: Secretary of Defense Austin's Meeting with Lithuanian Minister of National Defense Dr. Anušauskas; Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Finer also met with Dr. Anušauskas](#)
- [December 16: National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with B9 Counterparts](#)
- [December 17: Secretary Blinken's call with Bulgarian Prime Minister Petkov](#)
- [December 21: Secretary Blinken's call with Lithuanian Prime Minister Simonyte](#)
- [December 27: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Polish National Security Bureau Chief Soloch and Head of the International Policy Bureau Kumoch](#)
- [December 28: Secretary Blinken's call with Polish Foreign Minister Rau](#)
- [January 3: Secretary Blinken's call with B9 Foreign Ministers](#)
- [January 7: Secretary of Defense Austin's call with Latvian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Pabriks](#)

Engagements with Transatlantic Allies and partners

- [November 9-13: Vice President Harris traveled to France to meet with President Macron; she also engaged with other European leaders, including European Council President Michel, German Chancellor Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Draghi, Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, and Spanish President Sanchez](#)
- [November 29: Secretary Blinken's call with Austrian Foreign Minister Linhart](#)
- [November 30: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Transatlantic Quad Foreign Ministers](#)
- [December 1: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu](#)
- [December 6: President Biden's call with President Macron of France, then-Chancellor Merkel of Germany, Prime Minister Draghi of Italy, Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom](#)
- [December 6: Secretary Blinken's call with Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis](#)
- [December 7: President Biden's Call with President Macron of France, then-Chancellor Merkel of Germany, Prime Minister Draghi of Italy, Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom](#)
- [December 7: Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Finer call with Ambassadors of European Allies and Partners following President Biden's call with President Putin](#)
- [December 8: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with French Chief of the Defense Staff Gen. Burkhard](#)
- [December 9: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Norwegian Foreign Minister Huitfeldt](#)
- [December 10: President Biden's Call with Chancellor Scholz of Germany](#)
- [December 11: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Di Maio](#)
- [December 11: Secretary Blinken's meeting with German Foreign Minister Baerbock](#)

- [December 11: Secretary Blinken's meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Truss](#)
- December 13: Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Finer, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Adeyemo, and Deputy Secretary of State Sherman virtual meeting with Quint counterparts
- [December 14: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with UK Chief of the Defense Staff Adm. Sir Radakin](#)
- [December 15: Secretary of Defense Austin's Bilateral meeting with Canadian Minister of National Defense Anand](#)
- [December 17: Secretary of Defense Austin's call with German Federal Minister of Defense Lambrecht](#)
- [December 20: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Slovenian Foreign Minister Logar](#)
- [December 22: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with French Chief of the Defense Staff Gen. Burkhard](#)
- [December 23: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's call with UK Chief of the Defense Staff Adm. Sir Radakin](#)
- [December 23: Secretary Blinken's call with UK Foreign Secretary Truss](#)
- [December 29: Secretary Blinken's call with French, German, and UK Foreign Ministers](#)
- December 30: Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Finer call with Ambassadors of European Allies and Partners following President Biden's call with President Putin
- [December 31: Secretary Blinken's call with Italian Foreign Minister Di Maio](#)
- [December 31: Secretary Blinken's call with Canadian Foreign Minister Joly](#)
- [January 3: Secretary Blinken's call with Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu](#)
- [January 4: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with Greek Foreign Minister Dendias](#)
- [January 5: Secretary Blinken's meeting with German Foreign Minister Baerbock](#)
- [January 5: Secretary of Defense Austin's call with UK Secretary of State for Defense Wallace](#)
- [January 5: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with Spanish State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs Bau](#)
- [January 6: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with French, German, Italian, and UK Counterparts](#)
- [January 7: Under Secretary of State Nuland's call with Dutch Director General for Political Affairs van der Plas](#)

Engagement with NATO partners (Georgia, Finland, Sweden)

- [December 1-2: Secretary Blinken's meeting with Swedish Prime Minister Andersson and Swedish Foreign Minister Linde](#)
- [December 9: Deputy Secretary Sherman's meeting with Finnish MFA Permanent State Secretary Anttonen](#)
- [December 13: President Biden's call with President of Finland Niinistö](#)
- [December 15: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley's meeting with Swedish Supreme Commander Gen. Bydén](#)
- [January 4: National Security Advisor Sullivan's call with Nordic Counterparts](#)
- [January 5: Deputy Secretary Sherman's call with Georgian Foreign Minister Zalkaliani](#)
- [January 7: Deputy Secretary Sherman's meeting with Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Linde](#), Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Finer also met with Minister Linde

Upcoming Consultations with Transatlantic Allies and Partners

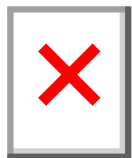
- January 10: USNATO Ambassador Smith will participate with Allies and Ukraine in NATO-Ukraine Commission
- January 11: Deputy Secretary Sherman will meet with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg
- January 11: Deputy Secretary Sherman will brief NATO Allies at a North Atlantic Council meeting about Strategic Stability Dialogue in Geneva
- January 11: Deputy Secretary Sherman will brief EU member states' ambassadors at the Council of the EU's Political and Security Committee
- January 11: Deputy Secretary Sherman will meet with Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Commission Seibert and European External Action Service Secretary General Sannino
- January 12: Deputy Secretary Sherman will lead the U.S. Delegation to the NATO-Russia Council
- January 13: USOSCE Ambassador Carpenter will participate in OSCE Permanent Council meeting on Russia-Ukraine

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 10, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 10, 2022 7:45 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 10, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:13 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay, just one item for all of you at the top. And I just have a hard out at five of, but I think we can get around to everybody in the room.

Today, the President spoke with the New York City mayor, Eric Adams, to express his heartfelt condolences and offer his support following yesterday's devastating fire at a Bronx apartment building, which took the lives of at least 19 people.

In the wake of this terrible tragedy, the President wanted to reach out to offer comfort and also offer support in case there's anything the mayor needs.

Our hearts go out to everyone who was impacted, and we are -- we are very appreciative of the heroic work of the first responders who were on the scene so quickly.

I know some of you have asked about assistance. I'm not aware of any requests for federal assistance. But, of course, we will let you know if there's anything to share. And we will remain in close contact with leaders there as well.

With that, Zeke, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks, Jen. Starting with the talks in Geneva right now, has the President been briefed on the -- on the rounds of negotiations over the past couple of days? And what is the current U.S. government assessment of Russian intentions

when it comes to Eastern Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President meets, as you know, regularly with his national security team -- members of his national security team, as he did this morning. I don't mean a formal NSC meeting; I mean the regular PDB meeting where he is -- receives regular updates.

As you know, those talks just ended late this morning. I think you probably have all seen Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman did a briefing following the conclusion of those as well.

I would just reiterate some of the points that she made, of course: that these talks were frank, that -- and forthright, and there was a discussion from the United -- from the U.S. side of what our expectations are, and a reiteration of what you've heard the President say and what you've heard many officials from the United States say, which is that there are two paths for Russia to take at this point -- for President Putin to take.

He can take the path to diplomacy -- there's two more rounds of talks this week; we've seen them as a package of three, which I think they also reiterated from their side -- or there's a path of escalation. We are certainly hopeful that the path of diplomacy is the path that they will take.

There are, of course, a range of topics discussed during that meeting, including a reiteration of what is at stake should they decide to move forward and invade Ukraine.

In terms of an assessment of where they stand, I would really leave that to the Russians to articulate. We can't give an assessment of that from here, and Deputy Secretary Sherman did not as well.

Q And what would it look like for the Russians to choose the diplomatic path? Is that just -- does that mean they have to withdraw some of their forward deployed forces on the border with Ukraine in order to have that more sustained engagement, or it just not invading further would keep the diplomatic pathway -- conversation alive?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Zeke, there are 100,000 troops at the border now. Obviously, returning those troops to the barracks -- returning troops to the barracks, conveying to us their intention of doing that is certainly -- would be easy ways to show de-escalation.

As I noted a little bit earlier, we see this as a path -- as a -- as a set of three rounds of conversations that will occur this week.

As you've heard many of our national security officials state, but I will reiterate from here: No talks without -- about Europe without Europe, no talks without -- about Ukraine without Ukraine. And that is certainly our mentality.

So, we are moving forward with the other two rounds of talks and discussions here. But, absolutely, the aggressive action, the bellicose rhetoric came from the Russians, so they have the ability and the power to de-escalate.

Q And turning to the President's trip tomorrow to Atlanta -- Karine got this question on the plane on Friday, but a number of advocates for voting rights and other issues down there have said the President should not come down unless he has a plan to actually pass voting rights legislation. What is the President's plan to -- is it past that, or is he going down there without a plan?

MS. PSAKI: Well, his plan is to sign voting rights legislation into law. That requires a majority of senators to support it, even if there are changes to the -- the Senate rules, which is something the President has expressed an openness to.

But let me give you a little bit of a preview of what people can expect to hear from him tomorrow. I would just note that the backdrop of where he's going is vitally important here, as we were planning the trip. In a -- it's in a place with profound civil rights history -- the Atlanta University Center Consortium on the grounds of Clark Atlanta University and Morehouse

College in Atlanta.

The President will forcefully advocate for protecting the most bedrock American right: the right to vote and have your voice counted in a free, fair, and secure election that is not tainted [sic] -- tainted [sic] -- tainted by partisan manipulation.

He'll make clear, in the former district of the late Congressman John Lewis, that the only way to do that are for the Senate to pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

He will follow his remarks from last week, on the anniversary of January 6th -- where he did touch on voting rights and that fundamental importance of protecting that right -- when an unprecedented insurrection sought to violently overturn the outcome of what the Trump administration's top election security officials confirmed was the most secure election in history, by saying that he will stand in the breach and keep fighting for the soul of America.

And he'll also describe this as one of the rare moments in a country's history when time stops and the essential is immediately ripped away from the trivial, and that we have to ensure January 6th doesn't mark the end of democracy but the beginning of a renaissance for our democracy where we stand up for the right to vote and have that vote counted fairly, not undermined by partisans afraid of who you voted for or try to reverse an outcome.

I would also note one other piece I think you can -- you will hear more from him on tomorrow: is he's quite focused on how -- ensuring the American people understand what is at stake here.

Sometimes we all are -- we all shorthand legislation or shorthand what we're talking about, and protecting the fundamental right to vote means he's going to also talk about what the changes have meant in states like Georgia across the country, what is at stake for voters in Georgia and other states across the country, and why this is so imperative it move forward.

Q And just, lastly, Senator Schumer set a deadline of a week from now for the Senate to pass this legislation or change Senate rules. Is the President optimistic that that can happen on that timeframe? Or does he think that that is maybe too ambitious?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he's going to continue to work in lockstep with Leader Schumer on moving this vote forward. But beyond that, we're taking it day by day to press for the vote to happen and to be successful.

Go ahead.

Q Just following up on some of those questions. So, on Atlanta, will Stacey Abrams be joining the President during any of these remarks?

MS. PSAKI: Andrea, I know we'll have a list -- there will be a number of elected officials joining us, traveling and also there. I think we're still finalizing that list. And we will venture to get you that as soon as possible.

Q Okay. And then just -- our favorite topic is the Fed nominations that we were expecting in December. Are you -- can you give us any kind of guidance on when we could expect those?

MS. PSAKI: We -- we hope --

Q A little bit more specific than "soon"?

MS. PSAKI: I wish I had something more specific to deliver to you today. But I can just continue to reiterate we -- the President looks forward to announcing those soon.

Q Okay. And then, just on the Fed issue, Elizabeth Warren has spoken out about reports that indicate that Governor Clarida made some purchases and sales, and is calling for greater transparency. Is this an issue that the President is

engaged on? And do you think it's time for a -- kind of a more serious look at what is -- you know, what the rules are that govern the Federal Reserve's actions and -- of its top officials?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the -- we and the President deeply respect the independence of the Federal Reserve. And we're not going to comment on recent developments.

But I can say, broadly speaking, the President believes that all government agencies and officials -- including the Federal Reserve, including independent agencies -- should be held to the highest ethical standards, including the avoidance of any suggestions of conflict -- conflicts of interest [sic] -- of interest.

The Fed is obviously an independent agency, as I've stated a few times; it has its own ethics rules and requirements, including new rules issued in October to address conflicts. And so we defer to that agency about any specific follow-ups.

Q And just to follow up on the issue -- on that issue with the Fed: So, I understand it's an independent agency, but, you know, if an independent agency is -- if officials at an independent agency are not following the rules to the letter or if those rules don't seem like they're covering the whole thing, is it time to take a closer look, even beyond what happened in October?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, Andrea, I think the President respects the independence of the Federal Reserve. I just noted that they have their own ethics rules and requirements. They put new rules in place in October. I'd point you to them.

But the President's expectation that all government agencies and officials, including independent agencies, are held to a high standard, a high ethical -- with high ethical standards, avoiding conflict of interest speaks for itself.

Q Okay. And then just one more question on COVID. So, we know that the -- we know that the rapid test -- you know, contracts have gone out, but they've gone to companies that basically procure materials as opposed to companies that are manufacturing the tests. Are you satisfied that there's adequate testing of -- you know, manufacturing capability in place and going to procure the tests?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me give you a little bit of an update on, kind of, a couple of timelines -- or updates on timelines, I should say, on where things stand. We're working closely with manufacturers and distributors to understand what they can ship and by when, as well as actively working through the timelines for distribution.

As you kind of touched on there in your question, there are several components of this. So, we want to ensure that there's not only the physical tests, but the ability to distribute them, which is what we're working through right now.

We expect that the contracts are structured in a way to require that significant amounts are delivered on an aggressive timeline, the first of which should be arriving early next week. We expect to have all contracts awarded over the next two weeks, and then Americans will begin being able to order these tests online later this month.

We also expect to have details on the website as well as a hotline later this week.

So, these are all components that we're working through and working to expedite as quickly as possible.

Q And on the hospitalizations, which are now at a record level, are you -- is there anything that the federal government can do to augment the capacity of hospitals, which are now having to cancel selective surgeries, I think, in something like more than half of U.S. states? Is that something where DOD could come in with mobile field hospitals perhaps to just offer additional capacity?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we actually have deployed a number of resources from -- to surge resources over the course of the last several months. We will continue to do that. And we're working with local health authorities, state leaders, local leaders to determine where there are the greatest needs.

But we have deployed a range of resources -- many of them through FEMA -- to ensure that local communities who have high -- higher surges or diff- -- needs in different ways, I should say, have resources from the federal government.

Go ahead.

Q On the kind of nascent bipartisan talks related to, kind of, a more scaled-back, targeted approach on the Electoral Count Act, your colleague, Mr. Bates, was quite definitive that that wasn't really an option the White House was pursuing right now. "It certainly is no substitute," I think to use his words. Is part of the reason for being so definitive on that is that you don't want an off-ramp for two Democratic senators, in particular, to point to instead of considering a rules change to the Senate?

MS. PSAKI: I've always known my colleague, Mr. Bates, to be definitive. I don't know if you all experienced that as well.

But I think what -- what our position is from here and what the position of many advocates for voting rights and many Democrats on the Hill is, is that it is not a substitute. And we should not treat it like a substitute, because the two bills that the President will talk about tomorrow have essential components of them that will protect people's fundamental rights, expand access, ensure that people know that when they vote, it will count and not be overturned. And we want to be very clear with the public that it is not a replacement or a substitute.

Q Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has declared war on this effort over the course of the last several weeks on the Senate floor. His office put out a lengthy memo last night that said, in part, Democrats will try to use, quote, "fake hysteria to break the Senate and silence millions of Americans' voices so they can take over elections." The President has been a little sharper towards Republicans. Do you have a response to that memo and Leader McConnell?

MS. PSAKI: I -- it is pretty ironic. If making it more difficult to vote is not silencing the voices of people -- words that Senator McConnell used -- I don't know what is.

I also think it's important to note here: If you look back at Leader McConnell's record from the past, he has a pretty strong record of supporting voting rights. And what has changed? That's a question for him, less for us. But I will -- I will give you a few examples:

2004, Leader McConnell: "I cannot think of any reason why anyone on either side of the aisle would oppose the protection of the franchise of all Americans."

2006: "The Voting Rights Act of 1965 represents one of this country's greatest steps forward. Obviously, I rise today in support of its reauthorization."

Again, 2006: He wrote in his memoir that he was "overwhelmed to witness such a moment in history" when the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965.

So, I use those examples to remind people that this should not be a partisan issue -- protecting people's fundamental voting rights; that people should be protecting them and standing up for Americans of all political stripes. That is what we are working to do.

And what we're talking about here is fighting against the Big Lie that was perpetuated after January 6th in -- around January 6th, I should say -- by many -- far too many Republicans in Congress, and it has resulted in states across the country putting in place more laws that are making it more difficult for people to exercise their rights.

We don't think that is right. We don't think that is a political issue; it is a fundamental right in this country, and it should be.

Q One more -- just on Build Back Better, because I have to ask about that at the press briefing. Look, I understand you

guys can walk and chew gum at the same time. But in talking to Democrats in both chambers -- some over here as well -- there's just not a lot of sense that the conversations you guys have said are ongoing right now are going at a pretty significant clip or are substantive at this point. So, where are you guys? And what are the next steps here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our conversations are continuing behind the scenes at a staff level. And I can assure you that -- and assure the American people -- that the President is going to continue to press to get Build Back Better done to ensure that we are lowering costs for Americans across the country, most importantly, to ensure we are lowering costs for Americans across the country on childcare, on eldercare, on healthcare; addressing the climate crisis.

We know that we were -- we need 50 votes in order to get that legislation done. And we need to figure out what that looks like to get that legislation done.

But those conversations are happening behind the scenes, and the President remains absolutely committed to getting -- lowering costs for the American people.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q On voting rights: When you do hear the criticism from some advocates about "don't come without the plan," or others who say the President has not been personally enough involved -- as he heads to this, does he feel he has the political influence to be the tipping point this week?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Kelly, it's a hard question to answer because, really, what we're talking about is whether we can get enough votes in Congress to get this done. And that's why I think it's important to note that the President will talk about this as a fundamental right for all Americans, something that there has been a history of supporting from both sides of the aisle, something that the public should expect and demand from their elected officials to support.

I think we would dispute the notion that the President hasn't been active or vocal. He's given a range of speeches. He's advocated for voting rights to pass. He said it is a fundamental priority for his presidency. And he has agreed with his Vice President that she would lead this effort.

We understand the frustration by many advocates that this is not passed into law yet. He would love to have signed this into law himself. But tomorrow is an opportunity to speak about what the path forward looks like to advocate for -- for this moving forward in the Senate.

Q Can you speak to the role of the Vice President tomorrow and what she will be talking about, and how that relates to the President's message?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. The Vice President, of course, has an important role to play here as the person who is leading this effort and will continue to lead this effort from the administration. She has worked to date to help build a groundswell of support -- something that many grassroots advocates have been working on for many years now, but she has met with a number of these advocates, she has engaged, and she is going to continue to speak about voting rights across the country.

In terms of the preview of her remarks, we're not quite there yet. Maybe we'll have some more to say about hers and the President's later this evening. We'll see.

Q And as the President has heard feedback from Geneva on the state of the negotiations or conversations there, is he giving any sort of incremental instructions to Wendy Sherman and the team about things he would like introduced into the talks, or is he leaving that to be an on-the-ground, sort of, discussion for those who are in the room and handling it physically there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he is in regular touch with members of his national security team, and they are in touch with team members on the ground. So, I would say we are looking, again, at this week as a set of conversations. And we will see and

be able to assess where things stand better at the end of that.

I will note a couple of things that -- as you're looking at this: We are preparing ourselves for the possibility and likelihood -- no one should be surprised, I should say, if Russia spreads disinformation about commitments that have not been made, or if it goes even further and instigates something as a pretext for further destabilizing activity. And so, we would continue to urge everyone not to fall for any attempts to push disinformation out there.

But the -- for the President, the most important thing to convey and that he's conveying to his team is that no talks without -- no talks about Europe without Europe, no talks about Ukraine without Ukraine.

We had these discussions with the Russians today. They are important conversations that will be happening on the 12th in Brussels and the 13th in Vienna. And this is just one part of a three-set series of discussions happening this week.

Go ahead. Oh, sorry, Peter -- I'll come back to you. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q Thank you very much. Can I ask you for the latest on the Chicago schools closure dispute? The governor announced over the weekend the availability of tests. He'd previously sought the administration's help in procuring tests. Can you say whether the 350,000 they procured involved federal involvement at all and whether those talks are ongoing?

And broadly, do you have any message to both the Chicago Teachers Union and the mayor of Chicago on what you hope to see there in the coming days? This, of course, is the fourth day in a row without any school there.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that we are in regular touch with the governor and his team and the mayor as well, so we can continue to convey -- have those conversations behind the scenes.

We have been very clear, publicly and privately, that we want to see schools open; that the President fought for additional assistance in the American Rescue Plan -- \$130 billion, including \$5 billion that went to Illinois, \$10 billion that went to testing across the country -- to ensure we were prepared and had resources needed to address whatever may come up in the pandemic.

But we are having these conversations. We are in regular touch with them -- both the mayor and the governor. And we'll continue to see how we can assist from here.

Q Given the mayor is a prominent member of the President's party, has he spoken to her directly? I mean, does he feel the need to intervene here? It seems like it's sort of an exceptional case in Chicago when so many other cities are reopening that it's bucking a trend in some ways.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to obviously speak for the mayor, but I think the mayor has also conveyed what her view is here as well.

The President's view is to -- that schools should be open across the country, and more than 95 percent are across the country; that the mental health impact on kids of not having schools open is very harsh and hard, and he does not want to see schools closed across the country.

So, that -- there's no secret about that. That continues to be what he states. That's why he fought for funding. And we will continue to be in touch with local leaders in Chicago to work to get their schools open.

Q And Jake Sullivan had a statement over the weekend with regards to Iran and sanctions --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and he alluded to the threats against American officials. Should we interpret from that that the U.S.'s intelligence --

that there have been threats, in particular against Trump officials who were involved in the Soleimani strike?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get into intelligence here, from the podium. But we've certainly seen concerning public rhetoric from Iranian officials about individuals from previous administrations, even before sanctions from this weekend, and that's unacceptable.

As the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, said in his statement over the weekend that you just referenced: As Americans, we have our disagreements on politics...on Iran policy," and other issues, of course. "But we are united in our resolve against threats and provocations. We're united in the defense of our people." And we're going to protect and defend our own people.

But I'm not going to get into more specifics. Obviously, they announced the sanctioning of more than 50 individuals and have made public comments in addition that are certainly available to anyone.

Q If I --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q Sorry, sorry. One more.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. You're fine. You're fine. We're good. Go ahead.

Q Speaker Pelosi opened the door to maybe some sort of virus aid measure coming through. Do you have any new update on whether the White House is involved in any talks towards that -- for instance, restaurants, of course, has had some traction in the Senate of a potential top-up of that fund?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we -- we certainly agree with Speaker Pelosi on a lot of things, but on the fact that -- on what she said this weekend, which is that we're not going to let a lack of resources get in the way of fighting the pandemic.

We have been in constant conversation with leaders and with the Hill and members about what may be needed, whether that's more to address COVID or small businesses and help keep them afloat. I don't have anything specific at this point in time, but we're going to continue to assess what the needs are and stay in close touch with them about that.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I was home all last week isolating.

MS. PSAKI: Welcome back.

Q Thank you. I was isolating with COVID after a positive test, like a lot of people watching. And -- a lot of time in front of the TV.

I heard the President say --

MS. PSAKI: Did you watch Fox the whole time, or other things?

Q I have exhausted the full catalogue of Guy Fieri content.

MS. PSAKI: Oo-kay. (Laughs.)

Q And obviously a lot of Fox

Q AND OBVIOUSLY, A LOT OF FOX.

But I heard the President say, "Google 'COVID test near me.'" So, somebody isolating with COVID, I did that. And the appointments everywhere were completely jammed. So, why is it that you guys were so unprepared for the need for testing after the holidays?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Peter, I'm happy to see you back and well. I would, second, say that there has been a massive surge in cases, as you know and were part of, in D.C. and New York. And there's been an unprecedented -- and other parts of the country as well. There's been an unprecedented demand for tests.

So what we have done over the course of the last few weeks, even before that, is the President quadrupled our testing capacity since the summer, we opened 20,000 sites across the country, and we have also opened additional federal sites, including one in D.C. only recently.

He's also provided -- we've -- also in the process of sending 50 million tests out to community health centers and rural health centers. And now we've just -- we're in the process of finalizing contracts for 500 million tests.

Q But --

MS. PSAKI: But what -- can I make one more point and then you can go next? I would just note where we have come from. If you look to a year ago, there were no tests -- or maybe one, depending on the timeline -- that was available on the market. Now we have nine. If you look to about a year ago, there was about 900,000, or maybe slightly higher, tests that were being issued every day. Now we're at about 10 or 11 million. Three hundred million tests are done in this country every month.

So there's enormous progress being made, but we needed to make sure the market was growing -- that's what we've been working on -- and increase our access to supply, and that's what we've been doing.

Q The test you're talking about, though, require people to go somewhere and either make an appointment or wait in line. The CDC's guidance is: If you think you have COVID, you're supposed to stay home. You guys said you were going to mail free tests to people that need them. The President is there, on television, talking about a "winter of severe illness and death."

While he's saying that publicly, why weren't you guys doing more to prepare for the winter?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Peter, everyone decides where they're going to go get a test. And we make a range of options available. You can also purchase tests online. Later today, we'll have more details on how 150 million Americans who have health insurance can get reimbursed for tests. So, we'll have more details on that later.

The 500 million tests I noted -- and I gave you a little bit of an update on the timeline -- we'll have more on the website later this week.

So our steps and our process from the beginning has been expanding access to free tests, to make it easy and more accessible for Americans. And we're continuing to build on what we've done to date.

Q But the President talked about a "winter of severe illness and death." At the rate you guys are going, these tests are not going to be available until spring. So will you admit that these free tests you guys promised are not going to be ready until after the Omicron surge?

MS. PSAKI: I think I gave an update earlier that we'll have -- start to have tests out the door in the coming weeks -- very soon.

Q Okay

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: And again, that's not the only place people can get tests. There are a range of ways people can get tests online. Again, you'll know more about how you can be reimbursed for those tests from here. Go to different sites -- there are federal sites opening up all around the country.

Q And we understand that you guys plan to rely on the Postal Service to send out these free tests whenever they're ready. But the Postal Service says they're going to have a staffing shortage because of your vaccine mandate. So, would you pull back on the vaccine mandate if it meant getting people these free tests sooner?

MS. PSAKI: The Postal Service also delivered 98 -- 99 percent of packages on time in advance of Christmas. And they also -- their leaders have also said they're eager to take on this challenge. So, we welcome that, and we're looking forward to working with them to get these tests out to the public.

Q And I understand that the science says that vaccines prevent death. But I'm triple vaxxed, still got COVID. You're triple vaxxed, still got COVID. Why is the President still referring to this as a "pandemic of the unvaccinated"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Peter, there's a significant difference between -- and you just -- you just experienced this. And not to expose your public health experience --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: -- but I can speak to me -- mine as well. I had been triple vaxxed. I had minor symptoms. There is a huge difference between that and being unvaccinated. You are 17 times more likely to go to the hospital if you're not vaccinated, 20 times more likely to die. And those are significant, serious statistics. So, yes, the impact for people who are unvaccinated is far more dire than those who are vaccinated.

Q Will the President update his language at some time to be more reflective of the fact that people who are triple vaccinated are catching and spreading COVID?

MS. PSAKI: I think peo- -- the President has said -- as have we, a number of times that there will be breakthrough cases. There will be people who get COVID here, at different media organizations, at companies around the world, around the country who have been vaccinated. But there is a significant difference between being hospitalized or dying, and being vaccinated with more mild symptoms.

Q Okay. And then, last one: You guys have been very aggressive countering COVID misinformation. So, what do you guys think about COVID misinformation coming from the Supreme Court and Sonia Sotomayor's false claim that over 100,000 children are in "serious condition and many on ventilators"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to speak to Supreme Court arguments or statements made in those arguments. But I will tell you that what is at stake here is our effort to protect health workers and, most importantly, protect patients with the CMS rule and also to make work places safer with the OSHA rule, which we have confidence in our legal argument for. So, I will leave it to them to decide. But that's what's being argued now.

Go ahead.

Q I know getting ahead of the President before a major speech is one of your favorite things to do, and, that being said, I'm going to try this question anyway. You mentioned that, over the past year, President Biden has expressed more openness about taking a look at filibuster rules, especially when it comes to voting rights. Is that a topic you expect him to directly address tomorrow and get into?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Is there an announcement in terms of whether it will be more forceful or whether he'll have any specific thing to say other than "I'm open to the idea"?

MS. PSAKI: You know, the President has spoken to this issue a number of times, as I've said before, including as recently as December, where he said that if that is how we get this done, "I'm open to that." But again, he's working on his speech. You'll have to tune in tomorrow and see what he has to say.

Q Has he had any specific conversations with senators about this legislation, about a rules change in the past couple of weeks?

MS. PSAKI: We're in regular touch at a range of levels with senators. I'm not going to detail those further.

Q And then, the last question: Any response to a recent statement from Senator Sinema's office indicating she would not be in favor of changing the rules and dealing with these two pieces of legislation?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think that everyone is going to have to take a hard look at where they want to be at this moment in history, as we're looking at efforts across the country to prevent people from being able to exercise their fundamental rights.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, in previewing the President's speech earlier today, you said that he will "forcefully advocate" for the voting rights. Last week's speech on January 6th, the President's speech then was -- was viewed as pointed and forceful. In terms of the tone of tomorrow's speech, should we expect something along those lines?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that the President will certainly be clear about what is at stake here and how important it is to protect people's fundamental rights across the country.

He felt that a speaking to this warranted a moment where he was going to give a full speech on it. That's exactly why he's going to Georgia, a place with enormous history on civil rights issue, unfortunately enormous recent history on efforts to suppress the vote. So, that is why he's going there.

But January 6th -- it's all connected in his view -- was certainly a day where he needed to speak very clearly about the role of his predecessor.

Q And just one on COVID. Could you expand just a little bit about -- on what the President said last Friday when he was asked about controlling COVID? When he mentioned the "new normal," was he moving away from his campaign pledge of shutting down the virus or changing the messaging at all about COVID-19?

MS. PSAKI: What he's referring to is the fact that we have -- now, we're in a different place than we were a year ago: More than 200 million Americans are vaccinated, and more than 71 percent are fully vaccinated. More than 80 percent, or a little higher than that, have had a first dose. We have a range of tools at our disposal, including antivirals and other treatments. So, we're going to continue to expand that, but we are in a different place than we were a year ago.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President feel that forceful speech that he gave last week -- does that raise the bar for getting something done? I mean, he's been talking about this for months. He had a speech in July in Philadelphia. Nothing's happened. Has he basically raised expectations here?

MS. PSAKI: About giving good speeches or about -- (laughter).

Q No, about -- about the voting reform.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think he believes the stakes should be raised. He wouldn't be going to Georgia tomorrow -- a place where there is enormous history of -- from -- of civil rights leaders, of his -- of his friend John Lewis -- advocating for fundamental rights, including voting rights -- if he wasn't ready and prepared to elevate this issue and continue to fight for it.

Q The administration has said that schools have the resources to remain open, yet they're -- we're seeing closures, including Chicago. There are still a lot of teachers staying away due to illness or fears -- other school personnel. So, what is the White House prepared to do in the event of other school closures due to the lack of personnel?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important to note that more than 95 percent of schools across the country are open and, in part, because of the resources that they were able to receive from the American Rescue Plan. It enabled them to hire more bus drivers, maybe hire more teachers, put in place additional mitigation measures. Many -- many secured testing contracts to ensure that there could be regular testing at their schools.

There are some parts of the country where all of those resources haven't been deployed yet. Of course, the Department of Education will continue to work with them. And our Department of Education has also taken steps far in advance of the last few weeks to work with states on anticipating and preparing for labor shortages.

So, we are in touch at every level. What our position continues to be is that schools need to be open. We err on the side of schools being open. We believe that there are the mitigation measures, the steps, and the resources to do exactly that.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. About those mitigation efforts: One way in which to reduce the spread of COVID is through the use of masks. And health officials have said that these cloth masks are virtually useless. You need to use, they say, a KN95, a K95 mask.

And as I travel -- I travel around the country -- I see very few people, oftentimes, wearing these types of masks -- the KN95 mask.

Any my question is: Is there a federal effort to make certain that these types of masks are available in the inner city, in rural America for people just getting on an airplane? Because this is a better type of mask, as Dr. Fauci has said, than a cloth mask.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would just note that the CDC guidance continues to be: A well-fit mask is the best mask to be wearing. They haven't changed that guidance as of now.

In terms of how these resources -- if we talk about schools and keeping schools open -- can be used, the purchase of masks certainly could be a part of that. It's up to school districts and local school districts to make those decisions.

We also, of course, work with community health centers, rural health centers, local health leaders on what they feel their needs are and how resources from the American Rescue Plan and COVID packages in the past should be spent. But the guidance has not changed from the CDC. But we do listen to local health leaders on what their needs are and how the resources that have already been approved can be effectively deployed.

Q So, there's no money then that could be taken from the American Rescue Plan devoted towards this federal effort?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think that's what I said. I think --

Q I'm asking you. I'm asking you that question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, \$130 billion of the Rescue Plan was for schools. That can be used in a range of ways. And so, some of that money has not even been spent yet. It's -- it is all in states, but I think there is an allowance for that. But I can certainly check if there is more specific measures. I just think it's important to note that the CDC has not changed their guidance on masks.

Q And then on those talks that took place in Geneva today between the U.S and Russia: The last time that President Putin spoke about this impasse that exists was during his end-of-the-year press conference. And during that end-of-the-year press conference, President Putin said "the ball is in the U.S. court" on this particular issue, which is different than what you said when I asked you that same question in early December. Do you disagree with that contention that "the ball in the U.S. court" here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's not just about me disagreeing. The facts disagree with that. Russia and President Putin has built up a troop presence of 100,000 troops on the border of Ukraine. They have used bellicose rhetoric. It is up to them to determine if they are going to deescalate. There is a diplomatic path forward. That is a path forward that remains open. But certainly, it's up to President Putin to make this choice.

I just want to get to everyone, so let me try to jump around to everyone before I have to go.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just two quick questions. I wondered: A group of congressional Democrats wrote to the White House, urging the President to use executive power to, essentially, use the Defense Production Act to manufacture enough rapid tests so that Americans could each take one test per week. I wonder if the White House had any response to that and if they think that is, you know, an achievable goal -- something that they would shoot for -- in response to that letter.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen that letter. The good news is that we agree and we're already doing most of what's in that letter. So, we use the Defense Production Act to drive production of these tests, and we'll do so again when it can accelerate production delivery of these tests. We used -- deployed \$3 billion for procurement of tests. We used \$3 billion to procure tests, which was -- which became a major driver in increase and expanding the market for tests.

And the President's plan to procure and distribute 500 million tests to all Americans is, in and of itself, providing a major stimb- -- stimulus for global production of these tests. We agree. That's why we've already used the Defense Production Act.

I know they referenced the hotline. There'll be more details on that this week.

Our objective here is to expand access to free public testing, as is referenced there. We're already in the process of sending 50 million rapid antigen tests directly to Federally Qualified Health Centers -- I know they referenced that -- and to rural health clinics. And we're publishing guidance. As I noted, we'll have more details later today on that.

So, the good news is that we agree with what -- a lot of what they're saying. And we -- we have already taken steps to put in place a number of measures.

Q And just one other one: You mentioned -- to follow up on the Chicago schools issue -- you mentioned that the administration has been in touch with the mayor and the governor. Has anybody from the administration been in touch directly with the teachers union? And if not, why not?

MS. PSAKI: We are in touch regularly with the teachers union and have certainly been, but I don't have any more details.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. A couple quick questions here. I know you don't want to weigh in on ongoing litigation before the Supreme Court, but not long ago, in this room, the Surgeon General told us that COVID misinformation was a public health threat. I'm wondering if the White House is at all concerned, given Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor's remarks about the Omicron variant, that maybe the danger is being overhyped and your message is not getting out.

MS. PSAKI: I think I just addressed this. Didn't I answer this question?

Q You answered it. But are you worried that there is misinformation that is being spread, so much so that even a sitting Supreme Court justice has an inaccurate picture of things?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm just not going to weigh in on a specific legal argument made in the Court.

Q And then, I know you've been asked several times about Chicago. You said it here, you said it before, you know, that the President clearly wants schools to be open. There's been money that's been allocated. Can we expect that the President will be more aggressive and use the bully pulpit to tell teachers unions in Chicago to get back in the classroom? I mean, this is the third -- the nation's third-largest school district.

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would note the President has been very clear, as we have been clear: We are on the side of schools being open. That is why he advocated for funding in the American Rescue Plan. And we will continue to convey that clearly, because he believes the mental health impact on kids is -- could be dire and it is imperative that kids are in the classroom.

More than 95 percent of schools across the country are doing exactly that, and we're hopeful that will continue to increase.

Q And then, one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- quickly. In December, you and I talked about the Afghan women who had been honored here at the State Department. Sources are telling us right now, currently, that some of these women are being told that before they can apply for refugee status, they need to leave the country. And if they do that, though, you know, the odds are good that their bank account will be seized and that that process is a two-year-long process.

Are there any additional resources that are going to them currently? I know it's a challenging situation and it's in flux. But is there anything more you can tell us about trying to get those (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Let me check on more specific details. Obviously, the State Department is overseeing all of our programs and we're continuing to work to get more people out, but I will see if there's more details on this and I'll ask them specifically.

Go ahead, in the way back.

Q Thank you. I wanted to ask you about India-U.S. relationship. What is on the President's agenda for this year when it comes to the world's two largest democracies, India and the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, back in September, the President hosted President Modi at the White House, and their meeting was about launching a new chapter in the history of the U.S.-India relationship.

At that time, the two leaders laid out their shared vision for the U.S.-India relationship and we'll continue to work closely this year.

You can expect our governments will move -- be moving forward on a wide-ranging set of initiatives, from cooperating to fight the pandemic, scaling up action to address climate change, working bilaterally and through the Quad, expanding our

cooperation and trading investments, cyber and in new and emerging technologies, and continuing to talk about -- and, as always, we are focused on strengthening the deep ties between our people and our shared democratic values that underpin the relationship. But, obviously, we're going to continue to build from here.

Q One, quickly, on China's aggressive behavior on its border with India. Does this come into your talks with the Chinese? And is the U.S. sending any message to the Chinese on this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we continue to closely monitor the situation, and we continue to support dialogue and peaceful resolution of these border disputes. We've been pretty clear how we view Beijing's behavior in the region and around the world. We believe it can be destabilizing. And we're concerned by the PRC's attempt to intimidate its neighbors.

We'll continue to stand with our partners on that.

Last one. Go ahead.

Q Goldman Sachs is saying that there's going to be four rate hikes this year; the Federal Reserve indicated maybe three. If they move a quarter of a point, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget says that three hikes would add an additional \$175 billion a year to a debt payment alone. So, does this change the thinking of the White House in terms of how much spending the President wants to do, as the rate hikes start to come in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I always like to say monetary policy is the purview of the Federal Reserve, and we respect their independence.

Interest rates have been, kind of, as you touched on there, at historically low levels during the pandemic. We always knew that as the economy recovered and gained strength, interest rates would rise to more historically typical levels.

The President is committed -- as you talk about spending -- to fiscal responsibility and ensuring that our long-term investments are fully paid for. That's why he has proposed a range of ways to pay for his Build Back Better agenda and he -- and why it's fully paid for and would still lower the cost for Americans on prescription drugs, childcare, and many other issues.

But he is somebody who is -- is mindful about being fiscally responsible and is focused on that as he looks to his agenda moving forward.

Q And one more on climate change.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q On climate change -- so the President talks about a transition away from gas cars, recently announcing the mileage standards going up 40 miles per gallon over the next -- in the next five years. He's pushed for electric cars. The Beast gets an estimated six miles to the gallon. The President has been in office a year. Is there any plan to make his car electric?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check on that. I mean, part of what we've talked about is making sure that the fleet owned by the United States government, which is very large beyond the Beast -- the Beast is just one member -- is that we work toward making sure we're leading with our focus on energy independence as well. But I am happy to check on his car, otherwise known as "the Beast."

Thank you, everyone, very much.

Q Jen? Jen, can I just ask you on the teachers?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You've talked about the importance of students being back in the schools and the mental health issues. And -- but this administration has made a really strong commitment to labor unions in general. So, how can you disregard the concerns of teacher unions who say that classrooms aren't safe, or who are concerned that teacher -- that classrooms aren't safe?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think, Andrea, that's an accurate characterization. We've prioritized teachers getting vaccinated first. We fought for -- the President fought for an enormous amount of funding to ensure that schools and classrooms could -- could -- and teachers could take steps that could put in place mitigation measures to make sure students, school teachers, and members of school communities are safe.

And I think what I'm echoing is what a number of people in the public health community have conveyed: that those measures can make sure that schools are safe, can ensure people attending school are safe. No parents want to send their schools -- their kids to school in an unsafe environment either.

But we are in a very different place than we were earlier this year. And it's important for people to be mindful of the mental health impact on kids, something that, of course, many parents across the country feel very strongly about.

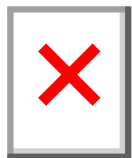
Thank you, everyone, so much.

2:59 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

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To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 13, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, January 13, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:18 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay, we have another special guest today, our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, who will give us some brief opening comments. We'll take some questions, and then we'll proceed with a briefing from there. With that, I will turn it over to Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thank you, Jen. Thanks, everybody. I'm here to provide a brief update on the situation with respect to Russia and Ukraine.

We've now completed an intensive week of diplomacy in multiple formats: the Strategic Stability Dialogue, the NATO-Russia Council, and the OSCE.

Russia raised its concerns, we raised our concerns, including the actions Russia has taken to undermine European security that Secretary Blinken spoke so eloquently about last week. We stuck to our core premise of reciprocity. We were firm in our principles and clear about those areas where we can make progress and those areas that are non-starters.

Allied unity and transatlantic solidarity were on full display, and they remain on full display. The discussions were frank and direct. They were useful. They gave us and our allies things to consider. They gave Russia things to consider.

We will now reflect and consult with allies and partners on how to proceed.

We're prepared to continue with diplomacy to advance security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic. We're equally prepared if Russia chooses a different path.

We continue to coordinate intensively with partners on severe economic measures in response to a further Russian invasion of Ukraine. We continue to work with Allies in NATO on changes in force posture and capabilities, especially on NATO's eastern flank, if that scenario arises. And we continue to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in the defense of their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We have been very clear with Russia on the costs and consequences of further military action or destabilization in Ukraine.

So, we're ready either way. We're ready to make progress at the negotiating table -- serious, tangible progress on important issues of concern to us, to Europe, and to Russia in an environment of de-escalation. And we're ready to take the necessary and proper steps to defend our allies, support our partners, and respond robustly to any naked aggression that might occur.

In our view, diplomacy is the more sensible path. The Russians will have to make their own assessment.

In terms of next steps in the diplomatic process, we'll remain engaged with allies and partners and with the Russians, and make determinations in the coming days about what comes next.

I'm going to leave it there and be happy to take your questions.

Yeah.

Q Is there an agreement to hold more talks with the Russians, Jake?

MR. SULLIVAN: There are no dates set for any more talks. We have to consult with allies and partners first. We're in communication with the Russians, and we'll see what comes next.

Q Jake, can you address the Deputy Foreign Minister's comments suggesting that the -- that Russia could deploy forces -- or wouldn't rule out deploying forces in Latin America? Is that something that the U.S. is concerned about? Is that something that came up in those discussions?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not going to respond to bluster in the public commentary. That wasn't raised in the discussions at the Strategic Stability Dialogue. If Russia were to move in that direction, we would deal with it decisively.

Q And, Jake, just another one on -- the Russian proposal suggested that -- to try to reach some sort of agreement on keeping exercises away from the line of contact between NATO and Russia, or limiting the deployment of missiles and other weapons. Is that -- is that something that's on the table from the U.S. perspective? Or is that not something that the U.S. could ever agree to?

MR. SULLIVAN: As Deputy Secretary Sherman said in her readout of these meetings, and as was closely coordinated with allies and partners at NATO: We are prepared to discuss reciprocal limitations on the deployment of missiles, as long as Russia is prepared to fulfill its end of the bargain and that there's adequate verification. So, we are prepared to have a detailed negotiation on that -- emphasis on "detail" -- because the devil is often in the details on those things.

We also, as Deputy Secretary Sherman indicated in her readout of these discussions, have said we are prepared to discuss reciprocal parameters around the size and scope and frequency of military exercises. But reporting that has suggested we're going to reduce the number of troops we have deployed or somehow cut back on our overall force posture in Europe -- those reports are wrong.

Yes.

Q I guess with no more talks scheduled with the Russians right now, as we sit here today, in your view, what is the likelihood of Russia invading?

MR. SULLIVAN: I m not going to put any kind of likelihood on it. What I m going to say is that the United States and our allies and partners are prepared for any contingency, any eventuality. We re prepared to keep moving forward down the diplomatic path in good faith, and we re prepared to respond if Russia acts. And beyond that, all we can do is get ready, and we are ready.

Yeah.

Q Are they making the case, though, to invade, do you believe?

MR. SULLIVAN: What do you mean by “making the case”?

Q Is Russia trying to justify an invasion, if one happens?

MR. SULLIVAN: I m not going to put myself in the head of the Russians. As you see from their public comments, they ve been -- they ve said many different things. Some of them contradictory. They’ve -- different speakers over the course of this week have given both hopeful signs and deeply pessimistic signs. You ll have to ask them where they stand in respect to their positioning.

From our perspective, we can just be clear about where we stand. And where we stand is ready to go down a principled path of diplomacy and ready to respond in the face of aggression.

Q The White House has often talked about this, and you ve talked about this, and President Biden -- about having this stable, predictable relationship with Russia. Given the back-and-forth over these talks and the threats, is that even still possible?

MR. SULLIVAN: We believe that diplomacy and diplomatic understandings that can be reached between the United States, our European allies and partners, and Russia can contribute to stability in Europe -- that it is possible to make progress on things like missiles and exercises, as we just discussed. That ultimately we can get updates to some of the underlying issues related to transparency and deconfliction. That we can get to risk reduction and conflict management so that the overall security situation in Europe is more stable. That is certainly viable if Russia is prepared to engage in a good-faith way.

If they re not, and they choose to further invade Ukraine, then they are going to deal with the costs and consequences that the United States and our allies and partners will impose.

Yeah.

Q Jake, you’re still saying “if.” Does that mean you’re still uncertain whether Russia is negotiating in good faith?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, the intelligence community has not made an assessment that the Russians have definitively decided to take a military course of action in Ukraine. So, as things stand right now, Russia has the opportunity to come to the table, as we go forward, to deal with the very real concerns that we’ve put on the table, that Secretary Blinken has laid out publicly, and to negotiate in some of these areas that we ve just been talking about.

If Russia chooses to go a different path, we ll respond accordingly.

But basically, we are still at a moment where we believe a path of diplomacy can operate in a way that vindicates and

reflects our interests and principles. And we're prepared to work with our allies and partners on that.

I think we're united with the European Union, with NATO, with Ukraine, with the rest of the countries of the Euro-Atlantic community on the notion that there is a diplomatic path forward here.

We are also united with our allies and partners that if Russia chooses to go a different way for whatever reason, or no reason at all -- well, we'll be ready for that.

Q Ambassador Michael Carpenter is offering a different assessment. I'm sure you heard him say that, "The drumbeat of war is sounding loud, and the rhetoric has gotten rather shrill." So, do you agree with that or disagree?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, the Russians have put tens of thousands of troops in and around Ukraine and occupied territory relative to Ukraine. So, it is certainly the case that the threat of military invasion is high. That's why I've stood at this podium repeatedly over the course of the past few months, warned about that, and laid out what would come as a result of that in respect to a response by the United States and our allies and partners.

So, there's no illusions on the part of the United States government. There's no illusions on the part of any of us who have been dealing with this issue about what the prospects are for potential conflict and potential military escalation by Russia.

The point that I would make today is that the United States and our European allies and partners are prepared for multiple different eventualities -- an eventuality that has us at the negotiating table, working on these issues in a serious and substantive way, and the eventuality that has us responding to what Russia does in a clear, effective, forceful way that imposes significant costs on Russia for any action that it might take.

Yeah.

Q On those actions, looking at Europe right now, it doesn't seem necessarily that they're prepared to join the aggressive multinational sanctions package that the U.S. has talked about. So, if Vladimir Putin were to invade Russia tomorrow, are you confident that the sanctions that you have threatened Moscow with and that you would want to see out of Europe are lined up, ready to go?

And secondly, the Kremlin sort of picked one element of sanctions legislation that's up on the Hill -- the prospect of sanctioning Vladimir Putin personally -- today, and objected to that. I'm wondering is that among the, sort of, package that you've signaled to them as on the table were Ukraine to be invaded by Russia?

MR. SULLIVAN: The main focus of the sanctions package that we've been working with Europe on have been significant financial sanctions with a "start high, stay high" mentality, not a graduated application of these sanctions; export controls that go at certain fundamental strategic industries in Russia; and other steps that we would take to ensure that Russia actually had to deal with the economic consequences of this invasion.

In terms of your question about my level of confidence in our European allies and partners, I feel very good about the level of engagement and the level of convergence between the United States and Russia, A, on the fundamental proposition that there would have to be severe economic consequences, and, B, on both the categories, types, and targets of sanctions that would have to flow.

Does that mean that the U.S. and Europe are going to have precisely the same list down to every last detail? No. Does it mean that I will be able to stand before you and say the United States and Europe have moved in unison on the application of severe economic measures? I'm confident that I will be able to do that.

Q Can I ask a question about the cybersecurity meeting that you held today? I'm wondering, in terms of the Log4j vulnerability, how many federal -- or if federal systems have been affected by that vulnerability; if it was because the government hadn't done the necessary patchwork to prevent it from happening; and if the firms that you spoke with today

made any commitments in terms of, you know, financial assistance or other assistance to maintain kind of critical open source software, since this seems to be an issue that continues to bubble up.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, the President signed an executive order last year that goes to procurement of software by the United States government and fundamentally raises the game. And we're in the process of implementing that.

And, actually, where things stand with respect to departments and agencies of the U.S. government today, as compared to nearly one year ago today when the President took office, we are in a much more robust posture. And that's due to the work not just of the interagency, but of specific departments and agencies that have implemented that executive order.

In terms of the session today, I'm not going to speak on behalf of the companies in terms of the commitments they made, but it was an incredibly constructive discussion about ways that the public sector and the private sector can work effectively together to ensure that public sector systems are more robust and resilient and private sector systems are more robust and resilient. I'll leave it at that.

And we will try to develop, along with the participants in that meeting, an agreed readout so that we're not betraying any confidences.

Yeah.

Q On Russia and Ukraine, Secretary Blinken said at the start of the week that he didn't expect any major breakthroughs this week but that one positive outcome could obviously be a de-escalation of tensions.

Given the current state of play, given everything that you've said, what specifically does that look like from your view -- Russia de-escalating -- right now?

MR. SULLIVAN: It would involve them reducing the number of forces that they have deployed in aggressive postures towards Ukraine. And that would ultimately be a key part of de-escalation.

There are other steps that Russia could take in respect to de-escalation that go far beyond Ukraine as well. But in terms of the proximate challenge in and around the border of Ukraine, that would be an important step.

I would also say one other thing that I think is very important that Tony -- you mentioned Secretary Blinken's comments at the beginning of the week. He said something at the end of last week that I want to underscore, which is that our intelligence community has developed information -- which has now been downgraded -- that Russia is laying the groundwork to have the option of fabricating a pretext for an invasion, including through sabotage activities and information operations, by accusing Ukraine of preparing an imminent attack against Russian forces in Eastern Ukraine.

We saw this playbook in 2014. They are preparing this playbook again. And we will have -- the administration will have further details on what we see as this potential laying of a pretext to share with the press over the course of the next 24 hours.

Yeah.

Q On the flipside of that -- and you've made clear that the U.S. will respond in the face of Russian aggression -- but I'm trying to get a sense of what the U.S. would need to see in order to actually respond. Would it have to be tanks and troops crossing the border, or would things like moving helicopters and tactical weapons be enough for the U.S. to take steps to impose sanctions?

MR. SULLIVAN: When you say "moving helicopters and tactical weapons," you mean onto the territory of Ukraine?

Q Yes.

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, our position is quite straightforward. If the Russian military moves across the Ukrainian frontier to seize territory, we believe that that is the further invasion of Ukraine, and it will trigger a response from the United States and the international community.

Yeah.

Q Thank you, Jake. I want to ask about your current policy in this crisis. But, first, if you'll indulge me, I'd like to ask something of a historical nature first. I assume -- you'll correct me if I'm wrong -- that in preparation for President Biden's first summit with President Putin, held in Geneva last June, the national security team undertook a comprehensive review of the official documentary record of all the interactions that President Trump had with President Putin.

You may recall -- during the Trump presidency, we saw reporting to the effect that Mr. Trump and/or his aides took some steps to prevent the maintenance of a full record of those interactions.

Without asking you to disclose any classified information, can you assure us on two points: Number one, did your review uncover any evidence of any effort, at any point along the way in the creation and storage of those records, to tamper with that process? And number two, did your review uncover any evidence of any impropriety of any kind or severity on the part of President Trump in his interactions with President Putin?

MR. SULLIVAN: On that question, I've got nothing for you.

Q Okay. To current policy then. This administration has tried without success to use sanctions to compel the military in Myanmar to abandon its coup d'état. This administration has used sanctions without success to compel China to release the concentration camp inmates in Xinjiang. The Obama administration, of course, used sanctions without success to try to deter a Russian annexation of Crimea.

Here you stand again, brandishing the threat of sanctions to try to deter a Russian invasion of Ukraine. Why shouldn't this be perceived as clinging to a failed tactic? And why shouldn't President Putin assess, on that basis, that his adversary is operating from a position of relative weakness?

MR. SULLIVAN: President Putin has indicated that what he does not want to see is further NATO force posture coming closer to his border. President Putin has indicated that what he does not want to see is further American and Allied support to Ukraine. President Putin has indicated that what he does want to see is the further strengthening of Russian strategic industries in the Russian economy.

We have laid out on all of those metrics that Russia will suffer costs and consequences in the event of a further invasion of Ukraine. And he can make his own determination about what he wants to do. But the United States is going to act; we're going to act with our allies and partners on those issues in those ways. We have the capacity to do that, and we will do that. And President Biden has been clear that that's what we intend to do.

Yeah.

Q Have you seen sanctions work?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, so, first, I would say that if you go back to a personal experience I had, which was the negotiation of the -- first, the interim agreement and then contributing to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, we do believe that economic pressure on Iran had a meaningful impact on bringing it to the table and ultimately putting a lid on its nuclear program.

There are other instances where sanctions have worked. And, of course, there are instances across administrations, Democrat and Republican alike, where sanctions have not achieved the full result.

And so, I'm not going to stand before you and say sanctions are a panacea, they're a tool that solves every problem. But remember, sanctions are only one part of the way that we and our allies are talking about how we will deal with a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine. We have other tools to bring to bear as well. Those tools also bear on the interests and the security capacities of the Russian Federation.

And our goal at the end of the day here is not to get into an escalatory spiral; it is to find a way forward, consistent with our principles, consistent with our interests, and consistent with open, transparent consultation with our allies to pursue diplomacy. If that works, great. If that doesn't work, we're ready.

Yeah.

Q With all of that said, is the window of time closing when it comes to diplomacy on this issue? And when you talk about options that are on the table -- you said sanctions is one of the tools. What are the other options? Presidents have a whole host of options, and they've always said, when they are met with these types of situations, "All options are on the table." Are all options on the table for this moment?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, we've been clear, both directly to the Russians and we've actually been clear publicly, about some of the other options. And they include changes in the forces and capabilities that the United States and NATO would deploy to eastern flank allies to reinforce and strengthen the robustness of allied defense on allied territory.

We've made clear that in the event of an invasion, in addition to the support we are currently providing to the Ukrainians, we would dramatically ramp up that support to support their territorial integrity and sovereignty.

We've also been clear that we are going to work in tandem with allies and partners not just in Europe, but in other parts of the world, on export controls that would have an impact on strategic industries in Russia.

So those are some of the extra -- the additional tools that we can bring to bear in this context. All of them go to the basic proposition that the United States is going to look to strengthen and reinforce our position and our allies' position and to support the Ukrainians in the event of an invasion -- further invasion of Ukraine.

Q What about the window of opportunity for diplomacy? Is that closing, as I asked earlier?

MR. SULLIVAN: Look, it's hard for me to characterize where things stand on the diplomacy because -- we've come through these four days. We need to sit and consult with allies and partners. Wendy Sherman is just getting off a plane; she may have gotten off a plane in the last few hours.

We'll take stock of where we are, we'll consult, and then we'll determine next steps. The Russians will have to do the same.

And all I can tell you is: As far as we're concerned, we are ready to move forward on diplomacy and we are ready to go down the other path.

And both of those -- in my view, that question of which path is one that is facing us now -- it's not facing us a year from now or five years from now; it's facing us in the -- in the foreseeable future.

Yeah.

Q Thank you so much. What happens if nothing happens -- I mean, if Russia doesn't invade Ukraine but keeps, like, this massive amount of troops at the border? Is this something you can live with? In this case, would there be sanctions, less sanctions, no sanctions at all?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, we're trying to, first of all, deter and prevent a potentially massive Russian invasion. That's step

number one.

If we end up in a circumstance of the kind you described, we'll deal with that as it comes. But I'm not going to get into hypotheticals today, in terms of our reaction.

I'll just take one more question.

Q Thank you, Jake. To follow up: But at this moment, are we in a position where -- what -- the next step is reducing the troops of the border -- on the borders of Ukraine? Is this the next thing that can happen that could satisfy the U.S. and the allies?

MR. SULLIVAN: What do you mean by "the next thing"?

Q I mean: What's -- what's -- after the week we've had, what are we expecting? That they take -- of course, we're hoping that they -- the Russian troops back off. But is this the only next step possible? Of course, there's the invasion. But after the entire week of diplomacy, what --

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, what we've said all along is that we're happy to talk. We're happy to talk about our interests and our concerns. We're happy to listen to the Russians talk about their interests and their concerns. But we've also been very clear from the beginning that to make concrete progress -- real, tangible progress -- it has to happen in an environment of de-escalation.

So, we will have to see now, on the diplomatic path, what comes next. We'll have to determine that first with our friends and then in engagement with the Russians. And as I stand here today, I can't tell you what the next steps will be. I can only tell you that the United States, the Biden administration, our allies and partners, we're prepared to deal with whatever comes.

Q And just a detail on the ambiance of the -- in the negotiations. I mean, you made a reference to the pessimist -- the different statements we heard. But the Russian officials had a more pessimistic and negative tone. Did they have the same tone when they were face-to-face with the --

MR. SULLIVAN: They were professional and businesslike. We clearly disagreed on things, and there were areas where both sides saw there was a possibility for progress.

Beyond that, it's hard for me really to characterize their point of view. They can characterize it for themselves.

Thank you, guys.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you so much, Jake. You're always invited.

Okay. I know there's a lot going on, so we'll try to get around to everybody. I just have two items for all of you at the top.

Sorry, lots of stuff in here.

In December, as a part of the administration's approach to strengthening America's supply chains, address bottlenecks, and lower prices for Americans, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Labor announced the Biden-Harris Trucking Action Plan.

Today, to uphold the 30-day commitments made in the Trucking Action Plan, DO -- the Department of Transportation and the Department of Labor are announcing next steps on several new initiatives, some of them -- some of which were mandated by the Infrastructure Law to support drivers, improve driver retention while expanding access to quality driving jobs now and in the years ahead.

These include expanding registered apprenticeship programs. More than 100 employers and industry partners --

(A note is handed to Ms. Psaki.)

All right. Everything is okay. I think just a statement may have gone out on the Supreme Court ruling that probably is in your inboxes. So, that's one note for all of you.

These include -- these steps announced today include:

Expanding registered apprenticeship programs. More than 100 employers and industry partners have stepped forward to work to expand registered apprenticeships in the last 30 days. This is the gold standard of training and retaining a skilled workforce.

Creating the Women of Trucking Advisory Board mandated to gather input on how to build a more inclusive and equitable workplace for women in the trucking industry.

And creating a new task force to investigate predatory trucking leasing arrangements with the Department of Labor, the Consumer Finance Bureau -- Protection Bureau -- and the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau.

Beginning two studies to explore the issues of truck driver pay and unpaid detention time.

And launching the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot -- an under-[21] pilot program for truck drivers.

All of this is an effort to expand the number of truck drivers we have so we can move more goods, get more good onto the shelves, lower prices for American people.

One more item for all of you.

This Saturday, January 15th, is the last day to sign up for the quality, affordable healthcare coverage on Healthcare.gov. A record 14.2 million people have enrolled since the start of open enrollment on November 1st on Healthcare.gov alone. Four out of five consumers are finding quality coverage for less than \$10 per month.

And a new HHS report out today found that, thanks to the American Rescue Plan, a majority of Healthcare.gov enrollees are also receiving subsidies to cut their co-pays, deductibles, and other out-of-pocket spending.

To be -- be sure to go to Healthcare.gov, anyone listening, before midnight on January 15th and get covered.

With that, Zeke, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks, Jen. My inbox is usually pretty fast, but I was hoping you can give us that reaction to the Supreme Court opinions.

And on the substance of the matter there, how -- how much of a blow is this to the administration's plan -- pandemic response plan that the employer mandate part of the testing or vaccination mandate struck or halted? And how will that affect the course of the pandemic?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I know there'll be a -- the statement from the President that should be coming into your inboxes any moment now. But let me -- let me give you a quick reaction.

First, let me start with some good news -- news that maybe isn't getting enough attention yet. That's our jobs here -- or my job here, I should say.

CMS's requirements for healthcare workers to be vaccinated will save the lives of patients, as well as the lives of doctors

OSHA's requirements for healthcare workers to be vaccinated will save the lives of patients, as well as the lives of doctors, nurses, and others who work in healthcare settings. It will cover 17 million healthcare workers at 76,000 medical facilities. The Supreme Court upheld it, and we will enforce that.

The Senate -- the Supreme Court's decision on the OSHA mandate essentially means that in the pandemic, it is up to individual employers to determine whether their workplaces will be safe for employees and whether their businesses will be safe for consumers.

So, President Biden -- and you'll see this in his statement -- will be calling on and will continue to call on businesses to immediately join those who have already stepped up, including one third of Fortune 100 companies, to institute vaccination requirements to protect their workers, customers, and communities.

We have to keep working together in order to get this done to save more lives.

I would note that there are a couple of signs -- good signs, in terms of -- without this -- even in spite of the ruling, that we would point to.

One is that 57 percent, according to a Navigator poll, of Americans support vaccine requirements. According to a Willis Towers Watson's report -- a survey of 534 U.S. employers -- a majority -- 57 percent of respondents -- have or will require their employees to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Why? Because nearly -- because employees want to feel safe in the workplace, because they want to incentivize workers to come back to the workplace, and because they've seen large companies across the country implement this and see how effective it is.

Q Another adjacent COVID topic: The President announced today that he's going to announce next week that he's going to be shipping -- the U.S. government is going to be making free, high-quality N95s available to Americans. There's this -- the new testing website, which is launching next -- website.

Why is it -- you know, middle of January right now, when a million Americans are testing positive for COVID a day, roughly -- you know, why is the President taking these steps now? Why didn't he take these three months ago?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me -- let me first say that what the President -- what we've been working to implement is building on the steps we've taken over the last six months and more.

Remember, when the President took office, there was zero or one approved testing -- at-home testing option on the market. Now there are nine. We needed to expand the market capacity.

The President used the Defense Production Act -- \$3 billion invested -- to expand that market. The reason he was able to announce the purchase of or the plan to purchase an additional 500 million beyond the 500 million we'd already announced is because of the expansion of the market. And just since last summer, leading up to December, we had quadrupled the size of the market.

So, if you look at the comparison, right now, we're doing almost 12 million tests a day in this country. We were doing under 2 million tests a day a year ago.

There's about 300 million tests that are happening in this country every single day, in part because there's 20,000 sites; because there are federal sites now across the country -- new ones we announce every day; because we've sent 50 million tests to community health centers.

So, all of this is an effort to build on that and make sure that that capacity and need -- and we're meeting the unprecedented demand for tests.

Q But the Pre- -- these are steps that the President has taken now because there was an unmet need. Presumably, he could have done the exact same thing three months ago when, you know, maybe it would be in effect now when the need is obviously greater than -- than is -- than the system has capacity to deliver right now.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, Zeke, that, again, because of the steps we've taken, we're able to -- there's 300 million tests that are happening in this country every single month. And that is enormous progress. We're not starting from zero. That is my point. So this is building on that.

But in terms of the number of tests available in the market and the expansion of the market, remember, a number of them were just approved at the end of October or beginning of November. The -- using the Defense Production Act means we needed to ensure there was manufacturing capacity and build on that. This is all building -- a building process. And we're continuing to expand and build from here.

I would also note that, in recent polls, despite some of the conversations we have in here, it's less than 10 percent of the American public that can't find a test. We've expanded capacity, and you're seeing the impact of that across the country.

Q And then just lastly on the -- on the voting push. I'm just -- you know, we've heard a lot from the President talking about Republican-controlled states taking actions to limit -- ease -- have access to the polls. I'm wondering -- election laws, we know, differ from state to state, jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Has the President ever reached out to Democratic states and -- you know, states like New York that don't have, you know, early in-person voting, or New Jersey or Delaware that have some different laws that exist, you know, maybe down south -- and call to -- or encourage them to loosen their voting laws to bring them in line with some of the restrictions he doesn't -- he's objecting to being rolled back right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think -- look, I think the President's view on expanding access to voting, whether it's the expansion of early voting or the number of mail-in voting boxes -- steps we know works to increase the participation of people in the process -- is something -- it's very well known that he partic- -- that he view- -- that he strongly supports.

The DNC typically does a lot of the outreach on election implementation. But I don't think it's a secret where the President stands. And, certainly, you heard him say that earlier this week and convey it again on Capitol Hill today.

Q Could you talk about --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q -- give us a few details on what the back-and-forth was like for the President and the senators at the lunch? He sounded pretty frustrated when he came out.

MS. PSAKI: I think he sounded passionate. That's what I saw and heard.

Look, I think the President conveyed directly to the caucus what many people heard him say across the country a couple of days ago: that now we face a system -- a systematic effort to dismantle democracy -- not just voter suppression, but subversion. You heard him say that when he came out and spoke to -- spoke after he left the meeting. He conveyed that this is a historic chance to save our democracy, need to protect the fundamental form of American government. And his view is this should absolutely be bipartisan.

I know we've talked a bit about the history of Senator McConnell's support multiple times over -- writing about it in his book -- for voting rights in the past.

There are 16 Republicans serving now who supported voting rights in the past; even, as the President has said, Strom Thurmond back -- did back in the '80s. Obviously, he's not serving today, but just as an example. So that's part of the point he made.

Also, I think it's important for everybody to understand that his view is that he would put his record of standing up for the history of the Senate, the institution of the Senate, the rules of the Senate up against anyone's -- Democrat, Republican, anyone serving today and before then. But his view is that it's a time -- there are times in history -- now is one of them -- where you can't allow the protection of process to get in the way of protecting people's fundamental rights. And that is also an argument that he made today to the caucus.

Q But what happens now with the legislation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Leader Schumer has obviously conveyed what his plan and his path forward is. And I think members are going to have an opportunity to vote and decide and determine what side of history they want to be on.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Did Senator Sinema's remarks on the floor today come as a surprise to President Biden, or had she conveyed them in private to the President or to the White House?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into private conversations with any senator, including Senator Sinema.

Q Can you tell us the last time they spoke one on one?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into more details about private conversations.

Q Okay. During his first press conference last March, the President was asked if there was anything he could do to protect voting rights outside of passing legislation. At the time, he said: Yes, but I don't want to reveal my strategy. Now, can you tell us whether the White House has identified any more executive actions that the President can and plans to take?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say the President did sign a historic executive order early on in his presidency. Also, since that period of time, I believe the Department of Justice has doubled their funding and support for protection of voting rights in states. Obviously, the -- he has spoken about this issue very vocally, in recent months since that period of time, multiple times as well.

The Vice President has been leading this effort to gather support across the country. And we're, of course, going to continue to look for ways to protect people's fundamental rights.

The next step is, of course, these votes in the Senate.

Q I have a question about a video that Iran's Supreme Leader posted on his website that appears to show a robot conducting a drone strike, killing the former president at his Mar-a-Lago golf club. Is the intelligence community assessing this threat and working with former President Trump to offer protection of any kind?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speak to the work of our intelligence community. Obviously, the -- the kind of rhetoric or video from the Supreme Leader is something that we've seen -- you know, offensive -- offensive rhetoric and behavior in the past. But I'm not going to speak to more specifics of internal discussions.

Q But are you aware of the video?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more details on it.

Q Okay. And then one more for a colleague who's not here. The embassy in Baghdad -- the U.S. Embassy just tweeted about an attack that happened there. Do you have any details or any response?

MS. PSAKI: I don't. This may have just recently happened. I don't have any more details, but we can venture to get you something after the briefing.

Q Okay. Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Back on the Supreme Court's decision: More than 80 million people would have been affected by this vaccine and testing mandate. So, what kind of impact does this decision have on the broader effort just to get COVID under control?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we're already looking at this point in time of more than 71 percent of people have had both shots that -- to make them fully protected. Obviously, we're encouraging people, of course, to get boosted. More than 80 percent -- 83 percent, I believe, at this point, have had their first shot. We're going to continue to work full speed at doing that.

Obviously, this was a step that we announced, and we had every intention of implementing because we knew that it was the point where putting in place requirements in the workplace would help get more people vaccinated.

The good news is that a number of companies have already decided to do that, and do that successfully. And the work and the effort is really going to be on their shoulder. So, really, it's going to depend on how effective that is.

Q And your message to employees and workers who may see this decision and be concerned about what comes next for them?

MS. PSAKI: Our message is that we're going to continue to work with employers across the country and continue to convey very clearly what the benefit of vaccin- -- vaccine or testing requirements would be on workplaces, both as many companies struggle to fill their workplaces, struggle to bring -- bring people back to the workplace -- people who are concerned about their safety that this would -- is an effective measure. And there are many models across the country to implement it.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Should we expect the administration to try to issue a more targeted mandate following the Supreme Court ruling today?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any additional predictions of next steps here.

Q But are you going to try this again, or is -- are you accepting what the Supreme Court decided?

MS. PSAKI: Again, they just decided -- any legal action, I'd obviously defer to the Department of Justice.

But at this point in time, what we are encouraging private sector companies to do is to take steps that have effectively worked around the country that many -- the vast majority of employers -- have indicated they have the intention to do.

Q Okay. And when it comes to the lunch that happened today, Senator Sinema -- before the President got up there -- reiterated that she does not want to change the 60-vote threshold. Senator Manchin just said now in a statement that he does not want to change that. Has the President accepted that he cannot sway them when it comes to changing the filibuster and creating an exception?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're going to keep fighting until the votes are had.

Q But they have said today that they are not changing their positions, despite an appeal directly from the President.

MS. PSAKI: And the President spoke to this after. Look, his job is to take on tough challenges, to speak out for what's right. And he thinks making changes to the rules in order to get voting rights passed and protect people's fundamental rights is right.

We'll leave it to Leader Schumer on what the next steps are and what the process is from here. But we are going to keep having meetings, keep having calls. And that will be what the President's focus will be.

Q What was his response to seeing Senator Sinema come out just a few minutes before he got up there, when she knew what he was coming to talk about, and say that she did not support it?

MS. PSAKI: I think the President was most focused on speaking directly to the caucus, not on her comments.

Go ahead.

Q So, what is the President's -- I guess, the administration's backup plan when it comes to voting rights and getting legislation passed? Is there a backup plan?

MS. PSAKI: As you heard the President say when he came out of the caucus meeting: We're going to keep at it. We're going to stay at it. The President is not --

Q But what does that mean, I guess, is what people would like to know.

MS. PSAKI: That means, Kaitlan, that any piece of legislation that's ever passed -- that's hard, that's difficult -- goes through a -- goes through some ups and downs and goes through some challenges. That doesn't mean you give up. That's not what leadership is. Leadership is continuing to fight for what's right, continuing to fight to get something done. That means sometimes it fails.

We don't know what will happen next. That means sometimes there are gaps between when you get to move forward. We're going to have to determine what the next steps are.

But in the meantime, the President is going to continue to make calls. He's going to continue to engage with his colleagues, and that's where his focus is on at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. I have a couple specific ones, but I wanted to kind of follow on that. As you're determining next steps -- I mean, frankly, things just seem like they're going pretty poorly right now for the White House. You know, Build Back Better is being blocked. Voting rights is being blocked. Diplomatic talks with Russia doesn't seem to have brought us back from the brink of war. Inflation is at a 40-year high. The virus is setting records for infection.

So, as we kind of hit this one-year period, and a period where everything seems like it's in pretty rough shape, or nearly everything -- which is not an invitation, I guess, to list off some other things -- I'm wondering, at what point do you take stock and say that things need to change internally, whether it's your outreach with the Hill, whether it's the leadership within the White House. You seem to be stymied on an incredible number of fronts right now.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me give you a little bit of a different take on this. More than 200 million people are vaccinated. We've had record job growth, record low unemployment rates -- historically, in this country, over the last year. We've rebuilt our alliances and our relationships around the world. And right now, as it relates to Russia, as you heard our National Security Advisor convey, we're working with partners around the world to convey very clearly: It's up to them to make a choice about what's next. We're not going to make that on their behalf. It's up to them to determine if there are going to be crippling economic sanctions or not, or -- if they decide to move forward.

But we also recognize when you have a small margin and threshold in the Senate, it's very difficult to get things done and to get legislation passed. And the fact that the President, under his leadership, got the American Rescue Plan passed, a Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill with 19 [Republican] votes in the Senate, about 6 [Republican] votes in the House. The fact that we are still continuing to work with members to determine the path forward on Build Back Better; that we have the vast majority of Democrats in the Senate supporting voting rights. That's a path forward for us.

And our effort is to do hard things, try hard things, and keep at it. So, we just don't see it through the same prism.

Q So, the sense is things are going well; there's no need for change right now?

MS. PSAKI: I think that having worked in a White House before, you do hard things in White Houses. You have every challenge at your feet -- laid at your feet, whether it's global or domestically.

And we could certainly propose legislation to see if people support bunny rabbits and ice cream, but that wouldn't be very rewarding to the American people.

So, the President's view is we're going to keep pushing for hard things, and we're going to keep pushing the boulders up the hill to get it done.

Q And just two quick things. The President announced the distribution of high-quality masks earlier today. That's been kind of a vague and undefined phrase. I understand "well-fitting" -- like what that literally means. But in terms of the masks that you're trying to procure, do you have a sense of the N95s, KN95s in that universe, or is it just, "We're not quite there in the process"?

MS. PSAKI: We'll have more, I expect, in the coming days on that. And -- but right now, just so people understand the backstory here -- the history, I should say -- is we've distributed more than 30 million masks to food banks and community health centers; states have been doing that as well. We have a stockpile of 700 million high-quality masks in the government, and they're also widely available across the country.

So, what we're talking about here is making high-quality masks, as you know, available to the American people for free. There are a lot of ranges of high-quality masks. I think we'll have more details on that -- on what that looks like next week.

Q And then, I know you're limited a little bit about what you can say about politics from the podium, but the RNC said today that they would ask their candidates not to participate in debates held by the commission that has done it for the last few decades. Do you or the President have any reaction to that move by the RNC?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has participated in many debates over the course of his career and believes they play a role in allowing the American people to hear from candidates on where they stand. So, I think it's more pose- -- a question best posed to the RNC on what they're so afraid of.

Q Would he participate in a debate that was -- he's planning to run for reelection, at least he said. And would he -- would he participate in a debate outside of the commission (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the DNC for that and any more specifics.

Go ahead.

Q The President, when he spoke to reporters after the Senate lunch today, he spoke about the voting rights push in the past tense. He said, "We missed this time." What then is the political value in moving forward with these "show votes," given that the President effectively has acknowledged that this process has ended, and risk potentially shining a light on Democratic divisions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you all can count who's for and against each vote, whether it's changes to the -- to the Senate rules or supporting these voting bills themselves. And I think it's very -- people publicly know where senators stand at this point in time.

I will leave it to -- we will leave it to and we'll work in lockstep with him -- Leader Schumer to determine what this next steps are here. And I know he's spoken a bit to that.

But ultimately, this is about continuing to press to move forward on the protection of voting rights and to use it as a moment to elevate this issue as an important issue for people across the country. And, of course, any new senator is going to be put in the position of determining what side of history they're going to stand on. And that's, I guess, the purpose of a vote.

Q The President also spoke about voter subversion when he spoke to reporters.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But neither the Freedom to Vote Act nor the John Lewis Voting Rights Act deal with subversion; they're focused more on suppression. Would the President want to see Democrats, if this process does move forward in the future, address laws in these 19 states, some of which would potentially allow for the overturning of a free and fair election?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, actually in Section 112, actually makes it illegal for state officials to willfully fail [sic] -- or "fail or refuse to certify the aggregate tabulations of...votes or certify the election of the candidates receiving sufficient such votes to be elected to office."

That is obviously addressing a root problem we're seeing in laws in many states across the country. And what these laws are meant to do is provide some fundamental baselines for protections for voters, and that's an important part of doing it.

Obviously, there's more you will continue to build from there, but that's an important component, I think, that sometimes everyone isn't always aware of in the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q One unrelated question about the U.S. Postal Service. Yesterday, the Board of Governors elected a new chairman, someone who has expressed support for Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who, as you know, has had a very controversial tenure.

What's the White House position on the persistent delivery delays that the Postal Service seems to be experiencing, at least anecdotally, and DeJoy's current place as Postmaster General? Does he deserve to have that role?

MS. PSAKI: You know how I love anecdotal data. I will tell you that, going back to the holidays, 97 or 98 percent of packages from the Postal Service were delivered on time. So, there may be anecdotes from that 1 or 2 percent, but those are -- that's actual data.

Q There are delays region by region, but I take your point.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, but 97, 98 percent across the country.

We have expressed concerns in the past about delays leadership that -- delay, sorry -- DeJoy -- that was a little slip there -- DeJoy's leadership in the past. That has not changed.

I will say, though -- and I know this has been raised, so I'm just going to use it as an opportunity to address it -- that many

members of the Postal Service, including leadership, has expressed confidence and an interest in playing the role in delivering tests to people across the country and their confidence in doing exactly that.

So, we take them at their word. And certainly, we're encouraged by the data we saw from December.

Go ahead, April. Oh, April, let me first say: Twenty-five years covering the White House. That's pretty significant. (Applause.)

I don't have a song for this, but -- just congratulations.

Q You don't have a song?

MS. PSAKI: I mean, I'm a terrible singer, so we don't want that anyway.

Go ahead.

Q But you know what you could give me? An interview with the President because (inaudible). (Laughter.)

Q It's on the record.

Q On the record. Right, right. (Laughter.)

On another issue, Jen: the issue of policing. As you're working on voting rights, we understand simultaneously you're working diligently on this executive order to bring more teeth into protections for people -- Americans, particularly minorities, who are dying at the hands of bad policing. What is different with this executive order versus what could have happened on Capitol Hill? We understand the laws have no teeth, but I understand that you guys are working to bring more teeth into these executive orders. Talk to me about that.

MS. PSAKI: It's a great question, April. And as you know from covering this closely, we were kind of waiting on any executive orders out of the -- out of deference to the negotiations that were happening in a bipartisan manner. And, of course, we believe that the ability, especially in a bipartisan way, when possible, to move forward on legislation makes it permanent. Right? And that is not the case, of course, with executive orders.

In terms of the specific details, there are -- they are under discussion. I just don't have anything I can outline for you at this moment because there's an internal policy discussion.

Q So, I understand there's a sense of urgency on it. I was told from one source it was "days," and then another said it could be "weeks," but it's happening soon. Why the sense of urgency right now, especially when you're dealing with voting rights, trying to figure that out as well?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I think there's a recognition and a commitment by the President to deliver on what he promised. And, of course, we're very supportive of the efforts to negotiate police reform on a bipartisan level. Obviously, that didn't move forward as we would have hoped. And so, there's -- there's a legal process, a substantive process that it has to go through in the consideration of executive order. That's ongoing.

It is hard to predict the timing of that, so I don't want to do that from here. But it's a -- it's a reflection of the President's commitment to delivering on his promise.

Q And last question. When candidate -- or President-elect, I guess you could say -- Joe Biden was building his Cabinet, he specifically singled out Marcia Fudge for her work and the fact that she was one of the presidents of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated that is having its Founders Day. He talked about the great work that the sorority does.

What does he have for the Delta sorority -- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated today, as they're celebrating Founders Day, since he knows about them so well?

MS. PSAKI: Of course. Well, the President wishes the women of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated a happy 109th Founders Day and many more years of academic excellence and service to those who are members.

The President has been very vocal of his support, as you noted, April, for Delta Sigma Theta and all Divine Nine sororities and fraternities. In October, Vice President Harris hosted a historic meeting of the Divine Nine Councils of -- Council of Presidents at the White House, which included immediate past president Beverly Smith.

And we're incredibly grateful to the work -- he is -- Delta Sigma Theta has done to uplift communities across the world, especially the hard work of former national president and current HUD Secretary, Marcia Fudge, and the women of Delta Sigma Theta who work on behalf of the American people in the Biden-Harris administration each and every day, of which I hear there are a few.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. Also a "one year" kind of question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q When you listen to the President's inauguration address, you hear the words "unity" and you hear "better angels" of America. We didn't hear these words in his speeches at the Capitol or in Georgia. Does it mean that he has changed his state of mind and that he thinks that America can't be unified anymore?

MS. PSAKI: No, actually quite the contrary. I mean, the President believes that protecting people's fundamental rights to vote and participate in the process, whether you're a Democrat, a Republican, an independent -- whatever party you are a member of -- that that is not a partisan issue. It should be a unifying issue.

And that is why he reflected, when he went to the caucus today, on the fact that there are 16 Republicans who have supported voting rights in the past, because it has not been historically a partisan issue. And he's not prejudging who people support; he is trying to protect people's ability to participate in the process.

Q Okay. And maybe just a quick follow-up, if I may. With the Congress as it is, with the Supreme Court as it is, what's the way forward for the rest of the mandate? Is it more executive orders? Is it smaller steps rather than, you know, take transformative reforms? What's -- you know, what's the idea?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's a big question. But -- (laughs) -- I would say -- I would say that the President has had -- we feel we've had a lot of success over the past year getting the economy back on stronger footing, getting 200 million Americans vaccinated, getting a Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill passed, rebuilding our relationships in the world and America's standing in the world.

And what we want to do now is build on that in year two. That means continuing to press to get voting rights done, to get Build Back Better done. There are -- to get CHIPS funding passed so we can ensure that manufacturing happens in the United States.

So, of course, there are still big, bold pieces of the President's agenda he wants to get done. And he's going to keep fighting for it.

It is also true that it is challenging to move things forward with such a small margin in Congress. And he is very well aware of that; we've been living it for almost a year now.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, a testing question and then a couple from pool colleagues who --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- couldn't be here.

The President mentioned the other 500 million tests --

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q -- that are now in the works. Can you give us any sense on timeline: when you're looking at contracts, when you're looking at delivery, when people will actually end up seeing them after they see this first half billion?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So -- well, I had said earlier this week that we were looking to finalize our contracts for the first 500 million within the two weeks. I can give you an update that now we're at the point where we've procured about 380 million of those tests. And we're going to continue to build from there.

So the plan is to -- you know, we feel we're making very strong progress, of course. And after we conclude this phase, we will begin awarding contracts for today's announcement, and we'll continue to proceed from there.

Q So can you give a rough ballpark on when that second half a billion might --

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. We may be able to as we kind of proceed in the process, as we have done with the first 500 million. But I don't have a specific update yet at this point in time -- just a status update on the first 500 million. And obviously when we make -- when we conclude this phase, we'll move to the next 500 million.

Q You had mentioned earlier in the briefing that less than 10 percent of the population is now having trouble finding a test. Can you kind of (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I said there was a recent poll. I'm happy to tweet it after the briefing if you'd like, to make it available to all of you. I think it was a YouGov poll.

Q We still see -- we know how much you love anecdotal data -- but people talking about the long waits, people talking about CVS, et cetera, et cetera.

The President made it a point to say testing has gotten so much better today. But that would be pretty stark if it's now 1 in 10 Americans claiming that they're (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Well, I said a "recent poll," which I think is just important to note, because obviously what we've been doing to date and where we are at this point in time is 300 million tests every single month. That is a lot of tests. And sometimes you would think that no one is able to get a test and no one is being tested when nearly 12 million people are being tested every day.

At the same time, as I have said, as the President has said, we want to do more, and we are continuing to do more. And that's why we're running this expedited process to procure more tests to ensure they're free, they're accessible, and they're available to people across the country.

Q And two --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q -- from radio pool colleagues --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- if you will. The FAA ground stop earlier this week, on the heels of the North Korean missile test, can you give us an idea of what information you all have about that? And is there a fear that these tests -- North Korean tests may actually pose some type of danger or issue for U.S. civil aviation?

MS. PSAKI: I believe the FAA has spoken to this and taken kind of a look back at what happened. I think it was a 15-minute ground stop. And they have reflected on the procedures that happened and taken a look for them moving forward.

I would note that our national security and, most importantly, our defense officials across the country, after those tests, conveyed that no officials were at risk. So I'd really point you to the FAA as they assess that decision last week -- or earlier this week, sorry.

Q One last one.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, go ahead.

Q The Committee to Protect Journalists report questioning -- saying freedom advocates are concerned with your administration in terms of access to the President for reporters, timely responses -- you know, the requests we have (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: Timely responses from our press office?

Q From the press office --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, I'm surprised to hear that.

Q -- to various queries on various topics.

MS. PSAKI: "To queries." Okay.

Q Slow responses to requests for information -- let me (inaudible) from that.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q The request to extradite Julian Assange, the restrictions on access to the media at the southern border, limited help for Afghan journalists. Can you give us a comment, from your perspective, on how you see those things playing out and what some of these criticisms are?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven't read the report. But let me -- well, I would say, broadly speaking, that when I spoke with the President about this job, I mean, one of our -- one of the things he conveyed to me very clearly was resetting the tone with the media was a big priority for him, and ensuring that there was a respect even when there's a point of contention or a difficult conversation, or a back-and-forth -- that that is part of democracy.

But our objective is to -- has been to re-instill normalcy and engagement with reporters, whether we agree or disagree, whether there is a partisan tilt to an outlet or not. And I think we have conducted ourselves accordingly.

And always we're working to continue to be responsive. I would say -- I would -- I would say to inquiries of probably tens of thousands, if not more, does not to me sound like a data point, but I will look closer at the report.

or thousands, if not more, does not to me sound like a data point, but I will look closer at the report.

The other thing I would say is that, you know, the President has taken questions at about two hundred- -- on about 250 occasions over the past year. If you average about three questions per time, that's about 750 questions he's taken. That does not include the formal press conference he did in March, other press conferences he's done. That's about three. So let's say 1,000, just to be generous there. That's about three questions a day.

I think the American people have seen him out there answering questions. He will continue to be. That's an important part of his engagement with the press and the public, and that will be a part of how we continue to conduct ourselves.

Go ahead, James.

Q Thank you very much, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

Q I want to ask one on the economy and one on the pandemic, if you don't mind.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q On the economy: In yesterday's briefing with Mr. Deese and in today's briefing, you have both cited economic metrics that showed great progress across 2021, from the unemployment rate to job creation to a rise in real household income. And when citing the progress in those areas, both you and Mr. Deese attributed that progress to specific administration policies and legislative initiatives.

Yet, when it came to the highest inflation in 40 years, both you and Mr. Deese attributed this to a variety of external factors, from the pandemic to supply chain constraints to inaction by the Congress on Build Back Better.

So, to be clear, for the American people in this midterm year who are going to be assessing the performance of the President and his party, where specifically inflation is concerned, does the buck stop with the President?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, James, first that the President has spoken to the fact that costs for Americans and the squeeze that puts on Americans is a top concern for him. And I think Brian Deese also conveyed that yesterday. And that's why he put in place a Supply Chain Task Force; why we've prioritized taking steps, including having a port czar, including ensuring there are more truckers on the roads, to ensure there are more goods moving and more goods on the shelves. And we've made a lot of progress in that regard.

Of course that's his responsibility and the responsibility of the economic team.

I also think it's notable that if you go back to earlier ~~this~~ [last] year, there were not the projections of the economic growth we have seen or the decrease in the unemployment rate we have seen. And that is, in part -- not just according to us, but many outside economists -- to the bills that have passed, some of them bipartisan, and the work of this administration to get the economy up and going again and address COVID.

Q So your answer is: Yes, he owns the job creation, he owns the low unemployment rate, and he also owns inflation. Correct?

MS. PSAKI: I think any president should own everything happening in the country. And the President certainly sees it that way.

Q To the pandemic: The President's remarks this morning included yet another exhortation to the unvaccinated population to get vaccinated. He has, since assuming office, made dozens and dozens, perhaps hundreds, of these kinds of appeals to that particular population. Do you have any evidence -- indeed, do you have any sound basis for determining at

appears to that particular population. Do you have any evidence -- indeed, do you have any sound basis for determining at all whether he is having any success in urging that population to do as he counsels?

MS. PSAKI: We do. If you go back to December of 2020, just over 30 percent, maybe 35 percent of people in this country was open to getting vaccinated. Now we're at the point where more than 80 percent of the country has gotten at least one dose.

What the President also recognizes is that he's not always the most effective messenger. Everybody in the country is not looking for him to tell them what to do. He certainly knows that.

What's most important here is for people hearing from local leaders, pediatricians in some cases, doctors, people who have different political beliefs out there conveying clear, accurate information about the effectiveness of these vaccines. We think all of that has had an impact. And a lot of that is stuff that we've implemented.

Q But how do we know that 35 percent of the American population was willing to get vaccinated a year ago?

MS. PSAKI: I can give you the data. I'm happy to give that to you after the briefing. It was a public -- public poll.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have two questions. One on Haiti, the other one on Canada.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The first one, on Haiti: Yesterday was the 12th anniversary of the terrible earthquake of 2010. The effects are still being felt over there. How has the administration -- or has the administration followed up on the deporta- -- deport- -- the migrants that were deported last fall, back -- the thousands of them that were repor- -- deported over there?

MS. PSAKI: Related to the earthquake? I'm --

Q Not related to the earthquake. But considering the situation over there -- 12 years later, what kind of follow-up has been done with the migrants that were sent back last fall?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a very large presence on the ground -- a diplomatic presence on the ground in Haiti, and that has continued to be the case. We are also the lar- -- one of the largest, if not the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to Haiti, through NGOs and many outside groups, in order to provide assistance for the range of challenges that people in Haiti have gone through from earthquakes or natural disasters to, obviously, the challenge -- the challenge of the -- that the assassination of their leader that happened this past summer.

So, we will continue to be providers of humanitarian assistance. Our diplomatic presence there is on the ground and working closely with trusted leaders in the region -- in the country. And we will -- we remain committed to that.

Q But you haven't been -- the Americans on the ground, the officials on the ground haven't been in contact with the Haitians who have been deported from Texas, for instance, last fall?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I -- again, I would say we have a diplomatic presence on the ground that's in touch with a range of Haitians who either have been sent back or who need help and assistance. And we work closely with local authorities to make sure that the humanitarian assistance is getting exactly to the people who need it.

Q Okay. On Canada, Jen, I just want to check something with you. Considering the multiple recent trade setbacks with the U.S. -- the Conservative leader in Canada this week claimed that the U.S.-Canada relationship is at its lowest point in

the U.S., the conservative leader in Canada this week claimed that the U.S.-Canada relationship is at its lowest point in decades. How do you see this?

MS. PSAKI: We don't see it that way. We view Canada as an important neighbor, an important partner, a country we are aligned on in many democratic values, we work with on a range of issues facing the global community. And that is certainly the view of our government here.

Q You don't feel a frustration towards, for instance, the fact that the Buy America measures are still imposed, actually, more strictly under this administration?

MS. PSAKI: We are certainly familiar with the frustrations of some leaders who were -- who have been outspoken about it and spoke to it when they were here.

And I would just reiterate that our objective here is to make -- to make electric vehicles, specifically, more accessible to Americans, to lower the cost here for Americans. And that is why the President pushed so hard for those provisions.

But we see Canada -- continue to see Canada as an important partner in the world.

Go ahead.

Q Just on the President's first anniversary in office: What does he regard as his single-most important achievement? And does he acknowledge that any mistakes have been made? And if so, what's the biggest mistake?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that, you know, the President is very proud of the progress we've made in getting 200 million Americans vaccinated, very proud of the work we have done to cut the childhood poverty by 40 percent to help Americans who needed a little extra help get by through a challenging economic time, the work we did to get a Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill passed, and to rebuild our place in the world.

There are many others: I think confirming -- nominating and confirming historic judges across the board, ensuring that our administration up and down the ranks looks like America. And I could go on from there. Fighting to take steps on climate in a historic manner; that has been more than any administration in the past.

In terms of -- in terms of what we look back, you know, I'm not going to speculate on that from here. I will -- I will let the President speak to that the next time you all see him.

Q But did he underestimate Donald Trump's continued grip on the Republican Party and how difficult that would make it to work across the aisle and unite the nation?

MS. PSAKI: You know, I will tell you that hearing Kevin McCarthy talk today, for an example, and seeing what he said on January 21st last year is a pretty stark reminder of how much sway the former president has over members of his party.

I think that's disappointing for everybody, not just people who work here.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I wanted to ask a question from some colleagues who couldn't be here.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q And then -- and then before I get to that, I wanted to follow up on a question that Justin asked.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The President was in the Senate for 36 years.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q We're at a point where his legislative agenda on Build Back Better and the Voting Rights Act has hit major roadblocks. Is there some introspection that his approach to the Senate is not working? And is he -- are there changes that he's making to his approach to the Senate, given his experience there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would also point to his experience leading him to stay focused and committed to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill -- something that many said could never happen. And when it was voted on, 19 Republicans voted for it. He leaned on his experience in the Senate to get that done. He leaned on his experience in the Senate to get the American Rescue Plan done and passed into law.

And he will continue to lean on a Sen- -- on his experience in the Senate and as for- -- as a former Vice President to press for voting rights legislation, to press for Build Back Better, and getting those pieces of legislation done.

So, I would say, you know, the successes we had in the past year and that he had, despite the fact that there was a slim margin, are actually -- I mean, I guess I'm biased -- but pretty impressive given the margin we had in the Senate and the challenges we had up against us.

Q Given that he's ending his first year underwater in the polls, Americans -- more Americans disapprove of his job in office than approve of his job in office -- what is he planning to do differently in the approach to the job in the second year that shows that he's listening to that disapproval?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what you see in most of these polls is a real frustration and exhaustion with COVID, and the fact that it is not over. We share that. We understand that. People are fatigued across the country. It's impacting how they live, how they work. There are worries about their kids -- their ability to experience joyful things in life, like concerts and going to restaurants and seeing friends. We understand that.

The President knows that the best, most important step he can take is to continue to fight to get the pandemic under control, and also to lower costs for Americans across the country.

So, I would say it's a continuation of the fights that he built a great deal of a base for over the course of the last year.

Q So the President doesn't think that the disapproval rates are a reflection of the way he's approached the job?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I would point you to what most data shows you, which is a frustration about COVID and prices. And he believes -- and he's believed from the beginning that addressing COVID and the economy are number two -- one, two, three, four issues. And that continues to be the case today.

Q And just a couple questions from a colleague who couldn't be here. Do Biden and Putin have plans to meet in the future?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to predict for you on that front. As Jake mentioned, we're just, of course, concluding the third round of talks. People are going to go back to their capitals. They're going to discuss and assess and see where things stand.

So, in terms of next steps, we'll have to see. We'll know more over the coming days.

Q In those talks, is there a deadline for Moscow to de-escalate in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to set any deadlines here. Ultimately, the choice is really up to them. Are they going to

proceed in in invading Ukraine?

If so, there are going to be severe consequences and economic impacts that will be devastating to the economy there, long - far beyond what happened in 2014. If that s a choice they want to make and they think that s to their advantage, that s a choice they -- they only have -- only they have the power to make that.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

4:29 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against UAE
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 17, 2022 2:18 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 17, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against UAE

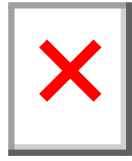
The United States strongly condemns today's terrorist attack in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, which killed three innocent civilians. The Houthis have claimed responsibility for this attack, and we will work with the UAE and international partners to hold them accountable. Our commitment to the security of the UAE is unwavering and we stand beside our Emirati partners against all threats to their territory.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with B9 Counterparts
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 20, 2022 1:09 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with B9 Counterparts

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with National Security Advisors, Foreign Ministers, and other officials from the Bucharest Nine (B9) group of our eastern flank NATO Allies. Mr. Sullivan briefed on U.S. diplomatic efforts related to Russia's destabilizing military buildup along Ukraine's border, including Secretary Blinken's upcoming meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, and welcomed continued close coordination with the B9 countries on NATO deterrence and defense efforts. Participants underscored the importance of Transatlantic unity, which is our greatest strength. They also emphasized their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression, including through continued provision of defensive assistance.

The Bucharest Nine members are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat Akiba Takeo
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 20, 2022 1:13 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2022

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat Akiba Takeo

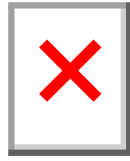
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with Akiba Takeo, Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat, to prepare for the President's meeting on January 21 with Prime Minister Kishida and to discuss the ongoing situation in Russia and Ukraine. The two discussed key issues in the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and our respective approaches to North Korea, China, and economic issues in the Indo-Pacific. Sullivan underscored concern about the possibility of further Russian aggression in Ukraine, and the two concurred on the importance of solidarity in signaling to Moscow the strong, united response that would result from any attack.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials On the Summit of the Americas
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 20, 2022 3:23 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2022

Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials On the Summit of the Americas

11:05 A.M. EST

MODERATOR: Thank you, Tom. And good morning, everyone. This is an on-background briefing to discuss the Summit for the Americas announcement that we made Tuesday evening and the Biden-Harris administration's priorities in the Western Hemisphere.

For your reference today, our speaker is [senior administration official], but from this point on, we ask that you refer to him as a "senior administration official."

We'll start with some initial remarks from him, and then we'll open it up for our question-and-answer. The call contents will just be embargoed until the end of the call. By participating in this call, you are agreeing to these ground rules.

And with that, I'll turn it over to our senior administration official.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Great. Thank you, [senior administration official]. And Happy New Year, everybody. I am very excited to talk with you today now that we have announced the city and dates for the Summit of the Americas -- the ninth Summit of the Americas -- which will be June 6th through 10th in Los Angeles, California.

And so, what I intend to do here is talk a little bit about the summit and then use it also as an opportunities as I run through the priorities that the White House is going to advance in the run up to the summit; talk a little bit about what we've accomplished this year and how the summit priorities really look to further advance this administration's agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

So, first, as I mentioned, we're very excited to partner with the City of Los Angeles -- Mayor Garcetti, Governor Newsom -

- to convene this meeting of our hemisphere's leaders. It'll be the first time that the United States has hosted the summit since the inaugural meeting in Miami in 1994. And it is incredibly -- incredible opportunity to reflect on what have -- what we've accomplished over the last 20 or so years since the last summit.

Briefly, what I'll -- I'll mention, if you read President Clinton's speech from 1994, which I highly recommend to everybody, it is a very ambitious and optimistic laydown of our relationship with the hemisphere and the opportunities for the countries of the Western Hemisphere. However, it is also stark how far we still are from the promise of the summit: greater integration; greater economic -- broad-based economic prosperity; lower inequality; the promise of citizen security; and the consolidation of this hemisphere consensus in favor of democracy.

Today, it's easy to think that all of that is at risk. And so, we are -- we're going to use this opportunity to really talk about the core issues that are facing the hemisphere. And we think there's no better place than Los Angeles, which is emblematic of the ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity that, you know -- that is the United States, more so as a majority Hispanic and Latino community.

It is an opportunity for us to really bridge the parallels between the President's domestic agenda -- the Build Back Better agenda -- his climate agenda, his successful efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic with many of the challenges that the people of the region are facing.

And we look forward to galvanizing the full offerings of Los Angeles, from the culinary diversity to Hollywood to just the amazing political and business leaders that represent Los Angeles and California in general. And, of course, we have a Vice President of the United States who has a special affinity with the state of California.

So with that said, look, the summit, I'll say, will focus on -- our theme for the summit is: "Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future." As you know, the Summit of the Americas is the only convening that brings together all the leaders of the Western Hemisphere. So there's a leaders component, but there are also a number of events, including a CEO forum. Traditionally, there's an Indigenous peoples forum. There is -- and there are other opportunities for leaders to interact with the private sector, civil society, and others.

What I'll say is that hosting this event and leading this process really demonstrates our deep and historic commitment to the people of the Western Hemisphere and to realize the promise of the Build Back Better World initiative, which is something that we've been talking about as -- with the hemisphere is a priority.

I'll go through the priorities that we are looking to advance in our conversations and preparations for the summit. And then I'll finish just with a quick lookback to what we've accomplished in 2021.

So the first priority of -- for the summit is, of course, combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, but also health systems and health security. So we've had a very active vaccination campaign in Latin America and the Caribbean beyond vaccine donations, making sure that we are, you know, supporting manufacturing and production capability in the region to prepare for future pandemics, but also given the focus on COVID vaccination; making sure that we are also buttressing our continuing efforts against other diseases -- yellow fever, measles; and making sure that we're using this as an opportunity to bolster the region's health systems, which the pandemic demonstrated are incredibly weak, particularly for a large swath of the population of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The second is -- related to the pandemic is promoting a green and equitable recovery from the pandemic. And what that means for us is, of course, the Build Back Better World initiative as a central point. It's five vertical themes which are, of course, gender, health and health security, digital connectivity. And I believe I mentioned climate and the issue of gender as a human capital priority in the Western Hemisphere.

So that's part of it.

Also making sure that for a region that is so dependent on fossil fuels, to ensure that we are mobilizing capital to help

facilitate what is a global energy transition away from fossil fuels and toward the energies of the future. Making sure that the hemisphere does not get left behind is something that we're very focused on. Of course, issues of climate finance in areas like the Caribbean, Small Island Development States that are impacted by climate change.

We've, as you know, published a climate and migration report recently, so that's something that's going to inform our efforts.

And the third element is -- obviously, migration has been a core element of our work in the Western Hemisphere. But the theory of the case that the President has talked about in the rollout of the blueprint for migration is the need for us to take a comprehensive approach to the migration challenge, to go beyond just border and migration policy to recognize that we need to change immigration laws in this country. We need a border that is functioning, that is treating migrants with dignity, an asylum system that's effective.

But also the leadership -- continuing the leadership that he had as Vice President of the United States and now the -- has passed the baton to the -- to Vice President Harris is addressing the root causes of migration, because nobody wants to -- nobody wants to leave their home and undertake the dangerous journey and go somewhere where they potentially don't speak the language, as the President has said.

And so, investing in the security and prosperity of not just Central America but the -- supporting the people of Haiti and supporting countries in South America as they deal with some economic security and health challenges -- what the Secretary of State has called the "right to remain," investing in these countries so that their societies are places where they don't want to leave.

And we are taking a regional approach to migration. You all may recall, in October, Secretary Blinken was in Colombia and co-hosted migration -- a hemispheric migration ministerial to talk about not just migration policies, the need for, you know, robust asylum systems, in-country processing mechanisms, legal pathways to migration, but also the need to making sure that we're working in coordination to address the economic and security challenges that often lead to migration -- what we call the need to provide stabilizing support to the countries of the Western Hemisphere, including those at Colombia -- like Colombia, for example, that are hosting a very large population of Venezuelan migrants. So that's the third one.

And then the last but not least is -- continuing on the theme of the democracy summit from December -- is helping to -- making democracy deliver in the Americas. And that goes beyond the, kind of, abstract debates of representative and participatory democracy and really getting at the issues of disinformation as a challenge in the region, issues of protecting the work of journalists and also independent prosecutors that are combating corruption -- corruption being a cross-cutting theme for us, but one that is central to the health of our -- and vibrancy of our democracies.

And so these are relatively -- you know, despite being, you know, four priorities, they're incredibly broad issues. And they really get at some of the major structural and fundamental challenges that the countries of the hemisphere have been -- have been facing long before the pandemic, and look forward to really working with the countries of the region and make sure that the leaders have an excellent conversation and one that is outcome-oriented when they meet in June.

To finish, I just want to -- a quick note, since the President gave a thorough briefing yesterday with the press. Just briefly on what I would say are the most noteworthy accomplishments over -- we've spent really a lot of our time in the -- in the Western Hemisphere.

The first I would say is: We have successfully repaired our relationship with the countries of North America. And we've done that by rebuilding institutional mechanisms for cooperation on challenges like migration, on shared challenges like security, and in our shared economic prosperity.

The High-Level Economic Dialogue that we launched with Mexico really produced projects on supply chain coordination, modernization of borders, our coordination on development in Central America. As I mentioned, the first-ever supply chain working group that the United States has with another country on issues of telecom, of health security, and other

issues.

The High-Level Security Dialogue, for us, was something that established the Bicentennial Framework for Security -- what we would say is basically a new framework for security cooperation with Mexico that looks not just at the challenges that Mexico is facing but, frankly, the -- also the responsibilities and the challenges that the United States has as a -- as somebody that -- as a country that has a shared responsibility and a need to work in partnership with Mexico to address these challenges -- not just on the law enforcement front but on the opportunity front, and a new kind of approach or business model to going after transnational criminal organizations.

The approach, overall, I think I would summarize is one that is focused on public health, homicide reduction, combating the cartel business models, specifically the illicit finance, and then building judicial capability.

And then, with Canada, very early on, the U.S.-Canada Roadmap basically reinvigorated a very active whole-of-government relationship that -- with Canada -- had been dormant for the last four years, and has served for us to work on everything from cooperation on COVID-19; you know, coordination on border issues, economic recovery; as I mentioned, supply chains, health security, climate, diversity, inclusion, security, defense, global issues -- a panoply that represents the full breadth and scope of the U.S.-Canada relationship.

All that culminated in the North American Leaders Summit later this year that produced over 50 deliverables. And so -- not to say that we don't have disagreements, and we have, certainly, issues of tension with both of these countries, but so do we with -- any great powers will have disagreements. We've built a respectful way of working through these issues while still working from a reservoir of goodwill to advance our shared priorities.

The others, of course, are the Vice President's leadership. We have -- under her leadership, we have made significant strides in the first year of the administration on addressing the root causes of migration in Central America.

The strategy that we -- that we rolled out this summer really creates a new approach that's focused on not just expanding economic opportunity, supporting good governance, combating corruption, and addressing citizen security, but really some of the Vice President's priorities are issues of empowering women, addressing the urgency of climate change, matters of human rights, and gender-based violence, which is a particular challenge in Central America.

But I think a signature of her work has been this call to action that has brought in a robust private sector element that, since it was announced, mobilized over \$1.2 billion in private-sector commitments since it was launched in May of last year.

It is something that for us is central to this, because governments alone are not going to -- you know, are not sufficient to really transform what have been some longstanding challenges of corruption, of lack of competitiveness, of opportunity. So we're very excited, and it's something that the Vice President has been personally engaged in.

Last -- I would say, last, maybe two or three points. We've dealt with a lot of crises in the Western Hemisphere -- Haiti being one that has been particularly concerning where, in addition to the broad humanitarian crisis that the country has been facing, the first assassination of a leader since the '60s, it's something that has thrown the political system into disarray. But through the leadership of USAID Administrator Sam Powers, the SOUTHCOM commander at the time really marshaled a robust response to the earthquake.

We have been actively involved in promoting a political accord -- a political accord between different actors in the country -- following the July 7th assassination of Jovenel Moïse -- and looking to really expand and strengthen the capability of the Haitian National Police to address the country's security challenges.

Ultimately, we are, you know, supporting Haitian-led solutions and working to rebuild institutional mechanisms for cooperation on migration, security, health, and economic priorities.

Tomorrow, there will be a ministerial hosted by the government of Canada that we will participate in and where we're going to lay out our approach to Haiti. And it's something that we have developed in very close coordination with the diaspora community here and in a dialogue with Haitian civil society and the different stakeholders inside Haiti.

We've worked to promote a negotiated outcome in Venezuela, where, you know, really, through a very close alignment of the White House and the State Department promoting a peaceful and negotiated resolution to the crisis in Venezuela, has -- it has helped bring together the international community, including the European Union, in favor of a negotiated outcome that would lead to free and fair elections.

And, obviously, we're going to stay the course. And we see that as really the best way forward to empower the Venezuelan people to determine their own future.

And then, what I would say is -- just as a cross-cutting issue for the hemisphere, and we look at issues of democracy backsliding and issues of economic and social rights in corrupt -- in combating corruption. We have made making democracy deliver -- or renewing the consensus -- the hemispheric consensus in favor of democracy, really, a top priority.

A lot of that really has been a change in tone from the last four years where we've focused much less on where leaders lie on the political spectrum and more on how they are elected and how they govern to ensure that we're really focused on democratic governance as an issue of -- around which we are galvanizing regional action.

So, combating corruption has really been a central theme of all of our work.

We've cracked down on illicit finance, seized and frozen stolen assets throughout the region, strengthened tools to hold corrupt officials -- corrupt individuals and groups accountable. And this includes targeted anti-corruption sanctions, criminal civil enforcement actions, and denying visas to corrupt officials.

I will say that the -- probably the two emblematic issues have been the response to election fraud in Nicaragua. We've, you know, sanctioned -- we've been to bring together the Organization of American States in rebuke of the actions of the Ortega-Murillo regime.

We've imposed sanctions on individual key regime figures. And we've not done it unilaterally; we've done it joined by Canada, the European Union, the UK. Imposed visa restrictions on at least 169 individuals linked to the regime. And brought together 26 countries, as I mentioned, at the Organization of American States, something that is a high watermark in terms of a Pan-American response to break down in democratic rule.

And then lastly, you know, obviously the situation in Cuba -- the direction that the President has been to be tough on the regime, but soft on the Cuban people. And that approach has led us to -- after the July 11th protests -- to really raise the profile of those individuals that have been responsible for the for the brutal crackdown.

We've imposed individual sanctions on Cuba Security Force officials with the Canadian, UK, and EU support and, at the same time, prioritized the delivery of food, medicine, and humanitarian supplies to the Cuban people. And then expanded our support for tools to avoid censorship so that Cubans can communicate to from and among each other. As they demand greater freedoms.

This is just in the first year of the administration. And now, in conclusion, I think all of these really create the momentum necessary for us to have these broader strategic conversations going into the Summit of the Americas in June. And we look forward to receiving the leaders of the region in Los Angeles in June.

So, I'll leave it there. Thank you.

(Call has technical issues.)

Q Awesome. I was not -- for the record, I was not muted. (Laughs.)

Thanks. Thanks so much for doing this. I wanted to talk to you about the root causes of migration, as well as -- you mentioned a little bit about democracy. Can you talk a little bit about the relationships going forward with the leaders in the Northern Triangle? El Salvador and Guatemala have kind of taken authoritarian turns. You know, how important are these relationships? Kind of, like, how you see these relationships proceeding?

Particularly with the inauguration of Castro -- a president -- a new -- incoming President Castro in Honduras. I know the Vice President is going there. How important is that? And how do you see those relationships going forward??

And secondly, if I can, we cannot heard as much about the administration -- Harris's efforts in the Northern Triangle. I'm sure there's things that have been doing down that hasn't been as public.

I wanted to ask, is the relationship, or the potential of a new relationship, with the new incoming Castro government in Honduras -- are we likely to see more steps taken with Honduras in the future? Will we be seeing, you know, new deliverables that -- coming forward? What (inaudible)?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Certainly. Thank you, Franco. And Happy New Year.

So, let me start with the second part, because as you know, the Vice President is going to be -- is going to lead the presidential delegation to the inauguration of Xiomara Castro next week. She's going to be traveling with USAID Administrator Power.

And the Vice President -- you know, she has been -- I can speak directly from just experience -- been hands on as we move to implement the strategy on root causes. Not only that, she has, in my view, taken a strategic focus so that we are really thinking strategically about the outcomes that we're trying to drive, having a well-calibrated approach to engagement with each of these countries.

But also fundamentally -- because the President has entrusted her to have a lead role -- is she has been personally engaging with, you know, Giammattei but also Castro to try to be responsive to their needs as we also are -- you know, have our own asks as well and are trying to promote a series of broad-based reforms in some of these countries.

So, the -- I think the optimism and the hope -- because she's had a very constructive engagement with Castro -- is that we helped set her up for success and that we are responsive to the needs and the challenges of governing -- issues of, you know, pandemic response, responding to the need to get kids back to school, the desire to have an anti-corruption commission. These are areas where the United States can play a really important supporting role and -- you know, creating a very positive, (inaudible) relation.

That's -- we're very optimistic and, you know, look forward to seeing where it goes.

On Guatemala, I will say that, again, the Vice President has engaged regularly with President Giammattei. And where the Vice President hasn't engaged directly, her National Security Advisor, Nancy McEldowney, has been very active, as have Jake Sullivan, [redacted], and others with Guatemala.

And the conversations go like this. They start very much in a positive tone, because we agree on a majority of issues -- the need to promote what Giammattei calls a "wall of prosperity"; a need to combat drug trafficking and illicit smuggling -- port security is a priority of his; excellent cooperation between the DEA and the government of Guatemala; and an agreement that we need to, as a part of the Partnership for Central America, really find ways to support private sector activity in these countries.

The issue of institutional corruption governance is one that we have made very clear is not negotiable -- a negotiable priority on the part of the United States; that we are not -- do not feel like we are sacrificing that as a priority at the

expense of cooperation on migration.

To the contrary, we've -- you know, from the President, to the Vice President, and everybody in government -- whether or not this is in their portfolio -- is the top issue that is raised with the government.

But also I would say, beyond the relationships that we have with the government, we have relationships with the private sector, with civil society, and obviously with representatives from the international community. So we're not going to agree on everything. And we have obviously unilateral means -- as we've suspended visas, imposed sanctions on officials in Guatemala. But we also are constantly trying to broaden the aperture of cooperation on rule of law and combating, I think, corruption much more broadly in Guatemala, as we see it as a root cause of migration.

I'm not saying it's easy, but it is a priority. If it was easy, it would have done a very long time ago.

In El Salvador -- look, we've engaged at different levels with the administration of President Bukele, recognize that he remains incredibly popular in the country, but have also been very public -- [redacted] have been specifically very public that popularity is not a blank check to undermine democratic institutions.

And there -- we have seen a concerning trend in El Salvador, but we've, I think, had some -- and we've also seen -- we've seen attacks on social media levied against our ambassador who has departed and has returned to SOUTHCOM. That is concerning. It's not really how governments should get along.

But we've, at the same time, continued to try to have that constructive engagement with El Salvador and feel like we're making progress. And we recognize that making progress on these issues given, kind of, the, I would say, generational challenges that we're facing are not -- are not as easy as flipping a switch and require us to remain sustained, remain committed.

And that's what we're going to do. And we hope to have these conversations. I think, in the context of the summit, we don't expect all the conversations that leaders will have will be positive ones. I think there'll be areas of disagreement.

But President Biden, I think, relishes the give and take of those sorts of debates. And I think we'll be eager to engage on -- along those conversations.

I hope that's useful.

Q Thank you. Thank you [senior administration official], for doing this. Thank you.

A couple of questions, if I may. The first one is: Is the White House preparing a special announcement, particularly on immigration, during the summit? Should we expect anything -- any announcement particularly? Maybe you cannot share the announcement today, obviously, but at least the topics that you are interested in?

And second question: Cuba participated for the first time in this Summit of the Americas in the summit in Panama. It was not invited in Peru's. But I was wondering if the United States is likely to invite the Cuban regime to the summit.

And also, what's going to happen with Nicaragua and Venezuela?

Thank you.

Q Great. Thanks, Gustau.

So, the second question is easier to answer. We have not yet made decisions on what the invitation list will look like. And we want to have that conversation with the countries of the region.

.....

I think that -- I think the operating assumption is that we look forward to welcoming the democratically elected leaders of the Organization of American States to the summit.

So, you know, but I think we'll make more formal announcements on the invitations as we get closer to the summit date.

But on the migration issue -- and thank you for raising this -- it's important to underscore that -- or to highlight that we have the chairmanship -- we have the chair of the summit for all of 2022.

So, what does it mean? For us, it means that the summit itself is going to be a leader-level engagement, an important moment in time to talk about these priorities that I mentioned at the beginning of the call.

But we see this as something that -- where we're going to have summit-related activities that are going to take place before the Summit of the Americas, on the margins of the Summit of the Americas, and after the Summit of the Americas.

Why is that? For two reasons. One is that a traditional summit is -- usually comprises 20,000 people in the course of a week in a convention space. That does not -- is not really a realistic expectation in the, kind of, pandemic environment that we're currently in.

And so, we are going to have a hybrid format for the summit. So some of these sessions are going to be in person; some of these are going to be virtual. The virtual space is one that we see as an opportunity to innovate and to make the summit accessible so it's not just a bunch of people in suits wearing lanyards talking to each other in a convention center, but so that we can actually connect with the countries of the region using virtual platforms. We're trying to get creative on that.

But we're also -- some of the different summits we may have before -- kind of this -- the parallel summits before and after the Summit of the Americas so you have a kind of continuous year of activity.

And on the migration front, we hope to bring -- to kind of galvanize an agreement or an accord or a broad set of principles at the summit with those key countries that are either the source, transit, or destination for migration that look at not just, as I mentioned, migration policy; the need for, obviously, protections; but also the need to support -- for the international community to stabilize -- help stabilize these countries that, you know, sometimes are a source of migration because of the -- their economic -- the economic crisis.

Again, I would identify Colombia as a perfect example. [Redacted], you know, Colombians migrated to Venezuela during the late '90s when there was a security and economic crisis in Colombia. Venezuelans, now facing their own crisis, are migrating to Colombia. And it was the strength of the Colombian economy that allowed them to assimilate and to absorb these populations, but also, I would say, the leadership of President Iván Duque, where I think a legacy of his presidency -- a positive legacy -- will be just, I think, the example that he's setting for the hemisphere, not just Latin America and the Caribbean, on the humanitarian and open treatment of migrants.

So we hope to bring these conversations together in a broad accord that recognizes the shared responsibility to address migration. So -- but again, we're going to have, I think, announcements before, during, and after the summit. And you're going to see travel and engagement by Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officials to help support the President's hosting of the summit, and then to also follow up from any outcomes that are produced at the Summit of the Americas.

Q Thank you. Thank you, [senior administration official], for this opportunity. You didn't mention China in your remarks, and some people believe that it's going to be like the big elephant in the room. There is this view when you talk to some public officials and people who are following closely the U.S. and the relationship with Latin America that there's a new era of influence -- China in the region -- and that the leadership of the U.S. is not what it used to be, and the difference between the U.S. and the hemisphere has not come closer, despite the good intentions of the Biden administration. And that has created some frustration.

I was hoping you could address how you're planning to touch on this issue during the summit.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Certainly. No, thank you for raising that. I -- look, I will say -- and we're also finalizing our National Security Strategy which, I will preview, has a -- probably one of the most robust sections on the Western Hemisphere that, since I've been reading these, has never really been this comprehensive or articulated a (inaudible), kind of, U.S. national security approach to the Western Hemisphere.

What you will note is the word "China" is not mentioned in the Western Hemisphere section. And I'll say -- I'll say this: that obviously that's been a defining characteristic of a lot of our foreign policy engagement, but what we see as really the best -- whether it's the democracy strategy; whether it's security, economic prosperity; whether it's, you know, China -- really is an affirmative agenda for the countries of the Western Hemisphere.

We, in the 42 years of normalization between U.S. -- the United States and China, have gone between competition, confrontation, and collaboration.

And what I would say is that, as National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, said during his visit last May to Brazil and Argentina: We're not asking the countries of the region to choose between the United States and China.

Any country that is investing in the economic prosperity, security, and social wellbeing of the countries of the region are advancing U.S. national security interests and are welcome, as far as we're concerned.

Also, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are not chess pieces on a board but rather, you know, independent nations that will make decisions based on their own national security interests.

And for us to be competitive in that space, we have to be present, we have to be active, and that, by definition, is an affirmative agenda.

I will put just a finer point on this -- is that, for the United States, you know, recognizing that our ties with the Americas, whether they're geographic, familial, economic, or, frankly, value-based, are a source of U.S. prosperity, diversity, and resilience.

We're the only hemisphere in the world where there are not interstate conflicts. It is a region that is relatively at peace. And that is something that has been a strategic reservoir for the United States.

So, the security and prosperity of our neighbors has incredibly important implications for us. And as such, though, the region's economic prosperities, as democracies -- so, meaning, their democratic -- their democratic development -- for us is a national security interest.

It's such -- our policy toward the Western Hemisphere is really predicated on the region's democratic development, in their self-determination of democracies as essentially -- as essential to our ability to address a widening range of global challenges and opportunities.

Why is that relevant to China is that, for us, the issue of democratic self-determination is emblematic, and those countries that are supporting authoritarian leaders are working against this -- these goals. And so, that's where I think I would identify areas of tension or disagreement that, for us, it's really not about any sort of system of government but rather one where the citizens of the region get to determine the future and not autocratic leaders that are using violence and oppression. And I think that's where you see the distinction between the United States and China, in that regard.

And I think our -- for example, our response to the pandemic in the hemisphere and around the world has been emblematic of this approach where we've not used vaccines as leverage but rather because it is in our interest to just support the hemisphere being able to successfully combat the pandemic but also why we've emphasized corruption across the board and why we've been able to organize a bipartisan response and a full, kind of, throated rebuke by the international community of what has been the authoritarian decline in places like Nicaragua.

Q Hello. Thank you for doing this. I'd like to know specifically if you expect Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to participate in the summit.

And also, yesterday, President Biden said that you're having trouble -- "great difficulty," he said -- making up for the mistakes that were made the last -- in the last four years. What are those mistakes that were made in the last administration, in regards to Latin America? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you for the question. So, look, on Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela -- so, again, we don't have like a formal position to announce, but I'll just restate what I said to Gustau, which is: We look forward to welcoming the democratically-elected leaders of the Western Hemisphere, given just this affirmation of democratic values and the need to have democracies debate some of these issues.

But, again, we, as the host, have a lot of -- I think, decide, ultimately, who will be invited. But we're going to consult with the countries of the Organization of American States as the Secretary for the summit.

And we'll announce something I think as we -- as we put together, I think, just the agenda and the invitations, et cetera. We'll have announcements in the future.

On the other question, I think that's probably something that would probably span well beyond the time we have left in this call. I would say that -- I think the first and, I think, most immediate challenge that we inherited from the previous administration is a border and a migration system in disrepair, where there was a intentional effort to dismantle our legal -- or our legal asylum system or our legal immigration system, our asylum process, our ability of the government -- of the border to process individuals humanely.

And that has been an incredible challenge because, ultimately, we don't -- enforcement regimes are not effective migration management tools, no matter how loudly somebody screams that we need a wall. But you do need a border that functions. You do need to have laws in place where those who have a credible claim to protection or to asylum are processed expeditiously and those who do not are repatriated humanely.

That has been incredibly challenging for us to rebuild, but it's ultimately a central component of the President's blueprint and the theory of the case that you cannot build walls and forget about your neighbor's challenges but, rather, you need to have a well-functioning border and invest in your neighbors' prosperity and security to successfully address migration. You also have to have legal pathways, robust asylum systems.

And we need to bolster the capability of our partners like Mexico to have strong asylum and protection systems themselves. So, that certainly was something that set us back.

But as a Latin Americanist [redacted], I think the -- perhaps the biggest mistake of the previous administration was that -- was to divide the region into those who were either "those who agreed with us" and "those who were our enemies."

And I think that that really ignores the diversity that represents the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. I think that is something that we've been able to come back from by simply a change in tone -- to say that we may not agree with the country but we're willing to find common ground. If you really focus on pursuing shared interests, then there's no -- then you can always find common ground with other countries. You know, whether or not we agree with everything that the government of Bolivia has done, we think we can find ways to work together and to improve that relationship.

The reason that Jake Sullivan traveled to Brazil and Argentina was to show that we work -- we look to work actively with countries across the political spectrum. And people have -- people have taken note that we have taken a very different approach.

Q Thank you so much for having the call, [senior administration official]. Really appreciate it. We had talked a bit about -- a good amount about corruption here and the expectation for -- you know -- democratic -- and for the integrity in governance

a good amount about corruption here and the expectation for, you know, democratic -- and for the integrity in government when it comes to these partnerships.

I'm just wondering how much of that will factor into who gets invited to this summit? I know that you haven't finalized it yet. But at this point, I mean, is the United States open to inviting officials from somewhere like Guatemala, where there has been undermining of prosecutors in the region, or El Salvador, where, as you said, you know, there was targeting on social media of an ambassador at that point.

And, secondly, on the Vice President's investment that we've heard about a couple times of \$1.2 billion: Just going through some of the information that's put out there, I see that some of the descriptions from those private sector companies go towards training programs or expanding access to economic opportunity, and that a complaint from some on the ground -- both community leaders, Indigenous leaders, as well as business leaders -- was that previous investment did not go to creating immediate jobs.

So, I'm just wondering how -- if you can assess, out of that \$1.2 billion, how much goes towards a certain training program or something that we might see years down the line, and how much of it will actually create jobs in the short term. Thanks so much.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, that's an excellent question. Look on the participation one: Again, not -- I can't offer too much, just because we don't have a position. I want to make that clear, as (inaudible) to report on it.

But I think that anybody who was in -- elected democratically will be invited to the summit. And that -- I think there's no question that the president of Guatemala will be invited to the summit, that the president of El Salvador will be invited to the summit.

And again, as -- that is because if we only invite the people who agree with us, then we're not really going to be having a debate but rather preaching to the choir.

And as somebody who, you know, has worked on Latin America and the Caribbean with President Joe Biden dating back to 2012, 2013, he does not shy away from these debates and, I think, looks forward to engaging personally and debating with leaders on these matters of corruption, not from a point of, you know, kind of preach- -- kind of imposing or finger-wagging, but rather ones where, frankly, on matters of democracy, we are also facing some of these challenges.

I'll go to countries like Brazil -- and questions about democratic governance. You know, there is such a long democratic tradition in Brazil, and the institutions have been so robust that it really doesn't matter who the leader is today and tomorrow. There's a lot that Brazil can teach the rest of the hemisphere, including the United States, on matters of democracy, social jus- -- social and racial justice.

And so, we want to have those debates out in the open as -- between leaders, but also having civil society, Indigenous peoples, and others, you know, making very clear demands of governments, and that includes our very robust and raucous civil society to, you know, make demands of us.

So, I think it'll be a very exciting -- and hopefully, it is a kind of robust component of the agenda.

And the -- I'm sorry, what was your second question? I missed it. Oh, yeah, on the Vice President's participation. I got it. Okay.

So, look, I -- this has -- this is multifaceted, right? We -- you know, the President made a commitment of \$4 billion over four years in U.S. assistance. That is assistance to prosecutors, security forces, supports that USAID is leading on -- you know, on reintegration efforts, on job creation, on rural livelihoods.

One, kind of, specific issue the Vice President has been driving is the use of technology to address rural poverty. And so, that's one element.

It's -- and obviously, the job creation front. And that's an area where the United States and Mexico have been -- you know, USAID and its Mexican counterpart, AMEXCID, have been expanding their partnership to deploy programs to create jobs in the short term in southern Mexico and in Northern and Central America. That's one component.

The private sector component is something that, I think, builds on the efforts that were begun when Vice President Biden was leading this. And it has its own, kind of, piece here. It's one of specific investment by companies that are either establishing a presence, expanding their presence, or expanding their programs and job training. Some of those are short-, medium-, and long-term commitments.

We are also moving forward with engagement with the multilateral development banks, recognizing that we have to also mobilize multilateral, kind of, financial capital to -- towards these ends.

So, I wouldn't take it in each of their parts, but we recognize that, I think, one of the most important deterrents to migration in the short term is a good-paying job. And that's something that, if you look at the, kind of, broader strategy has -- is hit by different elements, whether it's government, private sector, the multilateral development work.

MODERATOR: Thank you so much, [senior administration official]. And thank you, everyone, for your great questions.

As a reminder, this call is on background, attributable to a "senior administration official," and the embargo ends now.

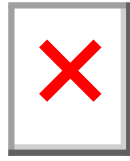
Have a great day. Bye-bye.

11:59 A.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Bringing Semiconductor Manufacturing Back to America
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 21, 2022 5:00 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2022

FACT SHEET:

Biden-Harris Administration Bringing Semiconductor Manufacturing Back to America

Intel Announces \$20 Billion Ohio Facility; Latest Company to Invest in U.S., Strengthen Domestic Supply Chains

Semiconductors are an essential building block in the goods and products that Americans use every day. These computer chips are critical to a range of sectors and products from cars to smartphones to medical equipment and even vacuum cleaners. They help power our infrastructure from our grid to our broadband. The United States used to lead the world in global semiconductor manufacturing. But in recent decades, the U.S. lost its edge—our share of global semiconductor production has fallen from 37 percent to just 12 percent over the last 30 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic shined a spotlight on the fragility in the global semiconductor supply chain. Experts estimate that the global chip shortage knocked off a full percentage point from U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) last year. U.S. autoworkers faced furloughs and production shut downs due to pandemic-driven disruptions in Asian semiconductor factories, contributing to large increases in the price of cars for U.S. consumers. One-third of the annual price increases in core consumer price index (CPI) last year was due to high car prices alone.

The Biden-Harris Administration has been working around the clock with Congress, our international allies and partners, and the private sector to expand U.S. chip manufacturing capacity, bring back critical American manufacturing jobs, address the chip shortage, and ensure we are not exposed to these disruptions again. Today, Intel will announce a new \$20 billion factory outside Columbus, Ohio.

Today's announcement is the latest marker of progress in the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to ramp up domestic manufacturing for critical goods like semiconductors, tackle near-term supply chain bottlenecks, revitalize our

manufacturing base, and create good jobs here at home. This investment will create 7,000 construction jobs and another 3,000 permanent jobs, another sign of the strength of the American economy.

To accelerate this progress, the President is urging Congress to pass legislation to strengthen U.S. research and development and manufacturing for critical supply chains, including semiconductors. The Senate passed the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) in June and the Administration is working with the House and Senate to finalize this legislation. It includes full funding for the CHIPS for America Act, which will provide \$52 billion to catalyze more private-sector investments and continued American technological leadership.

Since the beginning of 2021, the semiconductor industry has announced nearly \$80 billion in new investments in the United States through 2025, according to the Semiconductor Industry Association. These investments will create tens of thousands of good-paying U.S. jobs, support U.S. technological leadership, and promote security and resilience in global semiconductor supply chains. In addition to Intel's announcement today, investments include:

- A \$17 billion Samsung factory in Texas – the result of sustained work by the Administration, including the President's meeting with President Moon of the Republic of Korea in May.
- Texas Instruments investing up to \$30 billion in Texas;
- A new Global Foundries factory in New York state;
- Cree's intention to spend \$1 billion to expand a current plant in North Carolina;
- SK Group investments in a new U.S. R&D center; and
- Micron to expanding U.S. production.

The Biden-Harris Administration has led a whole of government effort to secure these critical investments.

- President Biden prioritized domestic semiconductor manufacturing and research and development (R&D) shortly after taking office, designating semiconductor supply chains as a centerpiece of his national [supply chain initiative](#) launched in February 2021.
- In June, the Commerce Department issued a [set of recommendations](#) on how to secure the U.S. semiconductor supply chain. Since that time, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, and National Economic Council Director Brian Deese have held regular follow-up engagements with industry leaders and diplomatic partners and allies to advance practical solutions to strengthen the global semiconductor supply chain. This includes White House has met with the CEOs of multiple semiconductor companies in this effort.
- In October, President Biden hosted a global summit on supply chains with the heads of state from 14 countries and the European Union on the margins of the G20 in Italy to discuss supply chain disruptions, with a focus on semiconductors. The President also focused on semiconductor supply chain resilience in his bilateral meetings with foreign leaders and directed the Administration to cooperate with Europe on strengthening global supply chains through the U.S.-E.U. Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and through the Quad's focus on critical technologies.

Investments in new foundries are critical to the long-term resilience of our semiconductor supply chains. At the same time, the Administration is working to address the near-term disruptions in semiconductor supply chains that have contributed to challenges in a number of manufacturing sectors and to price increases for U.S. consumers.

- In April 2021, the President hosted a [virtual summit](#) with leading firms that produce chips and those that use chips to identify practical ways to discuss actions they could to address the disruptions resulting from the global chip shortage. By the end of the year, the participants [had announced new partnerships](#) between semiconductor companies and U.S. automakers to strengthen the resiliency of the automotive chip supply chain.
- In the summer, the Administration worked with governments and companies around the world to mitigate COVID-related disruptions to semiconductor manufacturing and in September 2021 established a [global early alert system](#)

to identify and address pandemic-related disruptions.

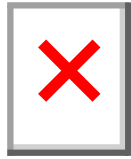
- The Commerce Department promoted transparency in semiconductor supply chains, including through a Fall 2021 survey on the chips shortage to identify the key chokepoints in the semiconductor supply chains. Over 150 responses were received from all parts of the supply chain – producers, consumers, and intermediaries – include responses from nearly all the major semiconductor producers and the major automakers. The results of the survey will be released publicly by the end of January 2021.
- The U.S. Department of Defense has used Defense Production Act authorities to strengthen supply chains for key defense-related semiconductors.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials On President Biden's Meeting With Prime Minister Kishida of Japan
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 21, 2022 2:36 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2022

**Background Press Call By Senior Administration Officials On President Biden's Meeting
With Prime Minister Kishida of Japan**

Via Teleconference

11:36 A.M. EST

MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us. This is a background call to read out the President's meeting with Prime Minister Kishida of Japan. As a reminder, this call is on background, and it is attributable to "senior administration official." And the contents of the call are embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

For your awareness but not for reporting, our speaker on the call today is [senior administration official].

With that, 'll turn it over to you for some opening remarks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you very much. And thank you all for joining us today. Again, 'm [redacted], but you've already heard how the meeting will be described.

So, let me just say that we just concluded, a little while ago, a 90 -- yes, we just concluded a 90-minute session -- a virtual session between Prime Minister Kishida

and President Biden.

This was their second meeting. They had a session in Glasgow during COP26 and agreed they looked forward to a meeting in -- early in the new year. I think the hope was, obviously, to do this in person, but given the COVID circumstances both in the United States and Japan, agreed it was important to do this virtually.

I think I would describe -- I'll just -- we've already put out a readout but I'll give you a little bit of the highlights and then happy to take questions.

I think it -- just at a general level, the discussion was exceptionally broad, very warm, and wide-ranging. And I think it was clear -- we had a substantial group with the President in the Situation Room, including Deputy Secretary Sherman; Secretary Raimondo; National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan; our outgoing ambassador to Japan who will be leaving tomorrow, Rahm Emanuel, who was celebrated and joked about during the session; and then myself and a few others -- Dan Krittenbrink from the State Department and Chris Johnson from the National Security Council.

I think what was clear is that the -- sort of the solidarity and the close alignment between the United States and Japan was really on full display.

So, very broad discussion on security, on views about the challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

And I think they were in very close alignment on the challenges that Russia is presenting to Ukraine. I think Japan -- the Prime Minister complimented the President on his handling and made clear that Japan would be fully behind the United States in the challenging days ahead.

Very in-depth discussion on sharing perspectives on China, a desire to promote and defend a free and open Indo-Pacific, concerns about some of the steps that China had taken across the board in terms of intimidating neighbors, taking steps that were predatory, and trade -- and other (inaudible) particularly concerned about the nuclear buildup in China and what that augured for regional security more generally.

Discussions about the importance of mutual commitments to support regional security and architecture.

The Prime Minister complimented President Biden on his role in convening the Quad -- two meetings of the Quad last year -- and also AUKUS. The President thanked the Prime Minister for his support and indicated much more to come.

Prime Minister Kishida invited President Biden to come for an official visit to Japan and, at the same time, his intention to host a Quad meeting in late spring. I think President Biden graciously accepted that invitation.

The Prime Minister laid out a number of things to illuminate his goals and objectives as Prime Minister. I think they spent quite a bit of time talking about their respective views, which were very much in alignment with respect to a desire to revitalize their societies from the working people, middle class out, underscoring the importance in investment in education. A lot of harmony in those interactions.

Prime Minister Kishida also indicated that the security environment in Northeast Asia demanded that Japan step up, and he indicated that he had increased in the supplemental budget defense and security spending by 8 percent. It's unprecedented. With respect to Japan, President Biden welcomed that and supported it more generally.

The two leaders also announced the inauguration of a new economic forum, the so-called 2+2, that will include Secretary Blinken and the Secretary of Commerce, with the express intention to focus on new areas of technology and supply chains; an agreement that a close partnership between Japan and the United States was going to be essential going forward across the board, whether it's in semiconductors or in energy.

lots of discussion about green innovation and the need to continue to push forward on initiatives announced at COP26 more generally. Close coordination and cooperation on COVID more generally.

And I think, you know, the President was quite gratified that Prime Minister Kishida was so clear and firm in his resolve to support the United States as we engage in the challenges currently with respect to Russia more generally.

I could say, guys, just, I think, the importance of the call. Obviously, lots of focus right now both on domestic policy in the United States. The President underscored to Prime Minister Kishida that as he was concluding this meeting, he was going to go into another meeting with senators and congressmen to talk about the importance of the CHIPS Act and moving ahead on investment and technology in the United States, but also challenges in Central Europe right now.

At the same time, the President wanted it to be known clearly that he was going to continue to step up our game in the Indo-Pacific, across the board on issues ranging from diplomacy to military security, and also to trade.

The two leaders had a robust discussion about the importance of the United States playing an active role in the trade and commercial architecture of Asia. And the President engaged actively on those issues.

So I think it was a very valuable meeting of the minds. I think both leaders came away wanting more discussion. I think the President, at the end of the session with Prime Minister Kishida, said, "This meeting has made me even more optimistic and hopeful about our relationship with Japan and what we can accomplish going forward."

There's much more to discuss, but I think that's a good, sort of, down payment on the initial issues. I'm happy to take any questions, and we'll take it from there.

Thank you.

Q Hi, thank you for doing this. Just to clarify, should we interpret that the President committed to going to Japan or just, sort of, welcomed the invitation with specifics and then an RSVP, you know, to come?

And more broadly, can you give us an update -- the readout mentions discussion briefly of a commitment to resolve trade disputes. Where are we on that, specifically the 232 tariffs? How are negotiations going? And when do you expect you might be at a point to discuss lifting, in whole or in part, those tariffs? Thank you.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Yeah, thanks. I think the President indicated his intention would be to visit Japan in the late spring for an official visit and for the Quad. We didn't get into specific dates, obviously. But I think he did accept the invitation, obviously, with details to be worked out. And obviously, we have to see how COVID plays out. But I think that's his intention. And he was very appreciative of the invitation. And the invitation came to President Biden and also Dr. Biden as well.

I think, as you know, the negotiation -- or negotiations on 232 are being handled by Secretary of Commerce Raimondo. I think the President made clear that his hope would be that these negotiations would be concluded rapidly. And I know that Secretary Raimondo is in regular contact with her Japanese interlocutor. I think our hope and expectation would be to have these wrapped up in short order.

And I think anything further, I'd recommend, Josh, you just go to the Commerce Department.

But I think the intention, given Secretary Raimondo's ambitions to talk about so many other issues, is to make sure that this issue is dealt with in a way that can be explained and understood on both sides of the Pacific.

Q Hi. Thank you so much for doing this. I know the readout was just sent out, but I'm wondering if you could give us more detail about what the two leaders discussed in regards to North Korea and how they will apply more pressure on North Korea as it continues to test and fire missiles.

And another question on the Quad Summit. So, building on the last Quad Summit and today's meeting, could you give us more detail on what the two leaders hope to achieve in the next Quad Summit next spring? Thank you.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate it. Let me take -- if you don't mind, Esther, can I take the last question, first, and then I'll come back to the first one.

So, on the Quad Summit, I think the -- look, they talked about a number of issues that we want to make sure that we are focusing on as we go forward.

One is we want to review the progress to date on our commitment to deliver a billion doses in 2022. And I think the idea will be not only to look at the production of those vaccine doses in India, but their distribution not only in Southeast Asia but elsewhere. And I think the leaders want to discuss that and discuss next steps.

Secondly, we've made quite a lot of efforts among the four countries on some infrastructure steps that we think the four countries might be able to take together. And we look forward to announcing some of those efforts going forward.

We will be able to formally announce the establishment of the Quad -- the Quad Educational initiative that will bring students from all four countries to American universities for graduate and advanced work in STEM and other applied areas.

I think we want to look at some initiatives that we can take, perhaps, to deal with

countries that are suffering from debt traps.

There are a number of initiatives that we've worked on with respect to cooperation in space, in maritime domain awareness, and fishing.

So, I think the goal will be for the four countries to both advance the work that has already begun, update it, and also launch, carefully, some new initiatives that are designed to animate cooperation among our four countries. Much of the focus will be on ensuring close engagement of the Quad in Southeast Asia, in ASEAN, and also ensuring that we're working to follow through on our commitments more generally.

And can you remind me, now that I finished that, the first question again? Just prompt me just quickly, Esther, if you would. I'm sorry.

OPERATOR: One moment, sir. Let me get her line back open.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Esther, I'm sorry. Can you just prompt me on the first? I apologize.

Q Sure. Yeah.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : I left my pen on the -- yeah, go ahead.

Q That's totally okay. I wanted to ask about North Korea --

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Oh, yes. Yeah.

Q -- and how they plan to apply pressure.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Yeah. So, first of all, both countries obviously strongly condemned the provocations that we've seen from North Korea, made clear that the two countries were prepared for diplomacy.

But under the -- given what North Korea had undertaken, I thought it was extremely important to have a clear statement of vigilance and purpose.

I think the President made clear that we would be working closely with South Korea and Japan on next steps to discourage possible provocations that might follow on.

I think we'll have more to say from other parts of our government in the next couple of days.

It is also the case that the President strongly supported Prime Minister Kishida's -- the group of people that had been taken from Japan to North Korea -- underscored the United States' continuing efforts to support Japan in trying to determine the fate of these people -- these Japanese taken from their homes -- and promised that our teams would continue the closest possible coordination, both on potential arenas of diplomacy and on areas of common purpose to send a strong message of deterrence.

Q Hi. I have a follow-up question on North Korea. So, North Korea make up some kind of (inaudible) that there are possibility that they're going to resume the test of nuclear and then CBM. So, do you have any reaction to this possibility from North

Korea?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : ook, we noted that statement. We are obviously following developments closely. We're concerned by those statements. We are in close consultation with all our allies and partners and other countries in the Indo-Pacific. And we've sent a very clear message to North Korea in an effort to dissuade them for further provocative steps.

The United States and South Korea remain open to diplomacy. But such a set of steps would be most unwelcome, particularly at this delicate time in Northeast Asia, and globally more generally.

Q Hey, good morning. Thank you. Just two quick questions. The first is: Did Prime Minister Kishida say that Japan would join the U.S. in imposing sanctions on Russia if they do invade Ukraine?

And, secondly, the Economic 2+2 that you had -- that the two leaders announced, does that mean that the U.S. and Japan are going to do more to harmonize or coordinate on export controls?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Yeah, so, on the second question, I think there is an agreement that there -- that the 2+2 agenda has not been fully worked out. But the expectation is that they will work in a number of areas including export controls, but most directly in the current environment -- supply chains, technology investments, and standard setting. We think those are areas that the United States and Japan can step up their game and take a much more active role in such a critical period.

I think Japan indicated that it -- that the United States and Japan are closely aligned on concerns about Russian threats. I think Japan indicated that they had worked and will continue to work with the G7. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed and thanked President Biden's leadership in sending such a clear message -- deterrent message -- with respect to Russia potential actions in Ukraine; indicated that Japan would be with the United States going forward.

We did not get into the specifics about possible, you know, steps that would be taken in the event that we see these actions transpire.

And I think both leaders promised that each side would be in close consultations. We are briefing Japan regularly on developments and concerns in Ukraine.

MODERATOR: Great. Thank you, everyone. Thanks again for joining. As a reminder, this call was on background, attributable to "senior administration official." And the embargo on the contents of the call will lift at the conclusion of this call.

Thanks again for your time and have a great day.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thank you.

11:56 A.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 21, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 21, 2022 5:19 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 21, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:23 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. I just have two items for all of you at the top.

As you all saw, today the President delivered remarks on his administration's work to increase the supply of semiconductors, boost manufacturing in America, and rebuild our supply chains here at home. These are steps that are going to help slow price increases, create good-paying manufacturing and construction jobs across the country, and strengthen our economy.

For three decades, America has lost semiconductor manufacturing to countries like China, but since President Biden took office that tide has turned. He's prioritized investing in critical supply chains like chips, and set out a clear plan to do so with his executive order. And he brought together labor and business to get it done.

In doing so, we've catalyzed the industry's outlook and gave them confidence in America again, including Intel's announcement today of a \$20 billion investment in Ohio and a total of over \$80 billion invested since he took office.

This is the power the President is using to make it in America -- to make -- to support his "Made in America" vision he's putting into action.

Those sorts of investments have never been more important, particularly as we see a global shortage of chips driving up prices of cars right here in America. As we know, it accounts for about one third of the inflationary pressure, with auto

prices contributing as a big part of that.

Today's announcement is just the latest progress in our efforts to ramp up domestic manufacturing, tackle near-term bottlenecks, especially with critical goods like semiconductors.

Earlier this year, Samsung, Texas Instruments, and Micron announced \$80 billion in investments in semiconductor manufacturing.

Congress can accelerate this progress by passing the U.S. Investment and Competition Act, also known as USICA, which the President has long-championed and which he called for action on today. This bipartisan legislation puts historic funding behind unclogging our supply chains, research and development, innovation, and advanced manufacturing in every corner of America; and invests \$52 billion in making more chips, something that's vital to address our supply chain issues and lower inflation.

Tomorrow also marks the 49th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in Roe v. Wade. Reproductive health care has been under extreme and relentless assault ever since, especially in recent months. It has been nearly 150 days since women in Texas have been denied these constitutional rights.

We are deeply committed to making sure everyone has access to care and we will defend it with every tool we have. That includes continuing to work with Congress to pass the Women's Health Protection Act and codify this fundamental right into law.

In the meantime, the administration has taken a range of important actions, from repealing the global gag rule to strengthening the Title X Family Planning Program. Today, HHS announced additional Title X grants, and there will be further announcements coming from HHS later today as well.

This is a moment for us to recommit to strengthening access to critical reproductive healthcare, defend -- defending the constitutional right established by Roe, and protecting the freedom of all people to build their own future.

I know we have a short time window today. We will keep up to date on when everybody needs to gather, and I'll try to get to as many people as possible. And otherwise, I'll be here in my office.

Go ahead, Aamer.

Q Thank you, Jen. When the U.S. presents its written response to Russia next week, is it willing to offer Russia something that goes beyond the repeatedly stated positions, particularly when it comes to Russia's demands on guarantees regarding NATO's future expansion?

MS. PSAKI: We will put in writing, as you reference, the serious concerns that we and other allies and partners have about Russia's actions, as well as ideas for how we might actually strengthen each other's sense of security going forward.

There are several steps we can take that are being discussed -- all of us, Russia included -- to increase transparency, to reduce risks, to advance arms control, to build trust.

We're coordinating with our allies and partners. And we anticipate that Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Lavrov will meet again to continue discussions. And the President obviously is regularly briefed every day by his team but will also be engaging with them tomorrow -- over the course of the weekend as well.

But as Secretary Blinken said today, he made clear to Foreign Minister Lavrov that there are "certain issues and fundamental principles that the United States and our partners and allies are committed to defend." And "[t]hat includes those that would impede the sovereign right of the Ukrainian people to write their own future. There's no trade space there -- none."

And we've said from the beginning that there are certain proposals that will not be viable.

But we will, of course, be responding, as you noted. And I expect the President will continue to discuss that over the next couple of days with his team.

Q I wanted to ask another foreign policy question. The strike in Yemen today -- 70 people were dead -- are dead after the Saudi-led coalition strike. National Security Advisor Sullivan immediately condemned the recent Houthi strike. What's the administration's immediate reaction to this strike? And does this prompt any reconsideration of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any prediction of that at this point in time. Obviously, we have -- have a long history of a relationship with Saudi Arabia, one where we raise issues where we have significant concerns on human rights and on a range of issues, and one where we have had a long security relationship that has been in the interest of the United States.

In terms of this specific strike and a reaction: Obviously, anytime there's a loss of life -- of innocent lives, that is a tragedy. And we -- we are mindful of that and focused on that.

Obviously, you know our focus and the President's focus, which is -- from the very beginning, he established new interim guidance concerning the United States' use of military force and related to national security operations. That's how we operate here as the United States, which I think is reflective of his -- of his view.

But certainly the loss of life is always a tragedy. And again, if there's anything new on -- on our relationship, I'm happy to get that from our national security team.

Q And just one last domestic -- on tax season: With reduced staffing levels, less funding authorization from Congress, the IRS already tasked with distributing funds from several pandemic relief programs, many 2020 refunds haven't been processed, how is the administration preparing to ensure that this year's tax returns will be processed in a reasonable amount of time?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first note that a lot of this predates this administration. And you touched on that, but I think that's important for people to understand.

As the Treasury Department and the IRS have said, the IRS right now has an unacceptable backlog, and that customer service -- and customer service that people are receiving is not what the American public deserves. And the President is very mindful of that.

Many of those challenges are related to the pandemic but also due to years of underfunding from Congress. The agency has not been equipped with the resources it needs to adequately serve taxpayers in normal times, let alone during a pandemic.

The President has prioritized ensuring the IRS gets \$80 billion of stable, multi-year funding, resources it needs to best serve the American people.

As he said in his executive order in December, on customer experience, the American people deserve an effective, equitable, and accountable government that meets the needs of its people.

So we would call on Congress to act now to give the IRS the funding it needs to meet its goal.

But again, in terms of addressing the backlog, it's going to take some work; it's going to take some time. And I think people need to understand that they need funding, but they need to -- but there's a long history here that's led to this moment.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Secretary Blinken is leading -- leaving Geneva and, so far, does not appear that he has a firm commitment from Russia not to invade Ukraine. So, is another summit necessary at the leader level? Do you anticipate that President Biden will be having a summit with President Putin and the President of Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that, you know, Secretary Blinken, as you as you mentioned, met in Geneva today with Foreign Minister Lavrov to share our serious concerns with the situation.

He warned Russia that we are prepared to respond to any Russian invasion of Ukraine with swift and severe consequences, along with our allies and partners. We re also ready to continue dialogue and diplomacy.

Ultimately, this has always been putting the choices up in front of President Putin and the Russians. Right? It is up to them to decide which path they are going to choose.

Secretary Blinken also conveyed we don t expect -- we didn t expect any breakthroughs to happen today. But we are on a clear path, in terms of understanding each other s concerns.

The President will meet this weekend at Camp David with his national security team to discuss the situation. Some will be virtual, some will be there in person. We ll also continue to consult with our allies and partners, and we will respond next week in writing, as I conveyed.

In terms of the President and his role, you know, I think part of that will be discussing with Secretary Blinken and his national security team what the appropriate next steps are. Of course, the President always values leader-to-leader engagement, but we ll determine if that s the appropriate next step.

Q So, he s open to that --

MS. PSAKI: He s always been open.

Q -- as potential next step? And that s on the table?

MS. PSAKI: It may or may not be the next step it, and I can t give you a prediction of if and when it will happen. But if that is a step that is recommended and that we think would be effective at this point in the discussion, of course, the President is always open to leader-to-leader engagement.

Q Let me ask you about something Secretary Blinken said. He told Ukrainian TV that "whether it s one Russian soldier or a thousand crossing the border," it s an attack on Ukraine. Does the President agree with that statement? Is that how he sees it?

MS. PSAKI: That s the President s policy that he has directed his Secretary of State to continue to convey and what the President conveyed to President Putin.

Q Let me ask you about the Electoral Count Act, if I could. Based on some of my conversations on Capitol Hill -- and obviously, there seems to be a growing consensus that there might be able to be some progress on the Electoral Count Act - - someone said to me that it could potentially be a vehicle to get preclearance passed. Is that something that this White House thinks is a possibility, is a likelihood? Is that what the President s going to be pushing for?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have any prediction of a process or a vehicle. What I would remind everyone of is that despite the fact that 16 Republicans in the Senate have, in the past, supported the protection of voting rights, they did not when given the opportunity.

So, again, I would note that the Electoral Count Act is something we are certainly open to, but it is not a replacement for. And there are many components of the voting rights legislation that are vital to protecting people s rights in this country,

you know, including the fact that we know that voter suppression largely impacts communities of color across the country. And one of the components of the voting rights legislation the President has been fighting for is requiring states that have a history of voter suppression to get approval to change their laws.

And also, these -- these voting rights legislation that we've been fighting so hard for would also ensure that there's a fundamental baseline of what people can know and expect. If you're a mother of three, you should be able to have many places you can drop off your ballot or vote. This is not a replacement for that.

In terms of a vehicle or what's possible, I don't have anything on that to read out for you.

Q And just very quickly -- it seems like there are going to be some discussions during break between lawmakers -- bipartisan lawmakers about the Electoral Count Act and where they can find consensus on this.

What can we expect the President's role to be, given that he's been very clear he is going to be taking a new strategy as it relates to reaching out to the American public?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President can walk and chew gum at the same time. I think what people can expect is that he's going to spend more of his time engaging with, talking with the American people, and talking about how far we've come and where we need to go from here.

He also has a very talented and experienced team that's already engaged in a range of conversations with Congress.

But I can tell you from spending a lot of time with the President and in the Oval Office with him that sometimes he just picks up the phone and calls a member of Congress or a senator when you're sitting there.

So, no one is suggesting that he is not going to engage with members. What we're conveying and what you heard from him the other night is that, as you look at the time he's going to spend over the next couple of months, it's not going to be hours and hours behind closed doors in the Oval Office.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Why would the U.S. agree to submit written answers to Russia, given that it could undermine or be used to discredit the U.S. negotiating position? And is the U.S. asking for any written responses from Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, no one sees it that way from the U.S. negotiating team or from our partners and allies around the world. I think what we're engaged in here is seeing what's possible as it relates to diplomacy.

And as I noted, it's not just -- it's not written answers like we're filling out a Q&A; we're also going to convey what our concerns are and reiterate a number of the strong statements you've heard the President and Secretary Blinken convey very publicly.

So, this is just a part of the diplomatic process and diplomatic negotiations, and has been a standard part of the process often with countries and nations where you have agreements but also disagreements.

Q Does the President have a plan to evacuate Americans from Ukraine?

THE PRESIDENT: I know there have been a range of reports out this morning, which is probably why you're asking, Jacqui.

I will say that, one, we are already at a Level 4 travel advisory for Ukraine for COVID and have advised that U.S. citizens - - have been advising that U.S. citizens should be aware of reports that Russia is planning for significant military action against Ukraine.

We do conduct rigorous contingency planning, as we always do in the event of the security -- any security situation deteriorates in any country around the world. The State Department does that assessment. I would point you to them for any -- any predictions or previews of any steps they may take.

Q Is there any effort right now to get a handle on how many Americans are in Ukraine? Because I remember with Afghanistan that was sort of an open question. Is the dynamic different this time?

MS. PSAKI: It's an open question around the world. We don't put a chip in Americans when they go to countries around the world and track their movements. People can register with the State Department -- that's something they do -- or they may choose not to register, or there might be people in any country around the world who are dual citizens who haven't lived in or have never lived in the United States.

But the State Department would certainly have the number, in terms of Americans who have registered with the State Department.

Q And then, is the President aware that he was caught on a hot mic yesterday? Why does he appear to be dismissing the idea of proactive deterrence?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President certainly does not dismiss that idea, considering he has taken a lot of steps including supporting and approving the several sanctions that were put out by the Treasury Department just a couple of days ago.

I would note that the United States has delivered more security assistance to Ukraine in the last year than any point in history. In the last year alone, we committed \$650 million in security assistance to Ukraine; in total, since 2014, we've committed \$2.7 billion. These deliveries are ongoing, including today there's more deliveries coming.

In addition to traditional security assistance, such as the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, the President has authorized the presidential drawdown authority to expedite lethal aid and meet Ukraine's emergency defense needs.

We've also utilized third-party transfers, authorized by the State Department, allowing U.S. allies and partners to provide U.S. origin equipment from their inventories for use by Ukraine. Specifically, the State Department has given the go-ahead for three NATO Allies to rush anti-armor missiles and other U.S.-made weapons to Ukraine.

And finally, in identifying additional equipment held in DOD inventories that can be delivered under the Excess Defense Articles program, among other mechanisms, we recently notified Congress of our intent to deliver ~~M-17~~ [Mi-17] helicopters.

So, I would say the President is hardly waiting. Actions are pretty clear on that front.

Q And then, I wanted to ask you about something that you said yesterday.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You told me in response to -- it was a Ukraine question: "It's important to remember who the aggressor is here. The aggressor is Russia and Putin. They are building up military troops. They are pushing out misinformation in Ukraine."

So why does it seem like U.S. officials are so concerned about being seen as escalating things, if Russia has created this whole crisis?

MS. PSAKI: Because I think we want the American public and also the global community to be clear-eyed about propaganda. And they're pushing propaganda about Ukrainians. Certainly, there's propaganda pushed here in the United States, but this is about a foreign -- potential foreign conflict. It's about the buildup of troops by one power that is a much

larger military power than the other on the border. And we want to be very clear with the public about the realities and the facts.

Q One final question on a different topic.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q On crime: Yesterday, the Manhattan DA clarified his memo about downgrading certain crimes, and he said armed robberies, for instance, will be prosecuted as felonies, violence against police officers won't be tolerated -- clearing up some of the confusion around how that office intended to prosecute crimes.

Does the White House have a reaction to that or welcome that kind of clarification given that these questions do keep resurfacing?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any reaction from here to the decisions of a local district attorney -- I think a district prosecutor or a district attorney.

Q DA.

MS. PSAKI: DA.

I would say that the President -- and he'll talk about this -- he'll talk about crime. And you've -- asked me about this yesterday. But you, I think, can expect to hear him talk a little bit about crime during his -- during his remarks later this afternoon.

The President believes that no one in this country should worry about whether it's safe to ride the subway or go to -- or the bus or go to work or walk home at night. And that's why he's put more cops on the beat, has stepped up efforts to get illegal guns off the streets, and invested in proven community anti-violence programs.

It's also why he's doubled federal support for community policing with \$300 million more for cities, plus another \$700 million more to bolster federal law enforcement.

We've been working with mayors and local leaders on this, but I think the President's record, his commitment speaks for itself.

Go ahead.

Q First, just a quick follow-up to what you said about the U.S. agreeing to put a response in writing. Are you saying that the world should not view that as the United States making a concession to Russia?

MS. PSAKI: I think you should see what it has to say. But it's part of a negotiation. We've been very clear about what we are not negotiating on, which is the sovereignty of Ukraine, which is this question that is continuously raised about Ukraine's right to pursue joining NATO. That's up to NATO countries to make that decision.

And you've heard the President, Tony Blinken, and others say, time after time, that we are not making any decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine, no decisions about Europe without Europe.

But negotiating takes many forms. It takes forms where you're in person, it takes forms where there's an exchange of written materials. That's pretty standard and has been in diplomacy for decades.

Q I know you've been asked something similar, but yesterday, again, Minority Leader McConnell said that the U.S. should send forces "to shore up NATO's Eastern Flank -- not if and when Putin escalates, but now, before it's too late." So,

what is your response? Why -- why wait?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, we work in close coordination with our NATO partners and Allies, and respond to what their needs are. We've been very clear and the President has been clear that we will support whatever their needs are, should they have security needs. But I don't have anything more to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And if I may ask one quick domestic question. Just yesterday, you were talking again about the idea of chunking off parts of Build Back Better.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q If you could get 60 --

MS. PSAKI: "Chunking" -- a bad word.

Q Oh, what --

MS. PSAKI: I think maybe not the right phrase.

Q What's a better word? Splitting off, breaking apart, seeing if there was a certain policy proposal that you maybe could get 60 votes on.

Anything else you can tell us about which policy proposal you guys might feel hopeful about? Is it universal pre-K? Is it paid sick leave? Where do you guys feel like you might actually be able to get 10 Republicans?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you tell me. Is there a proposal where there are 10 Republicans? I'm not aware of one. Maybe there is.

And there are some senators who have been out there saying they support different components. I know Senator Romney has said he supports or is open to some component of the Child Tax Credit. He's not the only one. Are there 10 Republicans they can get to support that? Great. Let us know. We're happy to have a discussion about it.

That's not what the President was talking about the other night. What the President was talking about is getting as much -- although we're very open to that -- but what -- what the President was talking about is: We have 50 votes in the Senate. You need -- we're going to get as much -- a big mountain-size chunk, whatever you want to call it -- as much as we can of the Build Back Better agenda that we can get 50 votes for.

There is clear agreement on some key goals -- right? -- lowering the cost of childcare, negotiating the price of prescription drugs, lowering the cost of eldercare, making sure the wealthiest Americans and companies have to pay more, and the unfairness of the tax system. So, what we have to figure out is how much of that we can get and get approval for.

Q So, it sounds like your focus is still on a reconciliation partisan package, not --

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: It's not that it's not -- but, you tell me or your -- your -- I know you've covered the Hill before. But are there -- are there 10 Republicans who are supporting? We'd be happy to. We don't -- we don't actually -- it's kind of a mystery.

Q I remember when Ivanka Trump was up there talking about --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well --

Q -- paid leave.

MS. PSAKI: Well, listen, if there are 10 Republicans who want to come support the Child Tax Credit or something else, great. They're welcome. Let's have a conversation about it.

But, you know, that's not -- I don't really know why no one -- none of us know why they're ceding the ground on supporting the lowering the cost of childcare to us, but so far, they have.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Over the weekend, insurers started paying for at-home tests or you could apply--

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- for reimbursement, but Medicare is not.

I know that Medicare recipients can go through their doctors and some, through Advantage programs, can get reimbursement. But broadly, members of the program can't.

And I'm wondering: Why not? This seems like a group that would be -- that it would -- you would most want to, sort of, be vigilantly testing before going to gatherings, as they're elder and therefore most at risk for COVID.

And especially since you said yesterday that you had all the money that you needed to fight COVID right now, why isn't the government paying for these tests?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, there are a couple things that are happening; you kind of glossed over some of them. But let me give you some specifics.

So, state Medicaid and CHIP programs are required to cover at-home COVID tests. CMS has also issued guidance to states to effectuate this requirement under Medicaid rules. There are a lot of people who are eligible for Medicaid out there, just to be clear, and the CHIPS program.

And people who are covered by Original fee-for-service Medicare -- Medicare pays for COVID diagnostic tests performed by laboratories, such as PS- -- PCR and antigen tests.

For Medicare, we are also continuing to explore the best ways to provide critical resources that will keep Medicare beneficiaries safe and healthy, as you touched on.

So, in addition to PCR tests, rap- -- rapid tests PRs test -- PCR tests and rapid point-of-care antigen tests are available at 20,000 sites across the country.

We've also sent 50 million out to community health centers and rural health centers.

But we're also exploring a range of options. So, I'm not ruling anything out. But I just wanted to note there are a range of ways that different forms of insurance, even if it's not traditional private insurance, have been covering not just in doc- -- in doctor's office, but also at-home tests as well.

Q The Federal Reserve issued a report yesterday saying that they're weighing the possibility of launching a digital U.S. currency. They said, as part of the report, that they were asking for public feedback and would be engaging with lawmakers. So, I know that you normally defer to the independence of the Fed, but this is an instance where they're openly soliciting sort of advice and consultation

openly soliciting, sort of, advice and consultation.

And so, I'm wondering, you know, this is something that could impact our competition with China. It could have an impact in many ways on, especially, low-income Americans. So, does the President, does the White House have an opinion on this sort of question for Fed?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's unlikely we'll weigh in from here, as much as they've asked for public comment. But I can certainly check with our economic team and see.

Q The Times, yesterday, had a report about some internal memos. But they also said that there was -- that you guys were setting up executive actions on clemency for drug offenders and police department reforms. Can you give any sort of time -- can you confirm that that's kind of coming and give any sort of timeline about when we'll be hearing from the President on that?

MS. PSAKI: So, on clemency, the President has talked about -- we have talked a little bit about the President wanting to deliver on his commitment to consider clemency requests for nonviolent drug offenders. That is something that's ongoing.

I don't have anything -- anything to preview for you in terms of the timeline. But, absolutely, the fact that we have every intention of doing that is accurate -- or he has every intention.

On police reform, you know, I think we said at the time that we had -- we're holding back on executive action because we wanted to give space and room for the bipartisan negotiations to move forward. Because, of course, federal legislation is a -- is -- would be the preference because it's permanent.

But we have been considering and looking at -- I don't have anything to predict for you in terms of the timing, but we have been and are looking at that through the policy teams.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President, on Wednesday, when he was talking about keeping schools open, referenced the tens of billions of dollars that were sent out in the COVID Rescue Plan. And he said that not -- quote, "Not every district" used -- "has used it as well as it should be used." What states or school districts is he referring to there? Because he's talked about this now twice in the last couple of weeks.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

(Reporter closes the door to the briefing room.)

Well, thank you for that, first, because it's freezing in here, I think as everyone can confirm. (Laughter.)

But, I would say, Karen, so, one, what people should understand first is 98 percent of schools are open currently. It fluctuates a little bit, but 98 percent, as of today. School districts, for the most part, are spending federal relief funding, by and large, across the country.

Part of what the President's message he wanted to hammer home when he spoke the other night -- and as you said, he's talked about this a little bit -- is to spend the money right now, for any school that has some left or maybe some haven't spent all of it. And I'll get to that in a moment.

And it's important for any of these school districts to know that different school districts spend it in different ways.

So, in DeKalb County, in Georgia; and Desert Sands, in California -- they're investing in safety measures like ventilation. Cut Bank School District in Montana are increasing pay and providing bonuses to help retain educators and staff. There's lots of ways to use it and spend it for those who haven't done it. But we're continuing to exert pressure anywhere that

lots of ways to use it and spend it, for those who haven't done it. But we're continuing to exert pressure any where that hasn't.

So, in terms of -- an example would be Florida, where they have done little to -- to distribute money to -- little to no steps to distribute money to state -- across the state and to school districts.

Now, part of it is you have to write a plan for how you're going to keep schools open to get the third tranche of money, and some have been delayed in that. But, right now, that's an example of a state that could do more.

Q And you said, you know, "We're exerting pressure." How is the White House -- obviously, this money goes out to states.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But how is the White House exerting pressure?

MS. PSAKI: The Department of Education --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: -- is really the primary conduit here. But they have been working and continuously in touch with school districts and states across the country from the beginning.

Q And is there a way, from the Department of Education perspective, to have a public accounting so Americans can see where that money is going toward -- the taxpayer money?

MS. PSAKI: We, of course, work to ensure there's no waste, fraud, and abuse. And we are very closely in touch with how it's being spent with states. And I can certainly check and see if there's a public accounting available.

Q Just one quick one. It's been four days since COVIDTests.gov has been live. How many Americans have ordered tests so far? And is the plan still to start sending them out next week?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, they will be sent out very soon. I don't have an updated number of how many have been ordered. It's changing constantly. I expect we will have a more of an update on that, hopefully, by next week.

I know we have to wrap up. Go ahead.

Q On Build Back Better: First, does the White House need this bill to be passed by State of the Union? Is that the goal? You know, Congress kind of needs deadlines.

MS. PSAKI: We have not set a deadline on that. We want to get it done as quickly as possible.

Q Does it need to have a different name? Speaker Pelosi suggests that perhaps it does.

MS. PSAKI: We'll see. Do you have any ideas?

Q Actually. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: You guys are all wordsmiths.

Q No, wait. I've got a few more.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q On the Electoral Count Act --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- I know you've said that the President has many conversations on a wide range of topics with lawmakers on the Hill. But here's the question -- it's a bipartisan group right now: Is he going to let them work on their own for the moment, or is he getting engaged with the Manchin-Collins group now -- as far as you know?

MS. PSAKI: Our team is closely engaged with all of the members who are discussing every component of any legislation that is being discussed on the Hill, including this.

Q Okay. And then one more.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Sorry, one more. Can --

Q Wait, no. I was --

MS. PSAKI: Let -- let me go to Jeff because I -- I just -- I just don't want to run out of -- we got to wrap up so you guys can gather.

Go ahead, Jeff. Sorry.

Q Thanks, Jen. This happened right before the briefing. A federal judge in Texas has ruled that President Biden's mandate for federal workers to be vaccinated cannot go through. Do you have a reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me update you that 98 percent of federal workers are vaccinated [in compliance]. That is a remarkable number. I would point you to the Department of Justice on any next steps as this news, it sounds like, just broke. But obviously, we are confident in our legal authority here.

Q And you had an event with Intel today. Is the White House concerned about Intel's presence in China?

MS. PSAKI: We have obviously spoken about concerns we have had. I'm not familiar with all of the specifics of their -- of their engagement in China, so I'd have to check with our team.

We have not held back, I should say, if we have concerns about engagement in parts of the country where there are human rights abuses. We also do, at the same time, work with a range of companies, even when we voice our vocal -- our concerns about issues that we don't agree with.

Let me just do this last one.

Q Okay. Another Intel question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q So their plan for a \$20 billion semiconductor facility in Ohio -- how can this be viewed as an immediate solution to the chip shortage if the plants won't fully be online until 2025?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think our view is it's an important step forward in ensuring that we have manufacturing capacity here in the United States so that we don't have a chip shortage in the future. But we also -- the President called for the passing

of USICA -- I just reiterated at the top of the briefing -- so that we can get that \$52 billion in semiconductor investment to get more going now.

Q What's the holdup with USICA in the House? It passed the Senate ruling.

MS. PSAKI: I think Speaker Pelosi made clear she wants to move it forward. So we're eager -- the President is eager to have it signed.

Okay. Sorry, I got to wrap it up, guys. You got to -- you got to gather. I'll see you soon.

Q Does the President like Meat Loaf?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I would -- what the phrase? "I would do anything for love"? Is that (inaudible)?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, that's right. (Laughs.) You got it.

MS. PSAKI: He might say that.

12:43 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 24, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 24, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:39 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Monday.

Okay. This afternoon, the President will meet with the White House Competition Council to discuss its success thus far in providing concrete cost savings to -- for Americans families, and to discuss plans for further actions in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

The Competition Council was set up by the President's July competition executive order to coordinate and monitor progress across the entire federal government. It is comprised of 10 Cabinet members and the heads of seven independent agencies.

He'll note today that the lack of competition costs average American households about \$5,000 a year, which is a pretty significant sum when you think about people's budgets.

Since the executive order was signed six months ago, the Council's members have met every deadline in the President's order. These actions across a broad range of industries will bring real benefits to American families. For example, the FDA has taken action to lower the cost of hearing aids from thousands to hundreds of dollars for the millions of Americans suffering from hearing loss.

It's becoming cheaper and easier for Americans to fix the things they already own.

Following the executive order's support for the right-to-repair, the FTC will repair -- will ramp up enforcement actions against illegal repair restrictions. Since then, big firms like Apple and Microsoft voluntarily announced changes to their policies so that consumers can readily repair their own phones and laptops.

The Department of Justice, the FTC, and other agencies have increased efforts to challenge or block mergers that would leave customers with fewer choices, higher prices, and lower wages. For example, the Department of Justice blocked an insurance megamerger that would have raised insurance costs for consumers and businesses alike.

So, this is part of our ongoing effort.

I also wanted to share that NATO is launching a significant military training exercise called Neptune Strike '22. This is something my colleague at the Department of Defense updated on, on Friday. But it will run through February 4th and is designed to demonstrate NATO's high-end maritime strike capabilities.

The USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group will serve as the centerpiece for this military exercise and be placed under NATO operational control.

This is the first time since the end of the Cold War that a U.S. carrier strike group has gone under NATO command. And this exercise will help demonstrate the unity, capability, and strength of the transatlantic Alliance. It also advances our ability to integrate an aircraft carrier strike group into NATO's deterrence and defense efforts.

While planning for Neptune Strike began in twenty-two -- 2020, long before the current escalation of tensions from Russia's aggressive posture towards Ukraine, such exercises help the United States and its allies enhance interoperability and ensure readiness for any threat against NATO.

Josh, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks, Jen. Two subject areas.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q First, Ukraine and Russia. The President is going to have his meeting with European counterparts. What does he plan to discuss with them? And how does he plan to address the issue of natural gas, given that 40 percent of EU's natural gas imports come from Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, as we put out just a little bit earlier today in guidance, the President will hold a secure video call with European leaders as part of our close consultation and coordination with our transatlantic allies and partners in response to our shared concerns over Russia's military buildup on Ukraine's borders.

During that conversation, we expect they will discuss diplomacy, deterrence, and defense efforts. And we'll have a readout for you all afterwards. And certainly a discussion about pending -- the pending sanctions, or discussion of that, we would expect to be part of that as well.

But in terms of the impact, I don't have anything more to read out for you on that front.

Q And then, secondly, per the Supreme Court, should race be a factor in college admissions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is, I think, in relation -- I would expect -- to the announcement by the Supreme Court about the decision to take up the affirmative action case this morning.

While we're not going to comment on the litigation -- I refer those questions, of course, to the Department of Justice -- we strongly believe -- this administration -- in the benefits of diversity in higher education, and we take very seriously our

commitment to advancing equity and equal opportunity for historically underserved populations.

That's why, on day one, the President signed an executive order launching an ambitious whole-of-government response to center equity throughout the government's work. Throughout the Department of Education, the administration has provided historic investments and support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and minority-serving institutions, such as Hispanic-serving institutions, including nearly \$21 billion in cumulative support.

And we have moved swiftly to protect student civil rights and equal opportunity, including by issuing guidance about schools' obligations to investigate and address claims of discrimination and harassment.

So, of course, the Department of Justice, they can speak to their view on the litigation.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Has President Biden made a final decision about deploying more troops to Eastern Europe?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me give you a brief update. And I know that my colleague, John Kirby, is going to be briefing shortly, in about 45 minutes or so, at the Defense Department.

We have been consulting with allies on deployments and refining plans for all scenarios. We've always said we would reinforce our allies on the eastern flank.

And those conversations and discussions have certainly been part of what our national security officials have been discussing with their counterparts now for several weeks. In fact, we've never ruled out the option of providing additional assistance in advance of an invasion.

Those discussions have been ongoing with our partners and eastern flank countries. And again, I would expect that my colleague, John Kirby, would have more of an update on where the process is at this point in time.

Q So he'll make a -- John Kirby will make an announcement about whether or not he's made a decision?

MS. PSAKI: No, I think he will make -- he will provide an update on where things stand on those discussions.

Q Okay. So, last week, President Biden at the press conference said that the U.S. would fortify NATO Allies, but said it was dependent on an invasion, saying if -- he would send more troops to Poland, to Romania, if Ukraine -- if Putin did invade Ukraine. So the fact that he's considering this now and having these discussions with Pentagon leaders over the weekend, does that suggest that he believes an invasion is imminent?

MS. PSAKI: We've never actually ruled out providing additional support, additional support -- assistance to eastern flank countries in advance of any invasion. And those discussions with them have been ongoing, and certainly that's been part of our contingency planning.

Q I guess the question is: There does appear to be a shift in his thinking and his attitude toward it. Is that how you would characterize it?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't characterize it that way. We have spoken to the fact that -- and we put out a lot of information about our view of the preparations being made by President Putin and the Russians. While we can't get into the mind of President Putin, we are seeing the preparations that they're making at the border. We have been very clear and the President has been direct that military action by Russia could come at any one -- at any time. He said that last week as well.

So, we have been in conversations and discussions with eastern flank countries. Obviously, our Secretary of State just returned from a trip to Europe as well, and he was part of the discussions this weekend too. And part of that has been

contingency planning and discussing what their needs have been.

Q My last question is: Today, the President has this call with European leaders. Several of them are on this -- the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, NATO, the European Council. Why is Ukraine not on that call this afternoon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a range of conversations with the Ukrainians. Obviously, our Secretary of State met with them last week, and they will be a part of many conversations moving forward.

As I noted a little bit earlier, part of this is a discussion about deterrence and defense efforts, diplomacy, but certainly they will be a part of many conversations as they have been from the beginning.

Go ahead.

Q So what happened then in the last few days that prompted the Pentagon to present specific potential troop deployments to the President? Or put another way: Why now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wouldn't say we're characterizing it exactly that way. The President has said -- said last week, and we also said, that as we've been watching the preparations of President Putin and the Russians, that they were prepared at any moment to take military action.

We've also been in ongoing discussions, from our Secretary of State to members of our national security team, with our eastern flank partners about what their needs are and what security concerns they have.

So I wouldn't say it's a response to an abrupt moment; it's a part of an ongoing contingency planning process and discussion.

Q After this weekend, is he more or less concerned about the possibility of a Russian invasion in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he said last week that military action by Russia could come at any time. That remains his point of view.

Q And there's been clamoring in this town and over in Ukraine for a U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. Where do things stand on appointing somebody?

MS. PSAKI: Certainly understand that. I don't have any update on the status at this point in time.

Q The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said decision to draw down the U.S. presence in Kyiv at the embassy was, quote, "premature and a manifestation of excess caution."

Is this potentially the afterglow of what happened in Afghanistan -- a concern for that? Or is something else more specific prompting people to leave?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that we -- our State Department regularly reviews and assesses what steps need to be taken for the security of our personnel.

I would note that the travel advisory was already at a Level 4 since back in October. We've also been closely consulting and keeping Ukrainians abreast. I would say this is more akin to what we -- the steps we took in Ethiopia and Kazakhstan than any other country or conflict.

Q One more on Ukraine and then one other quick subject.

The House Speaker today has requested a bipartisan, all-members briefing on the situation in Ukraine of the White House. Is that something you guys plan to fulfill?

MS. PSAKI: We have been in close consultation with members and leadership from the beginning. I don't have any update on this specifically. But that's been our objective and how we have proceeded. So I'm sure we are working to meet that request and needs of members.

Q And based on some news reports, it looks as if at least Jake Sullivan and maybe others are talking to senior lawmakers about this on a fairly regular basis.

MS. PSAKI: And we have been for weeks. Mm-hmm.

Q On another subject: Another violent weekend across the country. There was a shooting in New York; there was a shooting here in D.C. of a police officer. There have been reports of a possible -- executive actions that the President might be able to take in the realm of police reform or police policy. Where do things stand on that? And might that be coming soon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me -- can I -- may I address this weekend first? And I will come around to your question, but I think you had a few in there -- important ones to address.

The events of this weekend are a reminder that law enforcement officers head into harm's way every single day. They and their families make an extraordinary sacrifice for their communities.

The President is never going to be satisfied or complacent when officers are being gunned down, or when Americans have to worry about whether they can safely ride the subway or bus or even be at work.

We've seen a surge in crime -- obviously, this weekend is a glaring example of that -- especially gun violence over the last two years. And the President has been aggressive in using the tools at our disposal to combat that. That's why he took early action on gun violence last spring, and it's why he rolled out a comprehensive plan to combat crime last summer.

He also believes, as many Americans do, that we can and must have a criminal justice system that both protects public safety and upholds our founding ideals of equal treatment under law. That's why he not only has implemented this comprehensive plan to combat crime but why he is continuing to advocate for reforms to our policing system. He thinks that we can do both. But I don't have an update on any timings for a next step on that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. First, on the markets: Does the President think it's a big deal that today the Dow Jones is down, at one point, more than 1,100 points?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to start with, we focus on the trends in the economy, not any one day and any single indicator. Unlike his predecessor, the President does not look at the stock market as a means by which to judge the economy.

I would note that the market is up around 15 percent compared to when President Biden took office. But our measure of success is really how real working families are doing -- whether they are -- have a little breathing room, whether they have a job that delivers some dignity and a paycheck that can -- they can support a family on. And we've seen a great deal of progress made on that front.

Q Thank you. On schools: In Virginia, seven districts representing 350,000 students are suing the state. They're hoping to get a strict mask mandate for students that has been rolled back by the new governor reinstated. So who does the President think knows best for students: school board members or parents?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the par- -- the President believes that public health officials have the best guidance on what we can all do to protect ourselves, including teachers, administrators and students.

It's always been up to local school districts to determine how they're going to approach what implementation measures they're going to put in place.

But here's what we know from public health officials, who are the experts on a pandemic: Studies show that masks reduce transmissions in school. They are a proven tool that helps keep students and teachers safe from COVID. And they can thus help keep schools open and safe.

In short, we know it works. And we need every leader to focus on using the tactics we know work to keep our students safe and our schools open.

I'd note you mentioned Virginia, but in Texas, the state is fighting a critical public health measure to protect our children and keep our schools safely open. For Head Start communities, ones that -- a provision that is requiring masks to keep students and keep communities safe -- they're fighting against that. Why is that? I think that has more to do with politics than it does with public health.

Q But right now, in Virginia, the law is -- now that there's a new governor -- that students should not have to wear masks if their parents say that they don't think they need to wear masks. So if a parent wants to send their school -- their kid to school with no mask, should that child be allowed to go to school and be in class?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we're -- what we're advising school districts on is to abide by public health guidelines and follow public health guidelines. And it's about keeping an entire community safe. And those are the decisions that are being -- that people should focus on making.

Q And just so that it's crystal clear for anybody watching: You guys think that ultimately, in this conflict between school board members and parents, the school board members should have more of a say in what a child --

MS. PSAKI: That's actually not what I said. I think everybody should abide by public health guidelines, not just to keep their own kids safe but keep their school community safe, whether it's teachers, classmates, administrators, others in schools.

Q Okay. On crime, to follow up on what Ed was asking about: Would you agree that the most important job for any president is to keep Americans safe?

MS. PSAKI: I would agree.

Q So you said that the President is never satisfied if people don't feel safe. Does he know that after a year in office, people do not feel safe in this country?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Peter, I think if we look at the facts here, we've seen a surge of crime over the last two years. Would you agree with that?

Q So what are you attributing the rise in crime to then?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we should be responsible in how we're reporting to the public what the -- what the res- -- what the roles are -- what the reasons for the surge in crime.

Gun violence is a huge reason for the surge in crime. Underfunding of some police departments and their need for additional resources -- something the President has advocated for consistently through the course of his career -- that's something we know we need to take action on.

And it is absolutely true that he will not be satisfied or complacent when officers are being gunned down or when Americans

have to worry about whether they can safely ride the subway or bus. That should not be a political issue. He's somebody who has had a long career of -- many decades -- of fighting for funding for police departments, for local communities in order to reduce crime.

Q But he's been here, in office, for more than a year, and the murder rate is nearing a 25-year high. So, why don't we see and hear more from the President about this? We hear all the time about things that you guys are doing to fight the pandemic because that is a risk to American people. A rising murder rate is a risk to American people too, right?

MS. PSAKI: And he has spoken to crime. But I think what people are most focused on, as they should be, are what actions he has taken. He has unveiled a strategy to focus federal law enforcement resources on combating violent crime, offered unprecedented levels of funding through the Rescue Plan for cities and states to put more cops on the beat and invest in proven community anti-violence programs -- something every Republican voted against.

The Department of Justice has announced \$139 million in grants to cities for community policing, which will put 1,000 more officers on the streets. He's also proposed doubling those grants, and he's called for an additional \$750 million for federal law enforcement. He's announced a zero-tolerance policy for gun dealers who sell willfully -- willfully sell illegal guns. And we've launched gun trafficking strike forces in New York and cities across the country. Actions are important here, and he has a long record of them.

Q But does the President think that any of that is working?

MS. PSAKI: The President thinks you should have a plan to address crime and gun violence. He has one. And we look forward to working with people who support that effort.

Q But as the murder rate nears a 25-year high, would he consider maybe trying something different?

MS. PSAKI: Trying something other than supporting a massive plus-up in funding from his predecessor; cracking down on gun trafficking and gun violence, which is a major driver of the violence we've seen across the country; working to support community policing programs and police departments across the country?

I think most people who want to fight crime would agree that's the right approach.

Q But --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead, Justin.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just -- I know Kirby is briefing later, but --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- just to put a finer point on it --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- do you have any information about how many troops are under consideration; what the timeframe for the President's decision are; sort of, the logistical details of a possible deployment?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more details from here other than to convey that we're in close consultation with eastern flank countries about their security needs. And again, we've always said we would support them. We've never said that -- that an invasion would be a prerequisite for that.

Q Do you expect the written response that you're putting together to include any requests or demands from the U.S. side,

including, you know, a timeframe for President Putin to start drawing down troops from Ukraine's border?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview in terms of what a written proposal would be. I would just note -- because I -- we've talked about this a bit -- that written proposals have been the basis of basically every agreement we've ever had with the Russians and many countries around the world. They're a standard part of diplomacy, and they're a format for providing areas where -- conveying areas where you have concern, and also -- but also outlining areas where you can work together. But I don't have anything to preview on what that would look like.

Q We didn't have a chance last week to talk about one part of the President's press conference where he said he'd like to be in a position to lift -- to say that China is meeting its commitments and, therefore, be able to lift some of the tariffs.

I'm wondering: When he said that, did he mean making good on the phase one commitments that have already been out there? I know China is not meeting those. Or does he mean additional commitments that you'd be asking for from the Chinese?

MS. PSAKI: I think he meant he is looking forward to getting some recommendations through the review process that's ongoing.

Q And then, one last one. There was an FBI raid last week on Representative Cuellar, reportedly over his ties to Azerbaijani oil executives. I know you're not going to comment on an ongoing investigation, but do you think that the congressman should step away from his committee assignments or congressional work while this investigation is ongoing?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to have any comment on this at this point.

Go ahead.

Q A couple on -- more on Ukraine, Jen. There's a proposal that's floating in the Duma that would ask Vladimir Putin to recognize the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as independent. If Putin does that, would you regard that as an escalation?

MS. PSAKI: I have not spoken with our national security team about that. You know our view on the sovereign -- the integral [sic] -- the sovereign -- the sovereignty of Ukraine. And, you know, I don't have any other comments on it, though, at this point in time.

Q Okay. Under what circumstances would we evacuate American citizens and diplomats from Ukraine? And can that be done without the U.S. military?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the reason that we -- the State Department issued the guidance they did -- which, again, is a standard process that the State Department issues -- does -- and regularly -- with a range of countries where we have security concerns -- was to make very clear that we -- that American citizens -- our recommendation is that U.S. citizens currently in Ukraine consider departing now using commercial or other privately available transportation options, use the online forum and our updated travel advisory to tell us their plans so they can best conduct our ongoing contingency planning, and register in STEP to ensure they receive alerts and guidance from the State Department.

We are -- there is not an intention for there to be a departure or an evacuation along those lines, so we are conveying to American citizens they should leave now.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: And, in fact, there's not -- there is not precedent, beyond Afghanistan, for that to be how it operates.

Q Got it. And then, just more broadly: For years, NATO members have fallen short of their defense spending commitments. Last year, more than 60 percent of the Alliance's 30 members, including half of the Bucharest Nine that are

commitments. Last year, more than 60 percent of the Alliance's 30 members, including half of the Bucharest nine that are right near Russia there, failed to meet that -- their 2 percent GDP spending commitment. If Europeans aren't willing to expend blood and treasure on their self-defense, why should Americans be expected to do so?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are continuing to advocate for all members to reach the 2 percent goal that has been the vi- -- the President's position since he was the Vice President -- so, for many years now.

I would say that we have a sacred obligation under NATO, and we believe it is also in our interest to support our eastern flank countries and their security, and also to be clear about the value we have as Americans, which is that no country should be able to take with force another country, as Russia is attempting to do at this point in time.

Q And one last one. You said that military incursions by Russia into Ukraine would trigger stiff economic sanctions. Does that apply to our policy with China and Taiwan?

MS. PSAKI: As it rel- --

Q If there was a military incursion of some kind into Taiwan, would there be economic sanctions? Could China expect that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview on this -- that at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, at the press conference last week, the President spoke a lot about Build Back Better and his thoughts about sort of where the sweet spot might be to save as much of that as he can. I think, the next day, Senator Manchin was asked if he'd spoken with the President, and he said he hadn't yet. Has there been any conversation -- direct conversation between the President and Senator Manchin since last week?

MS. PSAKI: We're just not going to speak to or confirm any conversations the President has with members of the Senate, moving forward.

Q Can you broadly give us a sense of when those conversations will, sort of, ramp up in earnest?

MS. PSAKI: The President has been in touch with a range of senators. We're just not going to outline those or confirm those specifically.

Q On -- on putting that together and getting it through the Senate with 50 votes, is the State of the Union more or less the soft deadline? Or is this something that may well extend beyond that?

MS. PSAKI: We haven't set a deadline. I think what our objective is and what the President's objective is, is to move forward on, you know, an effort in Congress -- in the Senate to lower costs for the American people and do that without raising the deficit -- pay for it; make sure we're easing the burden that families have across the country. We need 50 votes to do that, but that is -- we don't have -- we have not set a deadline.

Q Can I just ask you one other thing about infrastructure? You may have seen our story and reporting elsewhere about Republican lawmakers, who oppose the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law out in the states, over the recess touting the benefits -- taking credit, in some cases, for doing that.

I know that this is a big pillar of the Democrats' 2022 midterm argument and the President's case for a successful first year. He's touted the bipartisan nature of this. Is he going to take issue with any of the Republicans who are out there who -- I mean, is he going to call them out for saying that, you know, they should get credit for something that they opposed? Or is he going to let that slide?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say we welcome the number of Republicans who voted against the infrastructure bill coming around to recognize the impact on their communities. We've seen this playbook before, so perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise.

And I don't think I can stand up here and rule out what the President is or isn't going to call out moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. The President spoke last week about Russia's historic concerns about loss of empire and encirclement. So, my question is: If you're sending some thousands of U.S. troops to the Baltics or the eastern flank, is there a chance that that will increase the risk of war rather than reducing it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've had troops in the eastern flank countries for decades.

Q Right. But we're -- it sounds like what's being discussed is sending more right now, at a time of real tension.

MS. PSAKI: And we have a sacred obligation to support the security of our eastern flank countries. I think it's important to remember who the aggressor is here. It is not the United States. It is not these eastern flank countries. It is Russia who has tens of thousands of troops on the border of Ukraine. They have the power to de-escalate. We would certainly welcome that.

Q And I know both you and the President spoke about the "little green men" --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- infiltrators into the country. Now that the British have put out intelligence of a possible coup planned by Moscow in Ukraine, how would the U.S. respond if that happened? Would that trigger the same sanctions that we're talking about here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get into intelligence matters, of course. We've been warning about Russian tactics like this for weeks. Reports of this kind of plotting are deeply concerning; if acted upon, would constitute a severe escalation. And, certainly, there would be consequences.

Q And then, just one more on the sched. I know we've all been anticipating the President is going to hit the road. Is the reason there's nothing on the public schedule these tensions with -- involving Ukraine, or another reason?

MS. PSAKI: We -- I expect we will have some travel very, very soon. We're just looking to finalize the details.

Go ahead, Kimberly.

Q Thanks. A couple of questions. First, a quick housekeeping question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Can you confirm the Qatari Emir will be coming to the White House at the end of the month and if the discussions will center around energy supply to Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I know there's been discussion of that. I don't have final confirmation of it. I will work to see if we can get that to you after the briefing.

Q Okay, perfect. And then, as the administration weighs reinstating the terrorist designation on the Houthis, is the President concerned this could block humanitarian aid? And why would the President consider this if millions are at risk of

THE PRESIDENT CONSIDERED THIS COULD BLOCK HUMANITARIAN AID. AND WHY WOULD THE PRESIDENT CONSIDER THIS IF HUMANITARIANS ARE AT RISK OF losing assistance, given his policy of upholding human rights?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that we call on all parties to the conflict to de-escalate and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of all civilians, and participate fully in an inclusive U.N.-led peace process. All parties must commit to a peaceful, diplomatic solution to ending the conflict and advance a durable resolution that improves the lives of Yemenis and allows them to collectively determine their own future.

There have been dangerous escalations in days, which is, of course, why you were asking. These escalations only exacerbate a dire humanitarian crisis and the suffering of the Yemeni people.

We are deeply concerned by these reports, and we are continuing to engage at a diplomatic level. And our Special Envoy, Lenderking, reaffirmed our unwavering commitment. And he has been recently on the ground pressing parties for de-escalation and protection for civilian lives.

Q And then, quickly: A UK court is now allowing Julian Assange to appeal his extradition to the United States. The Justice Department, as you know, isn't commenting. But what about the President? He says press freedom is critical for democracy, so why is he continuing to pursue this case? Is the reason that he's pursuing this Trump-era case because Julian Assange embarrassed the Democratic Party in 2016?

MS. PSAKI: Again, this is under the purview of the dem- -- the Department of Justice, so I don't have any comment from here.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. On the Palin-New York Times case -- I know you can't maybe speak specifically to the case, but does the White House have any concerns about threats to press freedoms, to press access, to the limits of the First Amendment protection?

MS. PSAKI: I obviously can't speak to the case, so I appreciate you saying that at the top.

I will say that I think the President has shown that he respects the value of the freedom of the press. He obviously took a step earlier this year to ensure there couldn't be a replication of actions that had been taken over prior administrations, as it related to journalists. So, I think that speaks to his commitment, but I don't have any more comments on the case.

Q And then, following off of Ed, I know you guys have forecasted, potentially, policing reform --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- executive action. Some civil rights advocates also want to see additional voting rights executive actions. Is there anything -- any details or any timeline for what you think the President, the White House may do there, considering that it stalled in Congress?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you know, the President is going to keep fighting until his last breath, as you -- as you've heard him say, on voting rights because he thinks it's so vitally important. We did do an executive order early on in the administration, which was quite extensive and comprehensive, that is still being implemented.

In terms of additional executive orders that would be possible, that we have the authority to do, I don't have anything to predict on -- along those lines. But we are going to continue to fight to get federal legislation passed. We are going to continue to work with states to ensure that there is proper protections. And there is, of course, more work ahead.

Go ahead.

Q Yes. There are currently at least 150 American military advisors in Ukraine, including members of the Florida National Guard. Are those soldiers going to remain in Ukraine? Are there contingency plans if hostilities break out to remove them? What's their disposition?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the Department of Defense to ask them that question.

Q My colleague mentioned Afghanistan. And one of the things that you hear among Russian propaganda in Ukraine is that the United States is an unreliable ally that is using Ukraine as a pawn. And they point to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan as evidence that the United States cannot be counted on. How does the United States respond to that? And has the Afghanistan withdrawal complicated diplomacy in this regard?

MS. PSAKI: It has not, in our experience. We -- the President ended a 20-year war in Afghanistan -- something he had talked about consistently doing for some time as he was running for President and even before then.

I think our commitment to our NATO partners is clear. Our commitment to Ukrainians is clear. We've sent more security assistance over the last year than in any year in recent history. We've been in constant contact, as is evidenced by the President's call this afternoon, with our European partners as we work to ensure we're in lockstep as we approach the next stage and anticipate what President Putin may or may not do.

So, what I would say to that is: That sounds like the old Russian propaganda playbook -- something we've talked about in the past. And I'd encourage anyone to be mindful of that.

Q And then, finally, there's negotiations going on in Congress for Russian sanctions if they do take military action against Ukraine. Does the United States support Congress acting? And are they involved in these negotiations?

MS. PSAKI: We are keeping -- we are regularly updating and briefing leaders in Congress and -- about what steps are under consideration, what the status is of things we're seeing on the ground. Obviously, we've talked about a lot of this publicly as well.

And we've also been clear that we have a -- a severe sanctions package of economic options that is under consideration should they decide to invade.

We also recently sanctioned a couple of individuals for their engagement as well.

But I don't have anything in terms of the specific steps under consideration. We have our own severe steps that we are considering here, and we're keeping Congress abreast of that.

Q Does it help to have Congress involved?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're working in lockstep with them. We are briefing them. We are conveying to them what we're thinking about and considering, and, of course, getting feedback from them as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. I recognize that the White House has said that they have, you know, very severe sanctions that are prepared if Russia invades. Is there any thought to enacting sanctions before Russia invades as a form of deterrence? Or is that under consideration?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we did announce a couple of sanctions -- sets of sanctions from the Treasury Department last week in response to their -- the involvement of a few individuals.

We've also plussed up our security assistance packages that we've been delivering to the Ukrainians, including recent

deliveries over the last couple of days.

And obviously, as we were talking about earlier in this briefing, there's been discussions about how we can support the security of eastern flank countries.

But also, we are mindful of what we think is the most effective deterrent. And the severe economic sanctions pact is something that would be -- go far beyond what was done and what was on the table in 2014, including the consideration of imposing unprecedented export control measures that would hit hard at President Putin's ambitions are part of the discussion. And our assessment is that is most effective as -- as a deterrent tool and not as one we would do in advance.

Q Okay. So, you're saying the threat of the sanctions is the most effective deterrent tool that --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Q I have a question, just to follow up. I know that, you know, you were asked about Americans who are now in Ukraine. I know you said that there is no precedent, you know, outside of Afghanistan, for evacuations in ca- -- if there was, like, some type of military incursion by the Russians.

So, I just want to be clear: If Americans are still in Ukraine and things start happening with Russia, are they pretty much on their own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are conveying very clearly now that now is the time to leave and that there are means to do that. Of course, there's commercial airlines. You can depart over land. There's obviously the embassy there to provide assistance.

And this is very similar to what we did in Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, and many other countries over the course of the last several decades.

But there is not an intention or a plan for any military evacuation.

Q And just quickly, in the -- in the past, a call -- another call with Putin was still on the table. I believe that the President was supposed to talk with his advisors about that this weekend. Like, what -- have any decisions been made about that? Will there be another call or another talk with Putin?

MS. PSAKI: The President remains open to leader-to-leader diplomacy, of course. He knows how effective that can be.

But I don't have anything to predict or preview at this point in time in terms of a call between them.

Hold on. Let me just get to the last two, and then I'll come back around.

Go ahead.

Q The President said last week that he has, basically, on a daily basis, to work to keep unity in NATO. How unified are NATO partners when it comes to hard and meaningful sanctions against Russia?

And what is the President's assessment or the White House's assessment of the new German chancellor in that case?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know that my -- that our Secretary of State spoke to this just yesterday. And what I would note is that -- as he said, that we are confident the Germans share our concerns and are prepared to respond swiftly, effectively, and in a united way to Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Germany is one of our closest allies. In fact, we look forward of course, to welcoming the chancellor here to the United States in February.

The Germans have said, as you know, that if Russia further invades Ukraine, the -- the future of Nord Stream 2 -- the future of Nord Stream 2 would be in grave jeopardy.

This is real leverage over Putin. If Putin wants to see gas flow through the pipeline, he cannot invade Ukraine. The pipeline is, of course, not operational, but that is often the context of how this question is asked.

I think what the President was conveying is that it doesn't happen on its own. It requires work. It requires conversations. It requires face-to-face diplomacy. I think there's been over 100 engagements that senior members of his national security team and the President have taken a part of -- part in, in order to ensure that we are united and strong as we -- as we confront the threats posed by President Putin.

Q Will Germany need more work than other NATO partners?

MS. PSAKI: I would say Germany remains one of our key partners and allies. And again, we are working in lockstep with them.

Go ahead.

Q Yes. Hi, Jen. Senator Susan Collins is leading a working group looking at reforming the Electoral Count Act so that during the counting of the Electoral College, a Vice President could not reject one slate of electors and, say, recognize a rival slate supporting a rival candidate.

I'm just wondering whether the White House has talked to either Senator Collins or any other senators about this, and, given, shall we say, recent history, whether the President supports reforming the Electoral Count Act.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've never said we were opposed to it. We are in touch with a range of senators -- I'm not going to detail who, but -- across the board, from senior members of the legislative team, senior advisors to the President -- about a range of steps that can be taken.

What's important to note -- and I've said it in the past, but I'll just reiterate it -- that it does not take the place of, it is not a replacement for the John Lewis Voting Rights Act or any of the voting rights federal legislation we were working to get across the finish line because they do entirely different things, including creating a baseline for what the American people should expect and, frankly, demand in terms of what kind of access they should have to participate in the voting process.

And, of course, the -- the requirement that any state that has a history of voter suppression would have to get approval from the Department of Justice in order to change voting laws -- the Electoral Count Act doesn't do that.

But we are open to the conversations. We've been participating in the conversations. But it's -- it's not a replacement for.

Q Okay. On a different subject, so much of the public discourse about so-called "Havana Syndrome" has come from anonymous leaks. And I'm just wondering: How soon will the National Security Council release their expert report on Havana Syndrome and -- these anomalous health incidents? And will this report be made, you know, public in a fulsome way?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I know there's been a recent CIA report that talks about the findings of their interim analysis. It does not -- which does not rule out that a foreign actor may be involved in a subset of reported cases and affirms that the intelligence community will be drilling down in its analysis on a subset of cases -- the toughest unresolved ones, of course, to try to determine whether a foreign actor may be involved.

There are a range of investigations and efforts underway across the U.S. government. And we continue to take every report of a suspected incident ~~safely~~ [seriously].

What's most important is the President has asked -- has asked his National Security team to ensure we are leaving no stone unturned in ensuring that people who have been impacted receive the proper healthcare they need.

I can't make a prediction of what a final release of a report would look like. I would really point you to the intelligence community on that.

Q Okay. Just one last one. Just yesterday, in D.C. -- not far from here, actually -- there was an anti-mask --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- anti-lockdown rally where, you know, some of the rhetoric around that was talking about Nuremberg-style trials to, you know, hold Anthony Fauci to account, to go after the media for spreading lies, things like this.

I'm just wondering how the administration is going to respond to what appears to be a growing intensity and potential for violence in the anti-vax movement.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are well aware that there is a loud and vocal minority, empowered through social media and media platforms that proliferate disinformation, politicians who espouse conspiracy theories and fundraise off of opposition to public health. We know that.

We also know that 87 percent of American adults have at least one shot. That's the vast, vast majority. And over 210 million Americans are fully vaccinated.

So our view is that it's wrong, it's dangerous, and it stands in the way of a coordinated effort to save more American lives.

Q Something like only 25 percent -- I don't know what the number (inaudible) is -- closer to 25 percent have their booster. Do you feel like you guys are sort of losing the war when it comes to the messaging on the importance of these types of public health measures, like getting vaccinated?

MS. PSAKI: Again, our view is that it's a loud and vocal minority, but still dangerous, still problematic.

The fact that 87 percent of American adults -- all those people, of course, mathematically did not vote for Joe Biden -- have had at least one shot means we far surpassed where I think most people think we would be.

It's difficult and challenging, of course, to get more people vaccinated. We know that. And, of course, efforts that are dangerous and wrong by groups like this are problematic, as is the spread of misinformation on social media platforms, unfortunately out of the mouths of some prominent officials. All of that is problematic and harmful.

But again, I think we should be mindful of the large percentage of people that have had one shot, 75 percent have had two shots. Obviously, our effort has been to get more people boosted, but if you're starting the process, that's a good sign.

Yeah.

Q Just two follow-ups. And thank you for working the room and for coming back. Just two more details --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- on Ukraine. Was there something specific that prompted today's meeting with those European leaders?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's a part of our ongoing contingency planning and discussions about what we are seeing, but also how we can help protect and support their security as well.

Q So it wasn't like the intelligence report from the British over the weekend or something prompted everybody to get together?

MS. PSAKI: No. Part of ongoing contingency discussions.

Q And, obviously, he gets briefed on this in his daily intelligence briefing. We know he had this briefing over the weekend at Camp David. Can you give us any more detail or a sense of how often he's -- the President is being briefed on Ukraine? Who's doing it? Is he asking for updates every hour? You know, give us some sense of what's going on on this issue specifically.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I can tell you, from being in a lot of meetings with him that are unrelated to Ukraine as well, that he is often asking for updates and looking for updates from his national security team on where things stand, how conversations are going on. And that's something he regularly asks for.

He's seeing his team or members of his team every day. Of course, there are central members that you're very familiar with who participate in the PDB -- Jake Sullivan and others. And, of course, he's regularly talking with our Secretary of State, who has been front and center in the diplomatic efforts.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

Q Jen, do you have a date on the German Chancellor visit? You just, kind of, like, offhandedly mentioned (inaudible).

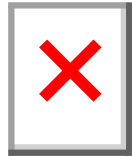
MS. PSAKI: Yeah, we'll -- we'll get it to you after the briefing. Yes. Important -- an important visit.

2:24 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with UAE and Saudi Arabia Ambassadors to the United States
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 24, 2022 5:51 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 24, 2022

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with UAE and Saudi Arabia Ambassadors to the United States

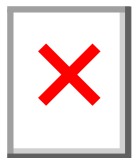
Today National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with both UAE Ambassador to the United States Yousef Al Otaiba and Saudi Ambassador to the United States Reema bint Bandar Al Saud to discuss ongoing Houthi attacks against civilian targets in the UAE and Saudi Arabia that have resulted in civilian deaths and injuries in both countries. The Ambassadors and Mr. Sullivan discussed joint efforts to hold the Houthis accountable. Mr. Sullivan reiterated the United States' commitment to the security of both the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where tens of thousands of American citizens live and work. He also welcomed their commitment to supporting UN-led efforts to ultimately end the war in Yemen through a political process, and underscored the importance of all parties to the conflict abiding by their obligations under international humanitarian law.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 25, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 25, 2022 5:37 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 25, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:19 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay, I just have one item.

Welcome, MJ. I think -- well, I know you've been here before, but it's the first time since I've been here.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, one item for all of you at the top: Last night, President Biden spoke by phone with New York City Mayor Eric Adams to express his deepest condolences over the tragic shootings last Friday of two New York Police Department officers, including one fatally.

President Biden reiterated his admiration for the brave men and women of law enforcement who risk their lives on a daily basis to protect our communities, including the deputy killed in Houston and the officer wounded in Washington, D.C. And he expressed his firm support for Mayor Adams's efforts to combat gun violence and violent crime.

During the call, the President also reiterated his commitment to serve as a strong federal partner for New York City and other communities grappling with the increase in gun crime we've seen over the past two years.

He discussed the steps his administration has taken to combat gun violence, including by providing cities and states with historic levels of funding through the Rescue Plan to invest in fighting crime by putting more cops on the beat and

supporting community anti-violence programs, as well as through stepped-up federal law enforcement efforts, such as the gun trafficking strike forces the Department of Justice has established in New York City and other major cities around the country.

Since their announcement last summer, those strike forces have already opened over 350 investigations nationally and have taken over 2,000 guns off of the streets.

With that, Josh, why don't we start with you?

Q Wonderful. Thanks, Jen. Ukraine's government is telling its people that a Russian invasion is not imminent. Their defense minister said, "Don't worry, sleep well. No need to have your bags packed." Does the U.S. agree with that assessment that an invasion is not imminent?

MS. PSAKI: Well, no one can get into the mind of President Putin or Russian leadership. We all know that is the case.

What we have seen is a range of preparations, including 100,000 troops at the border, bellicose rhetoric, and actions, as we've talked about in here, including false-flag operations to try to spread misinformation throughout the region and even the world, setting up the predicate for an invasion.

So, while, of course, our preferred path is diplomacy -- and we can't predict where the mind of President Putin is -- we've certainly seen aggressive actions and preparations increasing at the border.

Q And then, secondly, the FDA yesterday withdrew the EUA for some monoclonal antibody treatments because they don't work against Omicron, but Florida continues to push for the treatment for people in the state. What's your response to Governor DeSantis? And what's your message to the people of Florida?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's just take a step back here just to realize how crazy this is a little bit. We've approached COVID treatments like filling a medicine cabinet. We're not relying on one type, one brand, or treatment. We invested in and continue to buy a variety across monoclonal antibodies, preexposure prevention therapies, and oral antivirals.

We have provided 71,000 doses of antivirals to Florida, including 34,000 additional treatments that do work against Omicron, just this last week. I'm sorry, about -- of a range of those treatments, I should say, to be clear.

What the FDA is making clear is that these treatments -- the ones that they are fighting over, that the Governor is fighting over -- do not work against Omicron, and they have side effects. That is what the scientists are saying.

We have sent them 71,000 doses of treatments that are effective against Omicron and are effective also against Delta. And they are still advocating for treatments that don't work.

We've seen, unfortunately, from the beginning in our pandemic response, a range of steps or pushes that have been made -- through social media platforms; unfortunately, from the mouths of elected officials -- advocating for things that don't work, even when we know things do work -- injecting disinfectant, promoting other pseudoscience, sowing doubt on the effectiveness of vaccines and boosters, and now promoting treatments that don't work.

We know what works: vaccines and boosters. We have a range of doses -- of things that do work -- and treatments, and we're providing those to Florida.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The President said last night that there is "total unanimity with all of the European leaders" on Russia. How can he say that when Germany, for example, has been so outspoken against even providing arms to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what the President is speaking to is united agreement among our NATO partners, including Germany, about the fact that there will be severe consequences -- severe economic consequences should they invade.

As our National Security Advisor and our Secretary of State have said, that doesn't happen -- that unity doesn't happen on its own; it's required a lot of work. It also means that actions may not be identical, but we will be unified and they will be strong and severe.

I'll also note that the Germans -- and we expect the Chancellor to come here in February, and hopefully we'll have more specifics on that soon -- has also been vocal about this and about the severity of a response that would -- that would take place should Russia invade.

Q And how is the U.S. currently assessing the risk of a Russian cyberattack on the U.S. homeland? And what is it doing to prepare for it?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any intelligence that I'm going to read out from here, as I don't think you would certainly expect.

Obviously, we're focused right now on Russia's intentions as it relates to military invasion on the ground and other steps they've taken pushing propaganda, false-flag operations that we've spoken about quite vocally from here.

Broadly, we are always preparing for any -- any action that's related to cyber or any other activity that any country could take. But I don't have a prediction against -- about that at this point in time, nor is that something that our national security team has assessed that I'm aware of.

Q Do you think we can expect that the President will speak with President Putin anytime soon again?

MS. PSAKI: He's always been open to engaging at a leader-to-leader level. He knows how effective that is. He's, obviously, spoken with President Putin directly and candidly a number of times, including in person. I don't have anything to predict at this point in time. We're -- he's meeting with his national security team on a daily basis, getting updates. And if that assessment is made -- a recommendation is made, we'll let you all know.

Go ahead.

Q As it relates to the 8,500 American troops who have been put in a heightened state of readiness in preparation to go there, has the President or has the White House heard from our allies -- NATO Allies -- about the expectation or desire for any unilateral American troops to go to that region?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the announcement was made, as you know, Peter, to be a part of a NATO force, right? And so, all of these consultations that are -- have been happening over the last several days with our European partners and NATO partners has been about that -- 8,500 servicemembers, troops who are at the ready.

And the decision about whether they would be deployed would be made in coordination with our NATO partners and allies, including -- any additional discussions or requests. Outside of that, I would point you to the Pentagon. I don't have anything to assess for you.

Q So, for clarity, there's no -- to the best of your knowledge right now, it's the President's intention to work exclusively via NATO, to not send any troops unilaterally in any form?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we're working through NATO to plus-up support in our eastern flank countries. That is what NATO is there for, and we are committed to the sanctity of that alliance.

Just to be clear, there is no intention or interest or desire by the President to send troops to Ukraine. NATO is a forum to support our eastern flank partners and countries, and that's what the focus has been on.

Q And given the change in the state of readiness for that 8,500 troops that could go as part of this response force in conjunction with NATO, when should we expect to hear from the President of the United States about the situation as it relates to Russia-Ukraine in the form of some public remarks to Americans about whatever sacrifices that might take -- in terms of the U.S. men and women going there and the like, and anything beyond that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have anything to predict in terms of a public speech. Obviously, he gave a two-hour press conference last -- just a few days ago where he answered a number of questions on Russia and Ukraine, and we'll continue to do that.

But right now, a lot of our focus and his focus is on diplomacy, is on engaging with leaders, is on having conversations with members of his national security team.

Q And lastly, very quickly, the French President obviously has expressed a desire for the EU to be working sort of as the leader on this, as opposed to NATO leading the charge, as the relationship goes to Russia and the negotiations go. Would the U.S. be comfortable with the EU leading those direct conversations, as opposed to NATO being the lead?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a range of formats and forums that have been ongoing -- right? -- including conversations through NATO, including conversations through the OSCE. I know that there are conversations that are happening through the Normandy Format, that are happening today in Paris. And we certainly support international efforts that take place in a range of forums.

Obviously, NATO is a forum that we work with and coordinate with our partners as it relates to military support and how we're going to provide assurances to eastern flank countries. So that's certainly the appropriate forum for that.

But again, there's a range of forums to discuss de-escalation, negotiation, including the Normandy Format that's taking place today.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. A question about immigration.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Why is it that large numbers of single adult men are being released into the United States just hours after being apprehended at the southern border?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not sure the specifics of what you're referring to, Peter. What I can tell you, in terms of what our policy is and how we're approaching the border, is that we continue to be under Title 42. Migrants who cannot be expelled under Title 42 are placed into immigration proceedings.

And one of those avenues could be placement in an alternative to detention program in the interior of the United States. Sometimes that means moving migrants to other parts of the United States to move to different detention facilities, where they wait for next steps in the immigration process, such as a court hearing, and are required to check in with a local ICE office.

So that is some -- certainly something that is happening out there in the country and is consistent with our policy.

Q And you mentioned that they're supposed to check in at a local ICE office. But we know that just between March and August, which is a very small sample size, DHS says more than 47,000 of these migrants that were given notices to report did not show up. So, why let them into the U.S. unsupervised in the first place?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we have stringent protocols and processes that we implement here. That includes expelling individuals who come in under Title 42, given we are still in a global pandemic, and includes those who are -- do not show up will be subject to the repercussions of that.

So, that is the policy we re implementing from our Homeland Security Department.

Q Okay. On Ukraine, President Biden met with Putin in person in June in Geneva. And afterwards, he came out and he said that the two of them arrived at a conclusion. He said, "It s clearly not in anybody s interest -- your country s or mine -- for us to be in a situation where we re in a new Cold War. And I truly believe he thinks that -- he understands that." Has the President changed his opinion about what Putin thinks?

MS. PSAKI: How -- are you suggesting we re in a new Cold War?

Q I m just asking -- it seems like the President thought in June that things were going to be good. And right now, things are not looking good.

MS. PSAKI: I don t actually think that s at all what the President said. He gave an extensive press conference where he conveyed it wouldn t happen overnight and that there was work that we could do together. And that is something that -- that s how you approach a diplomatic relationship. You are vocal; there are consequences when you disagree and when you have strong concerns. And you ve seen us implement those.

You still look for places and areas where you can work together. That remains how we re working with Russia.

Q Okay. There s a Buzzfeed report now, suggesting that the Ukrainian government is upset the U.S. pulled citizens out of Ukraine before many other countries did. And this report says that a close -- a source close to the Ukrainian president thinks those Americans are safer in Kyiv than in Los Angeles. What do you make of that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we re always going to make decisions that are in the security interests of people who are serving as diplomats around the world. And we have assessments that are made by the State Department. Hence, the decision and the announcement made over the last couple of days, and the fact that we put in a Level 4 advisory back in October, conveying very clearly to Americans they should leave Ukraine.

Look, I will let others assess, but there are 100,000 troops -- Russian troops -- on the border of Ukraine and no clarity that the leader of Russia doesn t intend to invade. That sounds pretty dangerous to me.

I would also say that the Ukrainian leaders have welcomed the security assistance -- and they ve even met us at the airport -- that we have been providing over the course of the last several days. So that seems to be contradicting that assessment.

Q Okay. And then, last one: The Secretary of State, a few days ago, tweeted, "I #StandWithUkraine." Has that ever worked at stopping an authoritarian regime from doing anything -- a hashtag?

MS. PSAKI: I will have to say that unlike the last administration, we don t think Twitter is the only means of engaging or negotiating or discussing important topics. But it is important for us to convey to the Ukrainian people, who do view commentary through a range of forums -- I don t know how many are Fox News watchers; maybe some of them -- and -- including social media, that we stand with them, we support them. And that includes in their efforts to protect the sovereignty of their country.

Go ahead.

Q Can I -- you mentioned a visit by the German Chancellor.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you have a date on that, or is it sometime in the next --

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. Hopefully, we'll have one soon.

Q Okay. Can I, then, pivot back to Russia? The U.S. is in talks with other countries to deal with potential shortages in gas supply.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you speak to that a little bit -- and, in particular, what requests you've made of Qatar and whether they have responded about whether they would be able to step in and fill any shortfall should that happen in the case of a conflict?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So it's -- our approach is not about any one country or any individual entity. We're engaging with a range of countries and partners to discuss what we -- what could be shortages.

So, I'm not going to get into any specifics of what any conversations entail. They can certainly speak for themselves.

But what I can give you an update on is that a disruption, of course, in physical energy supplies transiting -- transiting Ukraine would most acutely affect natural gas markets in Europe. And so, we're engaging our European allies to coordinate response planning, including how to deploy their existing energy stockpiles. That's part of it.

But we've also been working to identify additional volumes of non-Russian natural gas from North Africa and the Middle East, Asia, and the United States. We're in discussion with major natural gas producers around the globe to understand their capacity and willingness to temporarily surge natural gas output and to allocate these volumes to European buyers.

And we're also engaging with major buyers and suppliers of LNG to ensure flexibility in existing contracts and storage is managed and enables diversion to Europe.

So, we are of course preparing, as we are in a lot of other areas, a range of contingencies should there be a disruption, for a range of reasons, to natural gas.

I would also note that natural gas markets are very regional by nature, given constraints on how much can be exported. So, any reduction in Russian exports of natural gas to Europe would have a minimal impact on U.S. prices. That's what our anticipation would be.

Q And then, sorry, on Qatar specifically, there's some -- there's a belief that they've sort of allocated their production right now, which is running at more or less full capacity, to Asia. Have you had any feedback from that country specifically or --

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to speak for any individual country or any individual diplomatic conversations at this point in time. That's why I said that it's about -- it's not based on our approach here and strategy is not based on one -- any one individual country or entity. It's a broad approach that includes engagement with Europeans, as well as suppliers in North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and in the U.S.

Q And then, broadly, can you say -- you know, last week was when the administration began to, sort of, ratchet up warnings that an invasion could be imminent, it could happen at any time. This week, where -- can you say how, if at all, the President's view has changed about the risk? Is it the same? Is it getting worse? Is it getting (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I think when we said it was imminent, it remains imminent. But, again, we can't make a prediction of what decision President Putin will make. We're still engaged in diplomatic discussions and negotiations.

Q So, there's no new element in the last week that's changed the President's view one way or the other on (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, "imminent" has a pretty intense meaning. Doesn't it?

Q I agree. I agree.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q And it's still the belief that it's imminent?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Q Roger. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Yes, go ahead, Jeff.

Q Hi, Jen. The Kremlin is using the U.S. announcement of putting 8,500 troops on alert to say that it's the U.S. that is fueling this conflict. The White House's reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that our commitment to our NATO partners and allies is ironclad. If you go back to 9/11, the only -- the first time that Article 5 was invoked, it was in defense of the United States.

And we take our commitment to our eastern flank partners and NATO Allies very seriously.

But what is important to note is that the aggressive behavior here is on the part of the Russians. This is a defensive alliance, not an offensive alliance. And what we're doing here is not making a decision -- as has been clear by NATO partners and by the President and members of our national security team -- to deploy, but just to be ready. And we have a responsibility to do that so that people who might be deployed can tell their family members it's a shorter period of time, and to be ready to deliver on our commitment to our NATO partners.

Q And can you clarify, are those 8,500 troops who are now "at the ready" as you said -- are they already based in Europe? We obviously have a lot of troops there.

MS. PSAKI: Europe and the United States.

Q Europe and the United States.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q And did NATO request that the U.S. put them on the ready, or is that a U.S. offer?

MS. PSAKI: It's a conversation with NATO -- so, a collaborative discussion.

Q And a follow-up on Peter's question about Ukraine. Are there direct ques- -- or excuse me, direct contacts with Ukraine right now to allay their concerns that the U.S. was acting preemptively to -- or too early, too soon to take personnel out of the country?

MS. PSAKI: So, yeah, we are in constant contact with the Ukrainians to reiterate our support, to convey updates on shipments of supplies, military equipment -- something that's been happening over the last several days.

Our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, has spoken with his counterpart at least eight times over the past few weeks.

And U.S. officials at the State Department, Defense Department, and across our government continue to work in close coordination on a daily basis with Ukrainian officials.

Secretary Blinken, as you know, was in Ukraine last week, and he called his Ukrainian counterpart to read out his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov.

So, we have been in constant and close contact with the Ukrainians' leaders at a range of levels, as well as with our European partners.

Q And just lastly --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- Senator McConnell gave you some unusual praise -- the White House -- today about its preparations for Ukraine, saying that it looked like the White House was prepared to act "before an incursion" and not after. Do you know what steps he was referring to there? Is that just the troop deployment?

And, B, were you pleased to hear some positive words from Senator McConnell?

MS. PSAKI: Well, yes, of course, we were. I mean, look, I think abiding by our Article 5 commitments, standing up for the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine, making clear that one country should not be able to invade and take over territory from another country -- that's not just a Democratic belief or a Republican belief, that's central to who we are as a country and who leaders like Leader McConnell -- or Senator McConnell, like President Biden have -- that's what their belief has been for many decades. So, we certainly welcome that.

I would note, there's -- there was a bipartisan delegation. We have had -- done a lot of briefings from leaders in the administration, with Hill leaders. Those will continue as well.

And what was the second part? Oh, what was -- he was referring to?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: I would -- certainly would point you to him. I would say that we, obviously, have taken a number of steps in recent weeks, including very close coordination -- more than a hundred engagements -- with European partners; staying in close contact with the Ukrainians; obviously taking steps, including sanctions last week, making clear that we are going to have troops at the ready to support NATO efforts.

So, I would point you to him. But we have been taking every -- and even noting false-flag operations and kind of calling out propaganda. But I would point you to him or his team on any specifics he was referring to.

Go ahead.

Q Republican lawmakers in Florida are advancing a bill that would bar the state from doing business with companies that transport undocumented migrants into the state. Does the White House have a response to this legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I am not familiar with the specifics of the legislation. I can check with our team and see.

Go ahead.

Q I'll start with a question on behalf of a reporter who can't be in the room today. His name is Pablo Manriquez; the outlet is called Futuro Media. And he asks: What unilateral authority is the President willing to exercise for immigrant relief that has not been tried yet?

MS. PSAKI: For immigration reform, or relief, or -- well, I would say, we're going to have to keep trying some of the measures that we have been working on to date. You know, the President put forward -- proposed an immigration bill -- a comprehensive immigration bill in his first day in office. We've obviously continued to work with leaders in the Senate to try to push that forward, including trying to work to have components included in the President's Build Back Better agenda.

We're going to continue to work to not only instill and -- implement safer security measures, but also more humane measures with how people are treated, how children are treated.

And we're also going to work -- continue to work and double -- redouble our efforts to address root causes.

So, we're going to continue to approach this from many fronts.

Q Pablo also asks: Is the President willing to reallocate unused green cards and apply them to immigrants waiting in decades-long green card backlogs?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have reformed the system -- green card system. It's certainly something we've talked about as a part of immigration reform. I can check and see if there's anything we can do unilaterally on that front.

Q Back on Ukraine and Russia.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you give us a status report on the written response to Moscow? When can we expect it? And will it be made public?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I don't have an exact timing update. Of course, that would be led by our Secretary of State and our diplomatic team who have been closely engaging in these efforts.

In terms of whether or not it would be public, I would note that typically it's not. Typically, paper -- paper that is part of negotiations or discussions -- if you look at the Iran nuclear deal, or you look at any treaty -- not that this is a treaty, but just as a point of comparison -- negotiations or discussions, it is typically not made public. It's a part of the diplomatic process and has been used by our diplomats for many decades.

Q Is the President involved in the crafting of the response?

MS. PSAKI: The President certainly engages, is briefed by, and approves every component of our response and our efforts in this -- in this process.

Q One more, from me. One of the criticisms that some fellow Democrats have been voicing in the press recently is that the President has surrounded himself with four loyal aides who have been with him for many years, and increasingly, these Democrats are publicly saying that these aides have left the President ill-served. Are you aware of a response from the President to those criticisms?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of what?

Q Well, there was a Democratic senator quoted today in the newspaper that said that the -- sometimes the boxcars are "empty." You know, you know that Senator Manchin has publicly voiced (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I was -- I didn't really even understand that quote, just to be honest.

But here's what I would say -- and I think I know what you're getting at. Steve, so let me try to answer your question

but here's what I would say -- and I think I know what you're getting at, Steve, so let me try to answer your question.

I am new to President Biden's orbit. I've only been working for him since I joined the administration during the transition and then joined in this role here that I'm still in today.

What I have found is that -- I see him on a daily basis, sometimes multiple times a day. He asks me consistently what I think. And by the people who have been surrounding him for some time, whether that's Ron Klain or Steve Ricchetti or others, they've certainly encouraged and supported that relationship and engagement.

What I've seen the President do -- and I know this isn't what everybody has visibility into, so I guess that's why I'm sharing this level of detail -- is if you're in a meeting with him and you're having a conversation, if you don't know the answer, he wants more information, he picks up the phone and he calls the person he thinks does. Sometimes that's Ron Klain. Sometimes that's Susan Rice. Sometimes it's Brian Deese. Sometimes it's Louisa Terrell. That's how the President operates.

And that effort to really empower team members and have that direct relationship with the President is something that -- that's been my experience to date.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just back to your comment about White House outreach on the Hill --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- can you confirm the White House is holding two classified briefings?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, sure. And let me give you a little bit more detail on that, because I think I have that here, too.

So, these briefings are led, of course, by the State Department and Defense Departments. But today we are providing two additional classified bipartisan briefings for House and Senate leadership and committee staff. They'll be providing updates on recent developments with Ukraine and Russia and the state of play.

We're also working on all-members briefings for the House and the Senate in the coming days. In the last week alone, Secretary Blinken and Deputy Secretary Sherman have spoken to nearly 20 members, with additional engagements planned this week.

And since December, we've had dozens of engagements with Congress on Ukraine and Russia, including two by President Biden, including one on December 7th with Big Fo -- with the Big Four; a January 19th virtual meeting with CODEL members; six briefings from National Security Advisor Sullivan to bipartisan members of the House and Senate, including leadership and national security committee chairs and ranking members; nine interagency briefings for bipartisan members of national security committees; eight interagency briefings for bipartisan Hill staff, including leadership committee and personal staff; and, of course, an open hearing that Victoria Nuland participated in back in December.

So, this is an ongoing process and we will continue to provide regular briefings -- some classified, some not -- moving forward.

Q Okay, great. And can I ask --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

Q Is there any updates on the federal website for testing? Anything you can give us on how many tests went out or how many were requested?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, I certainly understand the question. There has been a great deal of interest. I don't have an exact number. I know that's something we will be putting out. Let me check on the status of that.

I know I've got to wrap this up, so let me just quickly try to get to as many as I can.

Q I also wanted to ask about the testing. Do you know, at this point, how many of the tests that you've already ordered have come in yet -- I don't mean going out to the American people -- but are in your stockpile? And also when you'll be signing contracts for the other --

MS. PSAKI: For the additional 500 million?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Let me check on both of those questions for you.

Q And also, I wanted to ask you about yesterday when you were talking about the competition executive order.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You were saying about how the White House has met 100 percent of the deadlines in that order. I know a lot of those deadlines were for writing plans to do things in different agencies.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Can you talk about what tangible results Americans will see in the next six months to a year out of all those different plans? You've met those deadlines, but now people will start to see the effect of them.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I mean, the President talked about this a little bit yesterday, but part of that -- and I don't have an exact timeline on it because they all have different implementation efforts. But some tangible things are being able to buy hearing aids over the counter, being able to take some of your products and get them repaired anywhere you want without worrying about that being a challenge, making sure we're taking steps to address lack of competition that is out there in a range of industries where prices are going up.

So every agency is writing different plans, and I'm sure they can detail and outline in more specifics. But I also -- Bharat, from our NEC team, has been one of the people leading this effort, and maybe I'll see if he can come and give you guys all a more comprehensive briefing.

Okay, Todd, last one. And then I got to -- you guys, I think, have to gather.

Q Two quick questions. Some members of Congress have been promoting this theory that the FBI had at least one provocateur in the January 6th mob. Can the White House say unequivocally that there were no federal agents who provoked illegal attacks on --

MS. PSAKI: Well, FBI Director Wray has already said that the FBI had no evidence of this baseless conspiracy, and he would certainly know.

Q And over the last week, we've seen a number of House Republicans announcing billions of dollars worth of infrastructure projects in their districts. These are Republicans who voted against that bill. What does the White House have to say about that?

MS. PSAKI: We welcome their support for the President's agenda and an agenda that was supported by some Republicans -- not the majority. And, hopefully, they'll take the right vote to support their communities and jobs -- job creation in the

...not the majority. They, hopefully, they will take the right vote to support their communities and jobs -- job creation in the future. Maybe it will make them think twice.

Thanks, everyone.

Q One quick question?

MS. PSAKI: I m so sorry. I got to -- I think you -- some of you guys have to wrap, so --

Q We have some time.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, you have time?

Q Yeah, we have until one.

Q Yeah, one.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, sorry. Didn t mean to cut it off so dramatically.

Go ahead.

Q Does the White House have any words of support for the students in D.C. who are currently walking out to protest lax COVID standards in their schools?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, in D.C. and Arling- --

Q In D.C. right now, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think that we understand, as a parent myself. But I know these students are dealing with fears that they have themselves about the fear of going to a school, a classroom, a workplace where you don t feel safe. That is one of the reasons that we have been so supportive and advocated for leaders and school leaders to follow public health guidelines.

So, you know, that is the way to keep people safe -- to ensure people can feel safe in their school or their workplace, and certainly we support that.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. Tomorrow, India is celebrating its 73rd Republic Day. As the leader of world s oldest democracy, what is President Biden s message to the people of the world s largest democracy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we join India, the world s largest democracy, in honoring Republic Day, the day that marks the adoption of India s constitution.

As President Biden said when India s Prime Minister Modi visited the White House last September: “[T]he relationship between India and the United States...is destined to be stronger, closer, and tighter. And...it can benefit the whole world.” “Our partnership...[is] rooted in our shared responsibility to uphold democratic values.”

Q One more, on Ukraine. You know, India has had a -- is having a very strong and historic relationship with Russia. President Putin was recently in New Delhi for his annual summit meeting with Prime Minister Modi. Perhaps President Biden also has a strong friendship with Prime Minister Modi. Does President Biden think that India and/or Prime Minister Modi, in his role, can do something with both U.S. and Russia to de-escalate the situation in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly welcome any efforts to de-escalate, and we are in touch with a range of allies and partners

on this. But I don't have any specific conversations to read out that relate to Indian officials.

Go ahead. Linda, go ahead.

Q Oh, sure. So, the President has nothing on his schedule today aside from the PDB. Can you shed any light on how he's spending his day?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's see. This morning, I think he had some policy meetings, also a PDB meeting. He, later this afternoon, I think, is doing some remarks review. There are some days that we spend some time doing internal meetings and discussions with policy experts, with policy leaders, and that's what's happening today.

He would say he doesn't have nearly enough time -- of free time on his schedule because it is packed no matter whether people see him or not.

Q Tomorrow and Thursday -- is it a lot of time in the Situation Room? Or --

MS. PSAKI: There will be, certainly, some time where he'll be meeting with and engaging with his national security team, I'm certain.

We have an event tomorrow on Build Back Better, where there'll be a number of CEOs here. So that will be part of the day tomorrow as well.

Q Jen, can I ask you one last question?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Forgive me. It's sort of the elephant in the room. Many people in the country were talking about it last night and this morning. Does the President regret saying what he said about Peter? Can you shed some light, if you have any conversations with him today about what happened last night?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say what's most important -- and I -- it's -- Peter is sitting here, so this is kind of a funny thing.

But the President -- the President called Peter. And he confirmed this, so this is only why I'm speaking to this. And if you have private conversations with the President, I will assure you I'm not going to convey that on your behalf. But Peter spoke to this.

The President called him. He conveyed to him that, "It was nothing personal, man," and also acknowledged that all of you are going to ask him a range of questions. So, I think that speaks for itself.

Thank you, everyone. Hopefully, I did that justice.

Q Yes. I can confirm. "Person familiar."

MS. PSAKI: "Person familiar." (Laughs.) Okay. We only do on-the-record stuff here, Peter.

Q Yeah.

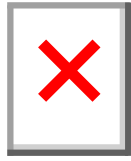
MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone. Have a good rest of your day.

12:53 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Joint Statement on the Virtual Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 26, 2022 2:31 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2022

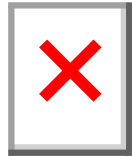
Joint Statement on the Virtual Meeting of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Israeli National Security Advisor Dr. Eyal Hulata convened a virtual meeting on January 26 of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group (SCG). They were joined by senior representatives from their respective foreign policy, defense, and intelligence agencies. The two sides discussed upcoming military training exercises, and welcomed American observation at a recent aerial exercise conducted by the Israel Defense Forces. The officials also discussed significant regional developments since the last SCG meeting in December, including advances in Iran's nuclear program. Mr. Sullivan emphasized that while the United States remains committed to diplomacy as the best means for preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, the United States is preparing alternative options, in coordination with its partners, should diplomacy fail. The U.S. and Israeli officials agreed that they will remain in close coordination on the full range of issues of mutual interest, and to remain united against all threats to their national security.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 26, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 26, 2022 7:00 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 26, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:36 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. Okay, I have a couple of items for all of you at the top.

As we mentioned, later today -- in our guidance last night, I should say -- later today, the President will sign an executive order to make sexual harassment an offense in the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

This historic addition to the UCMJ honors -- honors the memory of Army Specialist Vanessa Guillén, whose experience with severe sexual harassment was followed by a brutal murder, catalyzing national attention to the scourge of sexual violence in our military and helping advance bipartisan military justice reform in the 2022 NDAA.

This executive order also delivers on a key recommendation from the Independent Review Commission to strengthen the military justice response in prosecuting cases of domestic violence and fully implements changes to the UCMJ to criminalize the wrongful broadcast or distribution of intimate visual images.

The Biden-Harris administration thanks Congress for its bipartisan commitment to pass monumental reforms to our military justice system and codify key recommendations from the IRC -- the Independent Review Commission.

We also look forward to continuing to work with Congress to support the safety and dignity of our service members.

I also wanted to note that today we hit a major milestone in our global effort to be the arsenal of vaccines: 400 million doses

shipped to 112 countries for free, with no strings attached. To put America's leadership into perspective, we have shipped four times more free doses to the world than any other country.

And this is on top of our efforts to expand manufacturing at home and abroad, our close partnerships with manufacturers to provide their vaccines to hard-hit areas, and our work to turn vaccines into vaccinations around the globe.

The last item for you: Today, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau launched a new initiative to save American families billions of dollars a year in unexpected and hidden fees charged by banks and financial companies.

Right now, as I'm sure many of you know, banks and credit card companies lock you in with low rates, only to charge you high fees after the fact. If you've ever used a credit card, which I'm sure everybody in this room has, you are familiar with this; you're familiar with all those extra fees -- balance transfer fees, late fees, and more. They add up. Collectively, the CFPB estimates that these junk fees drain tens of billions of dollars per year from American families.

Consumers are already starting to feel the benefits of the CFPB's work in this space. After the CFPB published a report on bank overdraft fees in December, many large banks -- Bank of America, Capital One, and Wells Fargo -- announced they would reduce or eliminate some of these fees. That's an important start, but not enough, which is why the CFPB is interested in hearing about everyday Americans' experiences with unexpected fees.

This latest initiative by the CFPB was previewed at this week's Competition Council meeting and is just one of the ways we are -- one of the steps we are taking to go after excessive fees that companies use to hide the true cost of products. From airline tickets to high-speed Internet services, agencies are planning -- Internet service fees, I should say -- agencies are planning actions over the coming months that will make prices clearer up front so that consumers can save money by choosing the best deals for them.

Let me say one other thing. I know there is a lot of news out there today, so let me reiterate something that you heard the President say, and I also said over Twitter: "It's always been the decision of any Supreme Court Justice if and when they decide to retire, how they want to announce it, and that remains the case today." So, we're not going to have additional details. You are always welcome to ask any questions you'd like at any time. And there's a lot of news out there, but I just wanted to say that at the top.

Josh, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two subjects. So let's say hypothetically -- (laughter) -- a Supreme Court justice was to retire and announce it on his or her own terms. Does President Biden plan to honor his pledge to nominate a Black woman to the Court?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I've commented on this previously. The President has stated and reiterated his commitment to nominating a Black woman to the Supreme Court and certainly stands by that.

For today, again, I'm just not going to be able to say anything about any specifics until, of course, Justice Breyer makes any announcement, should he decide to make an announcement.

Q Okay. Secondly, on Ukraine: Is the White House publicizing the troop buildups in the Russian disinfo efforts in hopes of deterring Moscow? And does the White House think that strategy is working? And are you prepared to release more details about what you say Russia's been doing?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, on the last one, as we -- as we have. And I think you have all experienced that in here, also at the State Department and Defense Department briefings, and certainly from briefings delivered by national security officials -- senior national security officials as well.

I will say, Josh, that we are much more cognizant of the Russian disinformation machine than we were in 2014. And many

of you covered, of course, the invasion of Ukraine in 2014. And we have made a decision -- a strategic decision -- to call out disinformation when we see it.

And all across the federal government, various agencies are working together to fight disinformation and correct it.

In part, we know -- the part -- that's because we know that Russia's disinformation operation is highly developed. We are more wiser -- we are wiser, the world is wiser than they were in 2021, and Russia has a boundless capacity to misrepresent truth and what it's doing.

And some of that tactic from their end is intended to set the predicate for them invading. And we need to be very clear with the global community and the U.S. public what they're trying to do and why. So, there's a lot of efforts underway to do exactly that.

In terms of whether it will have a deterrent effect, I think our biggest effort -- in that regard is laying out the clear potential consequences. But it is also important -- and we think strategically important -- to be very clear that what they're trying to convey publicly out there, a lot of that is misinformation, and people need to understand and digest that.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, what preparations is the White House engaged in broadly in the case of a Supreme Court vacancy?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to detail any of that from here.

Q Not about -- unrelated to this, you can't detail what -- like, doesn't every White House like to get ahead of this in case of a sudden passing -- in the case of Ruth Bader Ginsburg? None of that you can share?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to detail internal planning from here. No.

Q Okay. Then let me ask you a couple other questions. Is there any scenario in which the President would select his Vice President, Kamala Harris, for the Supreme Court?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to speak to any considerations, preparations, lists. And as we've stated earlier, and you heard the President say, it is -- there's a long history of Supreme Court justices determining when they may retire, if they retire, and announcing that. And we're going to -- that remains the case today.

Q Clearly, you are more wiser than to take those questions then. So, I will ask you about a different topic, and that's Vladimir Putin -- the President saying, "yes," that he would very much consider personally sanctioning him in the case of a Russian invasion. Can you give us a sense -- because Russia has dismissed, or sort of pooh-poohed that idea -- what would sanctioning Vladimir Putin --

MS. PSAKI: Does Russia have a role in determining our sanctions?

Q No, but they've said that it would have no impact. So, what impact would sanctioning Vladimir Putin have on him, and what would that look like?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what's important to note, broadly, is that what we've also said is that it will be far beyond -- any sanctions package would be far beyond what was done in 2014, and that includes impacting business and economic interests of President Putin and the leadership of the Russian government.

I would also note that, while it has been our policy that we are not going to take options off the table from here -- and we haven't -- we also haven't been detailed what isn't in an initial package. And that doesn't mean that everything out there that's being talked about is in an initial package.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you. When you were asked about the Vice President possibly being selected as a Supreme Court nominee, you said you're "not going to speak to any considerations." Does that mean she is being considered?

MS. PSAKI: Again, Peter, I'm not going to speak to the reports of a Supreme Court justice retirement that hasn't been announced.

Q So, theoretically, would someone who served --

MS. PSAKI: Theoretically? I do like that you preface it. I appreciate that. (Laughter.)

Q Would -- just wondering, hypothetically and theoretically, would someone who was an attorney general of a large state and who served with many key Senate votes be an attractive candidate to the President for an open Supreme Court seat?

MS. PSAKI: I see what you did there, Peter. (Laughter.) But the President has every intention, as he said before, of running for reelection, and for running for reelection with Vice President Harris on the ticket as his partner.

But, again, I will just reiterate that I have nothing more to offer in terms of specifics or information on the reports this morning.

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Would you have another question for me?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I know there's other things on your mind --

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: -- on your list over there.

Q Now that you guys have submitted the written responses to Russia's demands, they are saying, "If we do not receive a constructive answer from the West on our security demands, Moscow will take appropriate measures." Is that a threat -- "appropriate measures"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that the aggressor here -- as maybe you're echoing in some ways or raising -- is Russia. Russia has tens of thousands of troops at the border. They have the ability also to make the decision to de-escalate, to bring troops back from the border, to participate in good faith in a diplomatic conversation. And that would certainly be our preference.

So, them making threats -- I think Secretary Blinken had a very good quote -- or it made me laugh -- that he gave a couple of days ago where he said it was like the fox threatening to attack the hens in the henhouse because they were feeling threatened by the hens.

But our objective is to give them paths and to take part in a diplomatic conversation in good faith.

Q And as the Russians talk about "appropriate measures," if one of those winds up being a Russian cyberattack, like DHS

is warning about, would you guys consider that an act of war?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Peter, we have talked many times before -- first of all, there's no -- no information we have at this point about any imminent threat against the U.S. homeland. We are always prepared for cyber threats from a range of sources. And we have a range of tools at our disposal to use and react -- in reaction, and the President reserves the right to do that. But I'm not going to get into a hypothetical.

Q And then, on COVID origins: You guys are talking a lot about sanctions for Russia if they dare to invade Ukraine. What about sanctions for China -- at any point -- for misleading the world about the early days of the global pandemic?

MS. PSAKI: We have used sanctions as a tool as it relates to our concerns about the behavior of a range of countries, including officials in China. But I have nothing to preview for you at this point.

Q Is it possible down the line though that they -- that sanctions would be considered -- or some other form of punishment -- for their actions in the earliest days of the pandemic?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you know, we strongly believe, and the President has been clear and directly clear, about the importance of them being transparent and providing data and information related to the origins of the pandemic. But I don't have anything to predict for you in terms of additional actions.

Q So then, my last one would be: The President said for months that he had not spoken directly to Xi about the COVID origins investigation. Now he says that he did talk to Xi about it, but nobody else was there. If the President had that conversation, did it work and is Xi now playing ball?

MS. PSAKI: What are you getting at there? Are you suggesting the President wasn't being honest about his own conversation with Xi?

Q No, but the story did change. For months he was asked about it and he said that he had not directly asked him about the COVID origins investigation.

MS. PSAKI: We don't share every detail of every diplomatic conversation. You know that. The President answered a direct question just a week ago -- or I think it was a week ago, yes? -- and provided that information.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you. When was the last time the President talked to Justice Breyer? Have they had any communication today?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more details of their communications.

Q I wonder if you can clear this up because there seems to be some disagreement among some legal scholars: Is it your understanding and the understanding of this administration that the Vice President can be the tie-breaking vote to confirm a nominee to the Court?

MS. PSAKI: I would have to check on the specifics of that.

Q And just one more. On the President's Supreme Court Commission, I believe they finished their report. They turned it --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- in last month. Has the President had a chance to review this? Might we hear from him on any decision or input that he's had?

MS. PSAKI: He has received the report. I don't have any update on his analysis of it at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Taking you somewhere completely different.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Let's go there.

Q On the China bill --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- which the President, last night in his statement, said he's, "heartened" by the bipartisan work on the package -- which it was in the Senate, not so much in the House. Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman McCaul said it was "absolutely not" bipartisan, "will likely garner no Republican support."

Are you guys involved in -- and if so -- in getting this to a bipartisan package eventually? And what are your priorities in that 3,000-page bill, since it is pretty long? And is your timeline the State of the Union? What are you looking at here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that it did receive extensive bipartisan support in the Senate vote -- right? -- in the Senate version; that our objective is -- certainly remains ensuring that this passes as soon as possible and the President can sign it as soon as possible. I don't have a new deadline or timeline for you.

We believe that bipartisan, competitiveness legislation will help us tackle supply chain issues and inflation head on, and will make investments in American manufacturing and our economic strength so we can outcompete China.

And we're certainly advocating that and have been advocating that and deeply involved in conversations with the House and Senate.

And our objective is certainly that -- to have legislation pass that can take a range of steps: strengthening R&D, boosting manufacturing, with important and imperative funding for chips -- manufacturing chips so we can make sure we bring down the cost of cars, as we know which is leading to one third of the inflationary pressure out there in the country.

We want this legislation to help businesses and communities in every corner of the country outcompete their global competitors.

In terms of specifics, as you noted, it's quite a long bill. We're certainly involved and engaged in it with officials from throughout the administration, but I'm not going to detail specifics of what we're for and against in it either.

Is there any possibility that should this play out, you know, sort of similar to the infrastructure bill -- take a long time, House Republicans will not get on board -- that you, given the pressure of the chips shortage on inflation, that you just take out the strip -- strip out the chips portion, pass that individually, and then negotiate on the rest? Do you see that --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to make a prediction of that at this point. I mean, as I understand it, the status of the legislative process is that both the House and Senate have indicated that it will go to conference and they'll work out disagreements that they have over components of the legislation.

Also, the Senate version had 68 votes. And certainly, we believe that increasing and improving America's competitiveness and investing in R&D -- research and development -- and making sure we're more competitive in communities across the

country is not a partisan idea.

So we are hopeful about that process moving forward quickly, and the President would certainly like to sign it as soon as possible.

Q And then one more on this bill, too, that is a difference between the House and the Senate version. The House version published last night had this outbound investment screening mechanism that wasn't part of the Senate bill. It would potentially block investments in countries like China.

Does the White House support this provision and will you fight that that's going to make it in the final package that's reaching the President's desk?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into specifics of the bill. I would tell you that we are in daily contact, from the White House, with House and Senate leadership and committees. And we're discussing the path forward, but we're not going to negotiate the pieces from here.

Q Is there anything you can tell us on the work the executive branch is doing on exactly that same thing? Because Jake Sullivan has been talking about a potential mechanism like this being interesting to you guys and potentially working on this, but we haven't heard about it in a while.

MS. PSAKI: I can see if there's any additional update from the national security team, of course. And certainly, I know he's talked about that in the past and it remains a priority.

Go ahead.

I have to give a -- give it a shot myself as well.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q In this hypothetical alternative reality where a retirement -- a vacancy were to open up, could you say who within the White House would be, sort of, leading the charge on the selection and vetting process?

MS. PSAKI: As the President said, I'm sure that if and when there is an announcement by Justice Breyer, there will be more to be said. And we'll have more conversation in here, I'm sure he'll have more to say, but I'm not going to have anything more for you at this point.

Q Just switching gears. On the energy front, the administration said, on Tuesday, it's in talks with major energy-producing countries and companies around the world over a potential diversion of supplies to Europe if Russia invades Ukraine. Have any of the energy companies or countries contacted by the administration told you that they do indeed have an ability to divert extra supplies to Europe?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's been part of the conversation, but I don't have any announcements to make on their behalf. But certainly, that's been our objective is to ensure that we are prepared for the possibility of the supply -- the natural gas supply -- which, as you know, is very much a regional issue, and there'd be a big regional impact, less so here in the United States -- as well as the global oil supply and ensuring there's enough supply in the market.

Q And what do you see is the risk of the contingency planning failing to secure Europe's energy supplies, since our reporting suggests so far that the industry has little or no capacity to do this?

MS. PSAKI: There are -- no question there are logistical challenges, especially moving natural gas. We know that. That's part of our discussion with a lot of these companies and countries.

But again, these conversations are ongoing and we don't intend to fail on them.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q A number of lawmakers sent a letter to the White House today, including Chuck Schumer and Elizabeth Warren, asking the White House to release the memo that the Education Department put together looking at the President's legal authority to cancel student loan debt.

I wondered: Do you have a response to that? And, you know, why hasn't this memo been released?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say: No one has paid or been required to pay a single dime of federal student loans since the President took office over a year ago.

And I'll also add that our country is seeing one of the strongest economic recoveries in history. And the pause announced in December gives some breathing room, for several more months, to borrowers who are still coping with the pandemic.

The Education Department will continue working to ensure a smooth transition to repayment.

I would reiterate also that the President supports Congress, members of the -- who sent the letter and others -- sending him a bill that would provide \$10,000 in debt relief. And he continues to look into what debt relief actions can be taken administratively.

I'd also note that in terms of loans that have been forgiven, since the President took office -- beyond the pause on repayment -- a total of \$15 billion benefiting more than 675,000 student-loan borrowers as part of -- been part of the forgiveness; borrower defense to repayment at \$1.5 billion; total and permanent disability repayments -- loans -- forgiveness, I should say -- \$7.8 billion; ITT Tech students, \$1.3 billion; and public service loan forgiveness, \$5 billion.

So, we have been doing a broad range of forgiveness and also have had this pause in place, meaning that no one who has student loans has been required to pay since the President took office.

Q But does the White House plan to release the memo? Like does the White House plan to tell the public whether it thinks it has the authority to cancel \$10,000 in debt on its own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as I said, again, we're still looking at administrative options. But Congress can also send the President a bill that would provide \$10,000 in debt relief, and he'd be happy to sign that bill.

Q On the trip on Friday to Pittsburgh, can you talk a little bit more about why the President is taking this trip? Is this about the President getting out more? I know that he talked about that last week --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that he wanted to get out and, you know, be face to face with people. Is that what this is about?

MS. PSAKI: That's part of it. I think if the President could spend every day out on the road, he might do that. There are, of course, a lot of responsibilities as president that don't make that possible. So that is certainly part of that. And I expect you'll see him out on the road more in the coming weeks as well.

It's also an opportunity for him to speak about his economic agenda and what steps he's taking to make people's lives better, to lower costs for Americans, to rebuild their communities, to make us more competitive, but certainly to interact with people in communities -- those who disagree with him and those who agree with him as well.

Q And just quickly, on the executive order that s being signed later on today, is that order coming out because the NDAA did not do enough to address the issue of sexual harassment? Like why is this order needed?

MS. PSAKI: It was a key recommendation from the Independent Review Commission, so it s delivering on the Independent Review Commission s recommendation, which is something that was supported -- these recommendations and delivering on them -- by the leadership of the Department of Justice. So, it s an effort to implement that.

Go ahead.

Q I wanted to start with a question on behalf of a colleague from another radio network who wants to know if you have any update on the launch of Build Back Better World, which was supposed to, I guess, be implemented earlier this year? And would Daleep Singh s upcoming trip to Africa include scouting projects for Build Back Better World?

MS. PSAKI: I m happy to check with our national security team. We have talked about Build Back Better World and been working a lot behind the scenes on efforts to launch that around the world. And the President has talked about it on all -- virtually all of his foreign trips to date. But I can see -- get more specifics about Daleep s trip.

Q And on the meeting the President had today with the CEO s about Build Back Better here: Is the strategy now -- with sort of the President talking about breaking it up in chunks potentially -- is the plan to bring a new proposal to Democrats in Congress? What does that strategy look like as it relates to, kind of, the meeting that he had today? Is he trying to get a sense of what the priorities would be from these private sector CEOs?

MS. PSAKI: The meeting was not a negotiation; it was not the basis of a negotiation. Those discussions will happen between the 50 members of the Senate who need to support a package -- a big chunk -- to move it forward.

This was an opportunity to hear from business leaders. And I think you heard a number of them speak during the open press component of the meeting. And I know a number of them will be doing interviews -- maybe with some of you -- afterwards as well.

What I think was interesting and compelling to the President when we were talking about this last night was that they re all experiencing different challenges as they look ahead to their, many of them, very successful businesses.

Some of that is ensuring they can have enough women at a senior level in the workforce. And lowering the cost of childcare and making that affordable is a big issue that the CEO of Etsy has talked about, for example, quite a bit.

The CEO of Cummins has talked a lot about climate change -- or the climate agenda and the importance of investing in that moving forward, because those are industries that will grow and have a huge opportunity for our manufacturing industries here in the United States.

Those are all components that are part of the President s Build Back Better agenda, but he really wanted to hear from them on their industries; of the best way to grow their businesses, the middle class; and how components will certainly impact them.

Q So is that a message the President plans to take to Democrats? Is he going to present something smaller -- a big chunk -- sort of a more narrow piece of legislation and proposal that perhaps can get unstuck in the Senate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I don t have any predictions of the legislative process. This was not a meeting about the legislative process.

The President and members -- senior members of our legislative team and senior White House officials are in constant contact with a range of senators, committee members, staffers. And, really, the point we re at now is determining what components there can be 50 votes for, and that will hopefully include a big, big chunk of what the President has proposed

components there can be 50 votes for, and that will hopefully include a big, big chunk of what the President has proposed. But that's what the status of that is.

But this was not a meeting to discuss legislative strategy or how to navigate conversations with different senators.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, Jen, I have a couple more on BBB. Ron Klain said last week that you'd like to see BBB legislation approved as quickly as possible. Some Democrats -- Representative Jayapal -- are saying that March 1st, the State of the Union, is kind of the deadline for action. Does the White House see it that way, in terms of the timeframe? Do you see the (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: No, we have not set a deadline. No.

Q And the -- five Democratic senators wrote the President and the Vice President urging them to keep the Child Tax Credit expansion in BBB. But the President seemed pretty clear in his press conference he wasn't sure that that could happen. Is he reviewing that? Did he change his mind?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President proposed the Child Tax Credit extension. He very much wants to see the Child Tax Credit extended, and you've all heard him talk about how proud he is of the expanded Child Tax Credit because of the impact it had on cutting childhood poverty by 40 percent, for giving people some extra breathing room. And there's some recent studies and evidence that the Child Tax Credit helps working families in the developments and opportunities for all children. So, he has long been an advocate.

Again, this is the legislative process -- right? -- and there needs to be 50 votes. We need every Democrat to support a package moving forward. I don't have anything to preview or predict for you on that front. That is going to be up to them to determine what that looks like.

Q And just one more. Should you have a Supreme Court nomination that has to make its way through the Senate, is there any concern that that could crowd out priorities like Build Back Better and make it that much harder to get something done here?

MS. PSAKI: Not -- without getting into any specifics of what may be on the docket, we have to walk and chew gum at the same time here in the White House, and that includes navigating, you know, the buildup of military troops on the border of Ukraine; that includes trying to get an omnibus bill passed and get our competition bill passed; that includes continuing to be the arsenal of vaccines to the world. And we are entirely capable of doing more than one thing at once.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have two questions -- two different topics.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q The first one on Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Is it about the Supreme Court?

Q No, actually.

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

Q No, I'm not part of this -- this bunch.

The President earlier this week said he talked to all NATO leaders. Canada has offered a \$100 million loan to Ukraine and

THE PRESIDENT, EARLIER THIS WEEK, SAID HE TALKED TO AN NATO LEADER. CANADA HAS OFFERED A \$100 MILLION LOAN TO UKRAINE AND IS CONSIDERING -- TO BE ANNOUNCED THIS AFTERNOON -- FURTHER SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE. WHAT TYPE OF CONTRIBUTION DOES THE PRESIDENT THINK CANADA COULD MAKE TO THIS CRISIS -- TO SOLVE THE CRISIS?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we wel- -- we welcome the support of Canada and any country that is contributing to the needs of Ukraine, that is defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine and defending what we feel is a fundamental value that we share with Canada and a number of countries around the world, which is the fact that no country should be able to invade and take the territory of another country.

So, we're not going to assess what they should do or not do. Every country has different capacities, capabilities, legal authorities. We recognize that, but we certainly welcome their support for Ukraine.

Q So the President hasn't asked for arm shipments or troop deployments?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into any more details of conversations. We just recognize that every country has different capabilities, capacities, authorities, and a range of contributions, and doing it in a coordinated way, we think, is very effective.

Q I'd like to talk about -- I have a question about Haiti.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q So Canada hosted an international meeting last week. Prime Minister Trudeau has called for "immediate action" to fix the security situation in Haiti. You know that in the next two weeks, it would have been the end of President Jovenel Moïse's term if he hadn't been assassinated. What's the U.S. plan, particularly in terms of security, knowing that there's no newly elected president to swear in on February 7th?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first reference -- and I think you're probably aware of this -- but last week, Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman participated in a high-level ministerial, hosted by Canada, to discuss sustainable, inclusive solutions to the challenges faced by Haiti and Haitians.

The ministerial was an opportunity for global leaders or high-level officials to reaffirm the continued international commitment to support Haiti as it confronts growing insecurity, works to restore its democratic institutions, and revives the country's economic development.

We're also -- continue to work with Haitian authorities and international partners to provide additional systems from the United States to the Haitian National Police to strengthen law enforcement, build up anti-gang operations, maintain peace and stability. And we have also -- in response to heightened humanitarian needs in Haiti, USAID has provided more than \$92 million in assistance in fiscal year 2021.

So we are working on a range of channels, including in close coordination with other leaders, about how we can help prop up humanitarian needs, address their security needs, and act in a coordinated way as Haiti looks to their future.

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Just a quick question on inflation. Many people believe that government spending is a big factor in the current inflation levels. Can you speak to concerns that spending plans that come out of Build Back Better aren't paid for and -- so could mean higher deficits and more inflation in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Aren't paid for?

Q Right.

MS. PSAKI: Build Back Better is paid for.

Q Can --

MS. PSAKI: Entirely.

Q Okay. Can you speak to the concerns that are coming in that it's not actually --

MS. PSAKI: Who are the concerns from, though? But who's saying it's not paid for? Because there have been a range of economists saying it's entirely paid for, and that has been a priority for the President.

It has also been concluded by a number of Nobel laureates and experts -- from a range of economic experts on the outside that it will not contribute to inflation.

So those are the global experts that we would point to. But there may be others suggesting something else, but I don't know who those people are.

Q So if those bills do pass, it will not raise taxes?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it -- something being entirely paid for means that part of that is the highest-income Americans, highest -- that companies would be asked to pay a little bit more. That has been part of the proposal and part of reforming the tax system to make it more fair.

Q So they're also not expected to contribute to future inflation then?

MS. PSAKI: The Build Back Better Bill?

Q Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Again, it's fully paid for. We would point to Nobel laureates and a range of global economists who have conveyed that it would not contribute to inflationary pressures.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask about the impact that President Biden's experience in foreign policy has on the -- his handling of the current situation with Russia and Ukraine.

Obviously, he served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He was Vice President when Russia invaded Crimea. He oversaw the end of the war in Afghanistan last year. Can you just talk about how those various experiences have informed his decision-making and his thinking on the situation currently with Russia and Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. So, one of the lessons learned we talked about -- I talked about a little bit earlier in response to Josh's question, which is the ability and the boundless capacity of Russia to misrepresent the truth and spread misinformation through a range of channels.

I mean, they have a range of state-run media channels that are not just prevalent in Russia, but around Eastern Europe, across Europe. You can even find them in the United States. But even beyond that, this is the capacity that we've seen them utilize in 2014 and 2016, and many times in between.

So one of the lessons that we have learned is certainly -- and the President has learned -- is certainly that it's important to

call out this disinformation and to make clear to the American public, to the global community what they're trying to do here, and the fact that it is not accurate. They're trying to set the predicate for war.

We've done that through a number of means. Last week, the administration announced sanctions on four, of course, Ukrainian individuals. We also had a briefing, launched a website, released a factsheet to educate the public on the Russia disinformation ecosystem. The FBI and DHS are coordinated with the intelligence community, as well as state and local partners, to ensure a common understanding of Russia disinformation and influence activities related to the situation in Ukraine. So, that's one part.

I'd also say that for the President -- and this has been a priority for him since he came into office -- building up our alliances and partnerships with the global community, ensuring that close coordination is front and center and is a priority is something that he has learned through his time in foreign policy -- as the former Chair of the of the Foreign Relations Committee; of course, as Vice President -- is imperative.

And we believe that's proving to be very effective at this point in time. We've had more than a hundred -- probably way more than that at this point -- engagements with NATO partners, allies around the world. And we have a coordinated and strong, you know, approach to how we're approaching the buildup of troops on the border of Ukraine.

So, there are many lessons, but I would say those are two of the biggest ones.

Q Right. And can I also ask about the China competitiveness bill --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- that was mentioned earlier? Does the White House want to see Congress finish work on that before Build Back Better, or is there, like, a priority there in terms of getting that done?

MS. PSAKI: The President would like to sign it as soon as possible. But beyond that, I'm not going to get into an order of events.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have a few questions. The first on the Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Does the President believe that the current makeup of the Court accurately reflects America's demographics?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say the President, as you know, asked for a -- put together a commission that could review -- that is a bi- -- a commission made of Democrats and Republicans of a range of legal views that could take a look at everything from the makeup of the Court, to how they select cases, to the length of service, to the size of the Court.

That's a report, as Mary asked about earlier, that he certainly has. I don't have an update on his review of that at this point in time.

I will -- I will note though, for you -- to go directly to your question -- he has nominated a historic number of judges who are people of color. A historic -- I don't know if it's a historic number of women, but a majority of the judges he has nominated are women. That speaks to his desire and his interest in having courts around the country that look like America and that represent the experiences of America, including public defenders and others. So, that is the evidence of his commitment to that I would point to.

Q And is it the expectation of the President and the White House that whomever he would nominate for any hypothetical vacancy that that would be an appointment that Democrats could unify behind?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's always the hope. If there were -- if that -- if that opportunity presents itself.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thanks, Jen. The pace of Americans who are getting booster shots has dropped by more than 50 percent since December. And public health experts are saying that one cause that might be behind that is confusion over the CDC's distinction between being "fully vaccinated" and being "up to date on vaccinations."

Folks with whom I've spoken say that initially describing the two-dose regimen for mRNA vaccines may have been premature. Given what we now know about variants and breakthrough cases, was it a mistake to say that people were "fully vaccinated" back last year before we knew what the virus was going to do next?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that -- it was not a decision made by the White House. It was a decision made by our public health experts at the CDC who make those definitions or determine those definitions.

They've also said that the term "fully vaccinated" refers to your primary series. So that means being up to date on your vaccines, which is true if you have kids. I have kids. Making sure they're up to date -- when they go to the doctor, you ask them if they need any shots. That is true of when you need a booster shot; you needed a set number of months, depending on what vaccine you got, past your second dose. That's something we think American people are more than capable of keeping up to date on.

It is also true that we think more people need to get boosters; that boosters are very effective in protecting against serious illness, hospitalization; and that that is one of the most effective steps that can be taken. Seventy percent of eligible seniors have gotten their boosters, but certainly it needs to be higher in other age groups.

Q And I do have one on the news of the day. I'm sorry. I got to try.

MS. PSAKI: Go -- don't need to be sorry. It's okay. You're doing your job.

Q So, if Justice Breyer were to retire, one of the last cases that he'll face as a member of the Supreme Court, obviously, will be *Dobbs v. Jackson*, which court watchers are saying is likely to weaken or potentially overturn *Roe v. Wade*. If his potentially final opinion ends up being a dissent in the *Dobbs* case, what is the administration's plan to protect abortion access as best it can, beyond trying to pass a congressional remedy, which I think -- you know, unless you guys have 10 extra senators lying around -- might not be able to beat a filibuster?

MS. PSAKI: Well, without speaking to the future of the Supreme Court, what I will reiterate is that the President has been an advocate for codifying *Roe*. That's something he certainly thinks and hopes that Congress will act on.

We've also taken steps and have announced steps, in recent days even, to -- for HHS to support -- to amp up their support for providers across the country. And that's something we will continue to look for ways to do.

But I'm not going to make a prediction of the outcome.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks everyone.

Q The German chancellor timing -- do you guys have that?

MS. PSAKI: Not yet. Hopefully we'll have it soon.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q Jen, any response to the Fed signaling it will raise rates in mid-March?

MS. PSAKI: I would just say that the President -- obviously, the Fed is independent, and we stand by that, as does the President; that the -- Chairman Powell has indicated his plans to recalibrate in the past, and the President spoke last week to his support for that.

Thank you, everyone.

3:15 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of President Biden's Meeting with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store of Norway
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 27, 2022 3:48 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 2022

Readout of President Biden's Meeting with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store of Norway

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. met today in Washington with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store of Norway to reaffirm the importance of the U.S.-Norway relationship. The two discussed joint efforts, including through NATO and the OSCE, to address Russia's destabilizing military buildup along Ukraine's borders. They also discussed enhancing the U.S.-Norway partnership in tackling a range of challenges, including climate change, ending the COVID-19 pandemic and establishing sustainable health security financing, and humanitarian support for Afghanistan. President Biden thanked the Prime Minister for Norway's leadership as President of the UN Security Council this month. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also met separately with Prime Minister Store.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Syrian Democratic Forces Re-Taking Full Control of the Hasakah Prison in Syria
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 30, 2022 4:55 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Syrian Democratic Forces Re-Taking Full Control of the Hasakah Prison in Syria

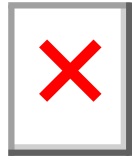
The United States commends the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who, along with Coalition forces, completed operations to re-take full control of the Hasakah prison in Syria. Thanks to the bravery and determination of the SDF, many of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice, ISIS failed in its efforts to conduct a large-scale prison break to reconstitute its ranks. The barbarity of ISIS's actions during this attack reaffirms why this group must be denied the ability to regenerate and why nations must work together to address the thousands of ISIS detainees in inadequate detention facilities. ISIS remains a global threat that requires a global solution. The United States remains committed to working with our partners in Iraq and northeast Syria, and the Defeat-ISIS Coalition, to counter the ISIS threat to our homelands.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 31, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 31, 2022 5:55 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 31, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, January 31, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:10 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Hello. Happy Monday. Okay, I just have two items for all of you at the top.

During President Biden's first 11 months in office, American agricultural exports reached a record \$160 billion, generating an estimated \$342 billion in total economic output and supporting more than 1.2 million jobs here in the United States. While we're proud of this historic progress, we know that agricultural exports could have increased even more but for pandemic-induced supply chain challenges.

For example, the Port of Oakland, which is underutilized, where other ports are -- you know, get most of the traffic. So, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is partnering with the Port of Oakland to set up a new 25-acre pop-up site to make it easier for agricultural companies to fill empty shipping containers with commodities, like American soybeans, dairy, and specialty crops such as nuts and fruit to ensure there can be more of these goods shipped out of that port.

USDA and the Department of Transportation also continue to call on ocean carriers to mitigate disruptions to agricultural shippers by restoring service -- full and fair service to the Port of Oakland, meaning they shouldn't bypass it. They should go there because there's going to be all these big shipping containers of agricultural goods.

One other item before we get to your questions. Today, we released the first edition of our Bipartisan Infrastructure Law guidebook to help state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments access the benefits from the historic investments in our nation's infrastructure bill.

The guidebook is a one-stop shop on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and contains the most comprehensive information to date on the more than 375 programs included in the law.

And our primary goal with this is to help our partners across the country know what to apply for, who to contact for help, and how to get ready to rebuild, especially for underserved and overburdened communities who may have more limited municipal capacity to navigate funding programs available.

We've also published an accompanying data file that allows users to quickly sort programs funded under the law by fields like agency, amount, recipient, or program name to make it as easy as humanly possible.

With that, Zeke.

Q Thanks, Jen. I just wanted to start with tensions between Russia and Ukraine. We've heard in the last couple of days from some Ukrainian officials minimizing or downplaying the imminence of a potential Russian invasion. There seems to be a disconnect between Washington and Kyiv here. Are there concerns in Washington that talking up the Russian threat is, in fact, weakening the Ukrainian government?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can only speak for our intention and our responsibility, and we feel it's important to be open and candid about the threat from Russia.

It's not just words, of course. You are seeing specifics that we've been laying out here, including over 100,000 troops on Ukraine's borders -- amassed on the border, with more troops and weaponry on the way.

They've also been surging troops into Belarus, which our U.N. ambassador spoke about this morning, seeing about 5,000 troops in Belarus with plans for more in the coming weeks.

We're also seeing Russia undertake efforts to destabilize Ukraine, including through a possible false-flag operation. It's dangerous. We've been saying for more than a week that Russia could invade at any time.

I would note, though, that our effort is to ensure we're informing the American public and the global community of the seriousness of this threat, even as we work with the Ukrainians, with the Europeans to ensure we are not only preparing them and providing them supplies that they need, but standing up and making clear to the Russians what the consequences will be.

So, I can't speak to the motivation or the reasoning for the comments of Ukrainian leadership; I can only speak to what our efforts are here.

Q And is there any discussions underway in Washington of providing, sort of, economic stabilization to the Ukrainian government as they try to deal with capital flight and other sort of domestic concerns as this sort of stalemate continues right now?

MS. PSAKI: Additional economic assistance beyond humanitarian assistance or other economic assistance we've provided?

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of that, but I can check and see if there's more specifics from our team.

Q And then, on Capitol Hill, there -- this bipartisan legislation that seems to be coming through pretty quickly that would include, potentially, preemptive sanctions against Russia ahead of a potential invasion -- a further invasion: Is that something the President is willing to sign into law should it pass?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are working very closely with Congress on U- -- on Ukraine and Russia and the tensions we're seeing build up at the border. We've briefed you on the number of conversations we've had, both in a classified and an unclassified format, and we've also had a range of conversations about this legislation.

We certainly are encouraged by the fact that there is bipartisan discussions about how to hold Russia accountable, how to have a deterrent impact.

Our view is that sanctions can be an effective tool of deterrence, and the deepening selloff in Russian markets reflects our message -- our message to Russia.

But we are in these conversations with Congress, and we look forward to continuing those.

Q And just on a different topic, we heard a few minutes ago from Governor Hutchinson, calling on the CDC and the federal government to provide more -- clearer guidance for the American public as COVID-19 moves from the pandemic stage to more of an endemic virus that we all have to live with for some time.

Can you speak a little bit of how the -- does -- is that something the President believes as well? And is there a disconnect between the White House's messaging for Americans that they should go about -- you know, take precautions but they can go about their daily lives in the midst of this Omicron surge, particularly if they're vaccinated and boosted, but also the precautions that are taken because the President is the President -- you know, the distance between him and the governors; you know, not going to dinner last night with the other governors; things like -- of that sort?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, there are a number of precautions that we have long taken from the White House and around the President and Vice President, which I think is to be expected. He still participated in the event last night.

The President's view, which I think you heard him speak to in his press conference just about 10 days ago, is that COVID and our efforts to address COVID are not going to exist in this current world we're living in now.

This is not the new normal -- what we're living in, in this moment. And that's important for the public to understand, because right now we're seeing record hospitalizations. You know, we are seeing -- we are still living with a range of precautions that change how people live their lives.

And in the President's view, that is not -- that is not living with COVID in a way that it doesn't disrupt your life, given we're still dealing with surges across the country.

It is also true, as you heard him talk about -- and this is where I don't think there's a disconnect; maybe it's a -- maybe it's the use of words -- that we have a range of tools that we had -- did not have a year ago. Right?

And this is something we've obviously been in close discussion with governors about, whether it is, of course, the fact that more than 87 percent of the -- of the country -- adults are -- have received at least one dose; or the fact that we've just ordered a huge supply of pills -- that is a game changer in many ways; or that we have masks that are now being distributed across the country and tests as well.

So, we are in a dif- -- a very different place. I don't think we see it as a disconnect. The President's view is that right now we still need to keep our heads down and stay at it to fight what is still, you know, surging in parts of the country, but we do have the tools to get to a point where it does not disrupt our daily lives.

Go ahead.

Q Can you give us any update on the President's search for a Supreme Court nominee? He mentioned he's going to be having in-person meetings here at the White House.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Is that something that might begin this week?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, I can give you an update. So, as you have heard the President say, he is -- he will do his duty to select a justice not only with the Senate's consent, but with its advice.

As somebody who served on the Senate Judiciary Committee and was Chair -- both as Chair and ranking member, he is steeped in this process and looks forward to advice from members of both parties on the Hill, as well as top legal experts and scholars across the country, working with the Vice President and his team at the White House. And I think you will see those consultations start this week.

So, tomorrow, the President is going to host Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley at the White House to consult with them and hear their advice about this vacancy. Chairman Durbin has worked on seven Supreme Court confirmation processes. The President has also worked for many years with Senator Grassley and respects his knowledge and views.

So, this will be part of that process, and I expect we'll have more details to confirm as the week proceeds.

Q The President has said he's going to be, you know, reaching across the aisle, obviously, as he makes this decision. We heard, over the weekend, Senator Lindsey Graham supporting his fellow South Carolinian, Judge J. Michelle Childs. Is bipartisan support a must-have for this President or something that he would simply like to have?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one, we appreciate Senator Graham's thoughts, and the President is working hard to choose from a wealth of deeply qualified candidates who bring to bear the strongest records, credentials, and abilities that anyone could have for this role.

I think, as the President views it, what's his -- his objective and his intention is to choose from among a group of -- of Black women with impeccable -- an impeccable record -- impeccable records and impeccable credentials. And he expects the Senate, Democrats and Republicans, to consider the qualifications of these nominees and do that, as it has been done historically for many decades in the past.

So, we certainly expect and he has every intention of nominating somebody who -- with impeccable credentials. And certainly, we expect and are hopeful that Republicans will look seriously at whomever he nominates and at what they -- who they are and what they would bring to the Court.

Q And just one more on this. Our latest poll shows that just over three quarters of Americans, 76 percent, want the President to consider all possible nominees, not only Black women, as he pledged on the campaign trail. What do you make of this? And why do you think that a majority of Americans want the President to take a different approach here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, what we can assure the American public of, whether -- wherever they fell on that poll, is that he will choose and nominate someone who has impeccable credentials and is eminently qualified to serve as a Supreme Court justice and someone who is eminently qualified to serve in a lifetime appointment.

He did make a promise to the country. That's certainly how he sees it. And he's going to work hard on this choice, seeking advice and counsel from, as I noted earlier, a range of leaders, of experts. And that's something that he is already pursuing this week.

I would note that there's a long history here. President Reagan promised the country he would nominate the country's first woman to serve on the Court, and he did so. Former President Trump also promised to choose a woman just over a year ago, and there was no such complaint from the voices on the Right who are speaking out now.

But the President's commitment is to deliver on the promise he made to the country. But he has -- there's no question in his mind that there is a wealth of qualified, talented Black women to choose from in this -- to nominate.

Go ahead.

Q Can you talk a little more about the size of the pool of candidates that the President will be considering? We've heard a lot about a few names that are currently federal judges the President had appointed, but then we've seen some expanding lists. Could you quantify that to any degree?

And are all of these women being actively considered for the vacancy, or might it also include future federal positions that the President would also have the power to appoint?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I can -- this may be unsatisfying, I will just preface for you, Kelly, which I hate to do -- but, you know, as somebody who appreciates the solemn importance of the responsibility he has, he's of course been reviewing a number of potential candidates. That is a list that is bigger than "a few" in the number of bios that he has been looking for -- looking at and that have been prepared for him by his team in order to be prepared if a vacancy occurred.

We don't think, and he -- it is important to him to preserve the details of the process. And his intention is to, as you know, put forward a nominee next month. So this is not a month -- many-months-long process. He is very focused on it and committed to it, but we're not going to get into details of names, if we can avoid it, or details of numbers at this point in time.

Q Often, for this kind of process, there is a team appointed to work short term --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- inside the White House to be sort of a guide for that nominee. The term of art in Washington is "sherpa."

MS. PSAKI: Sherpa.

Q Have you made any progress on that?

MS. PSAKI: We've been making progress and expect we'll have more to announce for all of you hopefully soon.

Q And last question. Do you think bipartisanship -- the chance to get Republican votes -- would be a factor that would weigh heavily on the President among those he would consider?

MS. PSAKI: I think the President is going to select a woman -- a Black woman -- who is qualified, who is prepared, who has impeccable experience to serve on the Court. He's going to do that based on her credentials, of course having a discussion with her, and not through gaming out the system.

He believes that Democrats and Republicans should seriously and carefully consider any qualified nominee he puts forward, as he has done in the past himself.

Go ahead.

Oh, sorry, I'll come back to you, Jacqui. I didn't mean to --

Q Okay. That's all right.

Q Thank you. Members of the economic team have been sort of frontrunning the jobs number on Friday, saying that the

figures would be wonky because of the course of all the Omicron cases we had during the sample period. I'm wondering what your expectation or the White House's expectation for this report is. And in particular, you've had a lot of revisions of these reports in recent months. Do you think it's time to overhaul how the Department of Labor does this survey -- the methodology and that kind of thing?

MS. PSAKI: I have no prediction or call for any changes to how the process is run. But what I can tell you is we're looking in preparation for the Friday jobs numbers. We'll get the monthly jobs report, of course, for January on Friday.

The way the jobs numbers are calculated is: Every month is -- there are -- is calculated -- every month -- it's a little complicated. But there are some simple things here to understand that most people don't realize: If a worker was out sick during the week the survey was taken -- because it's -- the data is taken over a week, and that is ba- -- that is what the monthly jobs numbers is based on -- and did not receive paid leave, they are counted as having lost their job.

Now, that is an inaccurate depiction -- and this is why I think you're asking the second question -- of whether or not they were unemployed, but that's how it's calculated.

Because Omicron was so highly transmissible, nearly 9 million people called out sick in early January when the jobs data was being collected. So, during that same period of time, in the week the survey was taken, the week of January 12th, was at the height of the Omicron spike.

So we just wanted to kind of prepare, you know, people to understand how the data is taken, what they're looking at, and what it is an assessment of. And as a result, the month's jobs report may show job losses in large part because workers were out sick from Omicron at the point when it was peaking during the period when -- the week where the data was taken.

Q Okay. May I follow up on Zeke's question --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- in regards to the President's distancing at events? Is it fair for us to interpret that this is a precaution being taken, given the caseloads we're seeing -- in particular in, you know, D.C. but other places? Is he taking more steps to not sit within six feet, for instance, of people that he had been previously?

MS. PSAKI: It's not a new precaution. We have had a process, and it may look different when people are sitting down -- right? -- because we don't do as many events with people seated versus standing. But when somebody has their mask off, we make a special effort, because they're speaking, to ensure that that spacing is adequate.

Q And this applies to the President and the Vice President? For instance, other people spoke today but were shoulder to shoulder. So we're just wondering if there's a particular rule for the VP and President.

MS. PSAKI: I know that's a precaution we try to take around them. I can certainly see if there's more specifics of additional speakers.

Q And, finally, can you give us any update on the Build Back Better negotiations? Is that a fair word for them? Is that ongoing? Can you say whether the President has spoken recently with Senator Manchin or Senator Sinema?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give any details on any conversations he's had, per our policy of trying to keep those conversations private. I will say that there are -- is still a great deal of interest; passion, I might say; and advocacy on the Hill for moving forward with a Build Back Better agenda, because there's a recognition and understanding that it's long overdue for Congress to take steps to lower costs for childcare, lower costs for eldercare, negotiate the price of prescription drugs, and ask higher-income companies and Americans to pay more. Those are all also widely popular among the public.

So, right now, the point we're at is there's a lot of discussion among members, their staffs, committees -- we're engaged in those as well -- about what big chunk -- just to keep using the phrase -- we can agree on moving forward.

And, of course, that would require 50 votes, but those conversations are always ongoing.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead, Jacqui.

Q Thank you, Jen. Real quick on crime first.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I wanted to ask about: There was an appearance -- your appearance on "Pod Save America." There was a discussion of Fox's crime coverage. And one line has prompted some criticism from people. It was, "Soft-on-crime consequences. What ~~even is that~~ [does that mean]?" Were you speaking in your personal opinion? Or is that at all a reflection of the priorities of this administration? Because the criticism is that it would reflect that crime is not a priority of this administration.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I encourage anyone to listen to the full context of the interview and the conversation. What I was speaking to was a chyron on Fox News -- since you raised it -- which suggested this administration is soft on crime with no basis, given we have had many conversations and back-and-forths with you and your colleagues about the prioritization of the President to ensure that we are working as close partners with leaders, whether it is Mayor Adams, who he's going to spend the day with on Thursday, or others in the country.

And the facts speak for themselves. This is what I was talking about in the interview, for the full context. In the American Rescue Plan, there was additional funding to support local COPS programs, something that every single Republican voted against. I said in that interview that I know they don't like it when we call that out. I'm going to keep calling that out because that's a fact.

Also, President Biden has proposed a significant increase in funding for local COPS programs in his budget -- more than the prior President. That's a fact.

So if those facts are uncomfortable, I'm sorry for people who feel they need to be critical, but the President has been a longtime advocate of addressing crime. He's never been for defunding the police.

Our Department of Justice has increased funding, has put in place support for strike forces.

And the other fact that is never talked about in these Fox packages -- maybe even this one -- is the fact that gun crime is a major driver of crime across the country -- also a fact.

So, those are pieces, I think, in that moment I was speaking to. And, again, we're about the facts here, and addressing crime is something that is a root of the President's agenda.

Q Thank you. I appreciate that.

And then, I wanted to move on to the DOJ. There is a letter from Tom Cotton today, threatening to block the President's DOJ nominees over the Department of Justice allegedly denying four deputy U.S. Marshals legal defense in lawsuits stemming from the Portland riots.

Is the White House aware of this? And can you give us any explanation for why that would be happening?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of the specifics of it, Jacqui. I'm happy to check with our Counsel's Office, I assume, and see if there's something more specific we can get back to you.

Q Thank you. And then on -- there's been this leaked video of Border Patrol agents expressing frustration over some of the policies of this administration. I know that we talked last week about flights, and we've heard the explanation for this procedure that they were frustrated over, but this video seems to show that morale is, you know, in a tough place, that these agents are frustrated who are having to carry out these policies.

Is anything being done to improve morale? Is there going to be any sort of outreach from the administration to Border Patrol, given that we're seeing more of this come to the surface?

MS. PSAKI: I haven't watched in detail the video. I will note that -- I think it was the migrant flights video. Is that the one that was -- or it's a different video?

Q It's a different video.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I didn't want to speak to the wrong thing.

Of course, the role that Border Patrol agents play in ensuring security and safety at our borders is something that there's great value for in this administration. I would point you to the Department of Homeland Security, who oversees, of course, the Border Patrol agents, and can see if there's anything -- any more specific programs that are underway.

Go ahead, Jeff. And then Jeff.

Q Thanks. A follow-up to Kelly's question about trying to quantify the pool of potential Supreme Court nominees.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Yeah.

Q A White House official told us late Friday that the reporting in some outlets that there were three primary contenders -- that that was incorrect. I wonder then: For our reporting, would it be more accurate to say "a dozen," "dozens," plural, women under consideration?

MS. PSAKI: I understand your efforts. I appreciate them. I value them. But I can tell you that the President feels very strongly about ensuring we're protecting the process.

What I was getting at with Kelly a little bit, but let me be a little more clear, is that the number of bios and information that the President has been reviewing was greater than the three.

Q Okay. On voting rights, what's the President's view on the early bipartisan talks around rewriting, reforming the Electoral Count Act? It doesn't go nearly as far as he'd wanted on voting rights, but there is perhaps new urgency, given the former President's comments at that rally and in the statement where he appeared to admit to this scheme to overturn the election results in 2020.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me speak to that first, and then I'll come around to the Electoral Count Act.

So, in terms of the former President, his actions represented a unique and existential threat to our democracy, as the President has said many times. But, you know, his remarks this weekend, he defended the actions of his supporters who stormed the Capitol and brutally attacked the law enforcement officers protecting it.

I think it's important to shout that out and call that out. He even attacked his own Vice President for not, in his words, having "overturned the election." And it's just a reminder of how unfit he is for office. And it's telling that even some of his closest allies have rejected those remarks as inappropriate in the days since.

As it relates to the Electoral Count Act: As you noted, Jeff, in your question, I mean, it is not a replacement. And I think why we keep saying that is because we don't want anyone to suggest, who supports it, that it's a replacement for the John Lewis Voting Rights Act or other voting rights legislation that has important components of it that would provide a basic baseline and important protections for people across the country who are trying to exercise their fundamental right.

We've been open to and a part of conversations about the Electoral Count Act. We've never been opposed to it. We just don't want it to be a replacement for it.

Q And lastly, at least six HBCUs received bomb threats today.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The FBI says it's aware of these threats and it's coordinated with the local law enforcement. Has the President been briefed? And do you have anything to say about it from the podium?

MS. PSAKI: I will say that these are certainly disturbing. And the White House is in touch with the interagency partners, including federal law enforcement leadership, on this.

We're relieved to hear that Howard and Bethune-Cookman Universities have been given the all-clear, and we'll continue to monitor these reports. The President is aware. I don't believe he's received a formal briefing, but he is aware of these reports. And obviously, as you noted, law enforcement authorities would be running point.

Go ahead, Jeff.

Q Thank you, Jen. There was a U.N. Security Council meeting today.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Russia's ambassador at that meeting said that the West's assertion that Russia has amassed 100,000 troops on the border has not been confirmed. And China, at that meeting, also said that it did not view Russia's troops as a threat to Ukraine. I'm wondering about your -- the White House's response to those two comments.

MS. PSAKI: Well, those are also the two countries that voted against the meeting proceeding -- the only two, right?

I would note that we have based the information we have provided to all of you on substantive reports out there, our own assessments, our own coordinated intelligence gathering with our partners on the ground. So -- and those are assessments that are -- as you know, Jeff -- are also made by the Europeans.

Now, again, Russia has the power -- they are the aggressor here -- they have the power and ability to deescalate: to pull their troops back from the border, to not push more troops to Belarus, to take steps to deescalate the situation on the ground.

But we know what we see with our own eyes. You have heard members of our depart- -- defense team -- our Secretary of Defense, as well as General Milley -- speak to this in very specific detail, as well as our U.N. ambassador this morning.

It is not our preference to be having these conversations. We'd prefer there to be de-escalatory actions by the Russians.

Q And China?

MS. PSAKI: And Chi- -- look, I think that I can't speak for the motivation of the Chinese. They can speak for that themselves. Obviously, we would encourage any country in the world to be part of an effort to deescalate, to protect and respect the sovereignty of Ukraine, and to make clear that a global value is not allowing one country to invade and take

respect the sovereignty of Ukraine, and to make clear that a global value is not allowing one country to invade and take land from another.

Q Do you have any more details on your plan to impose sanctions on Russia's -- on the Kremlin's inner circle?

MS. PSAKI: Let me see, Jeff. I know there were some reports over that -- about that over the weekend. That has been, as it was back in 2014 -- as I think you probably remember -- a part of what we have been considering.

I can confirm we have developed specific sanctions packages for both Russian elites and their family members if Russia further engage -- invades Ukraine. These efforts are being pursued in coordination with allies and partners. The individuals we've identified are in or near the inner circle of the Kremlin and play a role in government decision-making, or at a minimum complicit in the Kremlin's destabilizing behavior.

Many of these individuals are particularly vulnerable targets because of their deep and financial ties with the West, meaning they would be hurt by sanctions that are tying them to Western financial systems.

I would also note that this is just one piece of our effort to hit Russia from all angles. And this is -- when Jake Sullivan came here several weeks ago and talked about how this will be far above and beyond what we were considering in 2014 -- a lot of what we did in 2014 was around individuals, right? And we're talking about major parts of the financial system, but there is a package. We have developed specific sanctions packages for both Russian elites and their family members.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Zooming out a bit on Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q -- more. Does the President consider it as a risk the different simultaneous things going on right now? You've got North Korea upping its missile game. You got the -- the Taiwan Straits probably has never been more tense than it is now. And, of course, Ukraine. Does he consider -- fear that there's any link between these things, not as some kind of coordinated master plan, but that at least one of those -- you know, each place is watching the other and will take its cues, and then maybe how Ukraine goes forward could provide a lesson to the other challengers that he's facing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, one, North Korea has been doing missile tests -- dozens of them -- in prior administrations. And obviously, we've spoken to it each time that that has happened.

Our door -- the door to diplomacy remains open, and we have conveyed that clearly. We are very careful not to combine all of these pieces into one, because they're all different circumstances.

There is also -- if I flip it on -- flip it a little bit -- I would say, a clear value that we need to stand by, which is the belief of the United States and our NATO partners that -- and other countries, of course, around the world -- that you can't just stand by and accept one country trying to invade and take land from another country. And this is also about protecting the sovereignty of a country, and that is a value that's important to stand by as well.

So, as we are -- as the President and other members of our national security team are conveying that very clearly -- privately and publicly -- that's also sending a message -- to other countries around the world.

If you look at what President Putin's stated objectives are -- or his spokespeople, I guess I should say -- he wants to divide the West. He wants to divide NATO. The opposite is happening: There's been more than 200 engagements with NATO countries. We are united -- fiercely united and standing up to what we see as aggressive behavior, bellicose rhetoric, even as we're leaving the door to diplomacy open.

Q Thank you. One on the Olympics, if I may. Does the President have a stand on this debate on whether athletes should

Q Thank you. One on the Olympics, if I may. Does the President have a stand on this debate on whether athletes should be able to express political, human rights, or anything non-sporting views at the Olympics? I know the Olympics has got some rules, but the Chinese came out today with some pretty tough statements, warning people not to step out of line. What would the President's reaction be if an American athlete gets up on that stand and says or does something --

MS. PSAKI: I think we spoke to this last summer and conveyed a support for freedom of speech of individuals.

Go ahead.

Q Just today we've heard Russian diplomats say they see hysteria, "PR stunt," "megaphone diplomacy" to describe how the U.S. has been talking about what's going on there. You've all said diplomacy is still the path; that there is still room for that. And General Milley was very strong about that. At what point do you decide Moscow is not interested in that and that it will have shifted from the "We really want to do this" to "Clearly, they're not paying attention at this point"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what's important to note here is: Our view is that the door to diplomacy should always be open. And that is what the President, the -- our Secretary of State, our Secretary of Defense have been conveying.

I think the State Department confirmed this morning that our Secretary of State will be talking with Foreign Minister Lavrov, I believe tomorrow. That would be a next step in our diplomatic efforts and engagements here.

But I think we've also been very prioritized and focused on -- and you saw our U.N. ambassador do this in the -- at the -- at the session this morning -- calling out what we see as misinformation and propaganda, at times, by Russian leaders and others, because it's important for people to know and understand what the facts are.

But regardless of what people's public rhetoric is, it's our view that the door to diplomacy should always be open. And ultimately, the question here is about what President Putin is going to do. So, we're always going to keep that door open.

Q And back to SCOTUS, just to try one more time --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- with Judge Childs. You had -- within two hours of the event here with Justice Breyer and the President, you had Congressman Clyburn -- obviously, a very close ally -- come out and very publicly push for Childs. And then, as mentioned earlier, you had Senator Graham do that.

Hard to think of two opposite folks: the number-three House Democrat -- like the President, a former Judiciary Committee chair --

MS. PSAKI: They are both from South Carolina, which may be a factor.

Q Yeah, of course, with the state. But when you have -- when you're talking about the bipartisan part of it --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- how much weight might the President put on something like that, where you have, again, the number-three House Democrat, you have Lindsey Graham uniting for one person and very publicly putting the pressure on almost immediately to, kind of, nudge him in that direction?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can only tell you what -- how the President is approaching his role here. And through -- he is very familiar and has lived through many confirmation processes and hearings. He takes his role very seriously. And his role is to pick the most eminently qualified, credentialed Black woman to serve as the Supreme Court -- as a Supreme Court justice, a lifetime appointment.

It is certainly encouraging. We've seen the comments, of course, of Senator Graham and Congressman Clyburn. We always welcome agreement on anything in this town. But the President's focus is not on gaming out the process. It's on picking the right candidate.

Go ahead, in the back.

Q So, the President today -- two topics. It's on inflation, the first one. The President told governors today, quote, "We've sent you a whole hell of a lot of money. And we're going to send you more." The Fed Chairman last week, though, said that a drop in fiscal spending this year will help ease inflation. So, again, what's the level of concern for the President that more spending would contribute to inflation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there is still going to be a massive drop this year because of the end of a number of programs. So that doesn't -- that doesn't change what the President conveyed.

I don't -- I didn't see the totality of it, so I don't know what the full context of it. There are still, of course, programs and requests that these governors have, whether it is help on COVID or help with specific small businesses. And there is still some targeted assistance that leaders still want, they need, and we are delivering from the federal government.

But that doesn't change -- if you look at the overarching graph of, like, how much federal assistance is going, that it's a natural drop because of the end of a lot of programs.

Q So on the Federal Reserve nominees: The Federal Reserve maintains its independence. One of the picks, Sarah Bloom Raskin, is the wife of Representative Jamie Raskin, as you know. And it's been a while since I've gotten to see you, so I get to ask about Federal Reserve now. You know, he was an impeachment manager in the impeachment trial of a Republican president, so does the President believe she can keep that independence from the Fed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would also just -- I think she can stand on her own qualifications, not just because she's a woman, but because she's done a lot in her career. She has been said by many to be the most qualified person to be nominated to this role, which I think is probably more important than who she's married to, I would argue.

She brings unprecedented experience to this role and the support of economic experts across the spectrum, including from the top economic advisor to former President Bush. She believes, and she has said she believes, firmly in the independent role of the Federal Reserve and will work in concert with Chair Powell and her colleagues to identify and mitigate a range of risks.

She is also, you know, somebody who, again, as I mentioned, has a wealth of experience that she would be leaning into in this role.

Q But the federal -- the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to committee members there, calling into question her activism related to regulations on where banks could lend or should be able to limit lending into certain industries, specifically coal and oil.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me note what a couple of others have said. The community banker and former Fed Governor, Betsy Duke: "The characterization of Sarah Bloom Raskin as someone who will use the powers of the Fed for political purposes is simply false. I saw every day [her] commitment to the Fed's dual mandate."

Former Bush CEA chair, Glenn Hubbard: "[Raskin] brings a wealth of experience to a Fed role.

Former Independent Community Bankers of America President and CEO, Cam Fine: "An outstanding group of nominees. I hope the Senate will confirm them as soon as possible."

And I think, just like any nominee, she should be judged by her qualifications. She will have a hearing coming up where I'm

sure she will answer a range of questions. But I think her -- her background, her credentials, her experience is unquestionable in terms of its preparedness for this role.

Q So her husband being an impeachment manager had nothing to do with it? Just to put (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Again, I would say that her experience and her impeccable credentials were the determinant in her being nominated for this role. And I -- I think it's a little questionable for anyone to raise otherwise.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The administration is committed to the release of U.S. citizens held in Iran. Can you update us if there's anything new, and whether the White House has asked the Qatari Foreign Minister to mediate since he was recently in Tehran? And I have another question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I would say: Obviously, there's a range of topics, as I think we briefed out to you -- and we can talk about -- more about that if you would like -- that will be discussed during the meeting this afternoon.

There's no special coordination between the United States and Qatar on this particular visit about Iran, but, of course, there are a range of topics including the nuclear negotiations that could be a part of the discussion.

Q So nothing on the release of the hostages? Everything that was reported is not correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, again, I don't have anything more to offer to you other than to say that they could talk about the Iran nuclear negotiations, but there's no special coordination planned for this trip.

Q Also, the Houthis has attacked Abu Dhabi yesterday while the Israeli president was meeting. You keep saying that you want to protect your allies in the Gulf, but practically, how can you stop them from escalating, as we have seen in the last few weeks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I expect my colleague, John Kirby, at the Pentagon may have more to say on this. But I can tell you that -- as to your question about your -- the report: U.S. military personnel responded to an inbound missile threat on the UAE. This involved the employment of Patriot interceptors to -- coincident to efforts by the armed forces of the UAE.

I would say we are working quite closely with them. Again, my colleague will have more to speak to, but we are very focused on working with them and defending against all threats to their peoples and territories.

Go ahead, Shelby.

Q Thanks. I have two. Nikki Haley and Senator Risch wrote an open letter to U.S. Olympic athletes this morning, warning of a high-risk and potentially (inaudible) political environment. Is President Biden at all concerned for the safety of American athletes competing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that we are very focused on the safety of American athletes. And as you know, unrelated -- all related, I guess -- we made a decision not to send a delegation. It was not related to that; it was related to our concerns about PRC's ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses. I just wanted to note that for the record.

But in terms of athletes, we do everything possible to work in coordination with the U.S. Olympic Committee. We're providing consular and security services to our athletes, coaches, trainers, and staff, as we do for all U.S. citizens overseas.

Additionally, we expect the PRC to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our athletes.

They have our full support. We are 100 percent behind them. We've also provided the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee and corporate sponsors with briefings as well. And we will continue to work in lockstep with them.

Q And then, going back to crime, I know you noted the President is, you know, not for defunding the police. He has initiatives on combating crime, but we are seeing crime surge in major cities. And the President's poll numbers on the topic -- you know, there was a -- because he had an approval rating on crime that was at 36 percent in one December poll. Does that indicate to the White House at all that Americans feel Democrats are out of touch when it comes to safety or criminal justice? And, you know, what's the administration's takeaway to these numbers and the rise in crime?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we all agree or should agree that violent crime is a serious problem. We actually saw a record jump in murders in 2020 under the former president, and there hasn't been new FBI nationwide data that has been released to date. There has been city -- some city data, of course, which is important to focus on and talk about.

Our view is that instead of turning this into a political football, we need to be focused from the beginning of the President's time -- all of his time in office on reducing crime and keeping our communities safe.

And that's why he's been a longtime advocate for more accountable community policing. That's why he has supported and advocated for additional funding for proven community programs to reduce crime, why he's working to crack down on rogue gun dealers who sell firearms to criminals, and why he has taken executive action to crack down on ghost guns.

So his objective is to work with Democrats, Republicans, mayors, local leaders to work to address what we've seen as increases in crime in some areas. But I would just note that, nationwide, there has been increases in crime over the past few years.

Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q Jen, the governors were just out at the stakes --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- just a minute ago, after meeting with the President. They said their biggest message to the President and the administration is they want flexibility in how they spend these monies. What can the administration do, or what are --

MS. PSAKI: Which money? Just for clarification.

Q Infrastructure and also COVID relief bills. They want more flexibility on how they can spend that.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I would say, first, on infrastructure: We just published this massive booklet with the intention of providing a bunch of guidance to governors, state and local electeds, communities about how they can apply for funding.

It goes through different grant programs, so different programs work differently. Some of it, as I think we've noted in the past, has been against some of the most structurally challenged bridges, for example, which will take some time. But there are just different ranges of programs that come from different agencies. Obviously, if there are lead pipes in their state or communities or schools, those are things we're going to replace; that's pretty clear.

But there is a lot of, hopefully, comprehensive information in this lengthy booklet about how -- or book -- it's a big book -- about how to apply for grants, a follow-up for how to ask questions as they come up as needed.

In terms of COVID relief funds, I mean, we have -- I'd really have to dig into more specifics of what they're looking for. There have been areas of some flexibility in terms of how funding has been spent for schools or how funding has been spent for local community programs throughout the course of time, like through the American Rescue Plan and others. So I'd have to look at the greater context of what their exact issue is.

Q Okay. And a final question: What is the federal government going to do to supply -- are any supplies going to the Northeast states that just got hit by the blizzard?

MS. PSAKI: By the blizzard? So, we work very closely with state, local leaders to respond to natural disasters, of course including storms. Typically those requests need to come first from governors in the states. I can check with FEMA and see if there's any specific request that has come in or what needs that have -- that have arisen in the days since the storm. I mean, "days" -- it's not been that many days, but you get what I'm saying. We'll see if we can get more details to you after the briefing.

Go ahead.

Q On infrastructure, on the topic of this guidebook -- I actually just did a report in the state I cover, of California.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And there were a ton of questions about just the state portion, the formula fund portion --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that the state already knows is going to get committed. So many questions about how that's supposed to go out.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q How does the White House plan just sort of oversee all of that distribution and sort of make sure that the money is having its intended effect when it gets out the door?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. You mean to avoid waste, fraud, and abuse? Or to --

Q Not just waste, fraud, and abuse, but, you know, given that states will have a lot of discretion on how these funds are spent, just in terms of the ultimate outcome being -- so what was intended.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Through very close consultation. I mean, you saw the President have a meeting with his infrastructure task force on the day of his one-year anniversary. That shows how important the implementation of this bill is to the President.

The objective -- what we were trying to do with the publication of this book is to provide clear criteria as a baseline, obviously to build questions off of and to have follow-ups.

But I think, from here, what the President always says when I'm in meetings with him, with Mitch Landrieu, is: A big part of our job is, you know, spending hours a day calling mayors, calling governors, seeing what local -- what questions come from local electeds. That's the role he played as Vice President, and that's what his expectation is.

So this big book is a base that will hopefully help answer a range of questions. But different programs are being implemented by different agencies, even as they're being coordinated by here. So it really depends on the program implementation to where those questions should be directed.

Q And in terms of the American people, how do you intend to ensure that the average American ends up knowing what the impact of those bills are? Are you guys going to do signage the way we've sort of seen in the past with many big initiatives?

MS. PSAKI: I think there will be some branding around that the infrastructure implementation that the American people should be able to see.

Q And, lastly -- you know, it's still up in the air, but in California, there's sort of a push to get a single-payer health plan across the state. Is that something that you think the federal government could end up being able to interface with and something that, you know, if California were to proceed, you guys would welcome?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of interface in what way?

Q You know, that if the state were to implement the sort of single-payer plan, that would work with everything else you guys have in the healthcare ecosystem.

MS. PSAKI: We would, of course, work to coordinate with any state, but I don't have any more details at this point in time. We'll wait to see what they do.

Thanks, everyone.

1:57 P.M. EST

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 1, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:27 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: All right. Kristen, welcome back.

Q Thank you, Jen. I appreciate it.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. We missed you.

A couple of items for you all at the top. I know there was some good questions yesterday about the status of the infrastructure law implementation, so I just wanted to bring you a few updates that are hopefully helpful to all of you.

In the 79 days since the bill -- the law was signed, our team has hit the ground running to get money out the door, engage partners, and provide comprehensive resources to help municipalities unlock funding opportunities so no community is left behind.

To date, over \$80 billion has already been allocated and is headed out to states, territories, and local governments. That includes over \$50 billion to states for highways and roads; \$14 billion for 500 Army Corps projects; over \$5 billion for -- to states for bridges; over \$7 billion to states for water infrastructure; \$3 billion to repair and rebuild over 3,000 airports; \$1 billion to support Superfund cleanup to 49 sites; and \$239 million in Port Infrastructure Development Grants.

And this is just the beginning, and we'll do our best to provide you all updates in here on the status of these funds being

allocated. State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments will receive over 90 percent of funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to rebuild their communities.

We mentioned yesterday -- or I talked a little bit yesterday about this large guidebook we had put out to provide guidance and information to communities to apply for the part of this that will be through competitive awards.

As we did with the American Rescue Plan, we also know that local leaders have the best sense of where the communities need funding. And the formula funds in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law include flexibility to deal with unique local and state challenges.

As we've also said many times, with flexibility comes great responsibility to use funds wisely. So, to ensure accountability and transparency, Mitch Landrieu and the infrastructure team convened a meeting with inspector general -- inspectors general -- general from all agencies with funding from the infrastructure law to discuss oversight and transparency. He called for each state to appoint an infrastructure implementation lead, and we are committed to showing transparency on how money is allocated and spent.

Also, one other update for all of you at the top. As you know, the President is headed to New York City on Thursday, and I wanted to give you a quick preview of his trip.

He will be joined on the trip by Attorney General Garland to talk about the steps the administration has taken so far to reduce crime -- gun crime, and how we can be a strong partner for New York City and other cities grappling with increased gun violence over the past two years.

The President and the Attorney General will join with law enforcement officials alongside elected leaders, including Mayor Adams, Governor Hochul, at the New York Police Department headquarters to discuss the work that federal, state, and local law enforcement officials are doing to quickly take guns and repeat shooters off of our streets.

Afterward, President Biden, Attorney General Garland, Mayor Adams, Governor Hochul, and other elected leaders will visit with community violence intervention leader -- leaders in Queens to talk about the community-led work to interrupt gun violence.

The President outlined a comprehensive plan last year to tackle gun crime that includes giving cities historic funding through the American Rescue Plan to put more cops on the beat and support community violence intervention programs, as well as initiatives like afterschool programming, creating economic opportunities, and reducing recidivism to address the root causes of gun crime.

The President's budget also doubles federal support for community policing, with \$300 million more for cities plus another \$200 million for community violence interventions -- a total of a half a billion dollars for these strategies that are proven to reduce gun crime. And he's going to continue to urge Congress to act on that.

Finally, the Department of Justice continues to step up their efforts to combat violent crime and gun trafficking, including through five strike forces launched last year in New York City and other regions.

As the Department of Justice reported just last week, those efforts have resulted in thousands of guns and violent criminals being taken off the streets over the past year. But they will, of course, have more to say on Thursday.

Why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks, Jen. It's been a busy news day so I have a few. Off the top, Senator Manchin just said Build Back Better is "dead." Was the White House aware that he felt this way? And what's the path forward for some of those Democratic priorities?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, as a policy, we're not going to get into private conversations we have with Senator Manchin or any other senators about this piece of legislation or our efforts moving forward.

What I will note and where there is strong support moving forward across the Democratic Caucus is on taking steps to lower costs for childcare, for healthcare, for eldercare; on making sure that Medicare can negotiate the cost of prescription drugs; and ensuring the tax system is fair. Whatever you call that, there is strong support for that, strong passion for that, a lot of advocacy for that, and there are a lot of members having continued conversations about it.

Q And then Russian President Vladimir Putin just said today that the U.S. is ignoring its top security demands but that Moscow is still open for more talks. Is the U.S. open to more talks? If not, what is the step forward with respect to Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely we are. The door to diplomacy remains open. We don't know what decision President Putin will make. While we've seen the buildup of troops on the border, Secretary -- our Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, just spoke this morning with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and he reiterated our commitments and openness to a diplomatic path forward.

Let me give you a little bit more of a readout of that. And I can give you more of an update of some of the other conversations we've been having with a range of counterparts as well.

So, Secretary Blinken -- I know the State Department did a bit of a background call on this, but let me give you some highlights: The Secretary emphasized the U.S. willingness, bilaterally and together with Allies and partners, to continue a substantive exchange with Russia on mutual security concerns, which we intend to do in full coordination with our partners and Allies. He reiterated the United States commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the right of all countries to determine their own foreign policy and alliances.

He also urged immediate Russian de-escalation and the withdrawal of troops and equipment from Ukraine's borders, and was clear that further invasion of Ukraine would be met with swift and severe consequences and urged Russia to pursue a diplomatic path.

Our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, also met with his German counterpart today as part of our regular consultations with our Allies and partners. But certainly, the door to diplomacy remains open. As we've said many times, de-escalation will, of course, make that diplomatic path easier moving forward.

Q And then one more on HHS. Last week, there was a GAO report warning that HHS may not be prepared for a future pandemic and that it had fallen short in a number of ways in this pandemic. There have also been reports about White House officials being frustrated with Secretary Becerra's leadership. So does the President still have confidence in Secretary Becerra? And has he talked to him about any changes he might want to see at HHS or about his leadership of the department?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you know how we feel about anonymous sources around here.

Q They weren't all anonymous. There were some experts that are publicly criticizing the way HHS has --

MS. PSAKI: From -- from within the government, I'm referring to.

Q Sure.

MS. PSAKI: I would just reiterate that the President remains confident in the role of Secretary Becerra. He is somebody who is an important partner. He has been leading a range of efforts from the Department of Homeland Security -- I mean -- Homeland Security -- the -- from the Department of Health and Human Services. And we have strong partnerships from the very top down with HHS.

We're less focused on -- not at all focused, I should say, on palace intrigue, as much as we are on vaccinating more Americans, fighting the Omicron surge, expanding testing capacity, and getting more therapeutics out to the American people. And that's how we believe we and the leadership of the Cabinet will be judged.

Go ahead.

Q A couple of follow-ups here. On Ukraine, we've seen some of the major European allies talking directly with Putin. Emmanuel Macron has spoken with him twice. The Italian Prime Minister has spoken with him. Boris Johnson is now traveling to Ukraine. Why not have the President have a -- you know, take more direct involvement like some of these other allies are?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President remains certainly open to that if there's a determination that that is the appropriate and most constructive step moving forward. We also have a very active and engaged Secretary of State, who has had a number of conversations with his counterpart, including this morning, and that's the channel that those conversations are happening through at this point -- as well as at many other levels, I should say.

Q And on the question about Senator Manchin: He also said that no one has reached out to him. He hasn't been having talks about trying to do this "in chunks," as the President has suggested may be the path forward. Why not?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to outline from here conversations that we are having with a range of senators and a range of senators are having with each other, but I can assure you we've been in touch with and hav- -- with every member of the Democratic Caucus.

Q And just some housekeeping on the Supreme Court pick. The Times is reporting that Doug Jones will be the sherpa on the Hill. Can you confirm that and talk about that decision?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to confirm yet at this point about what the team will look like that we bring in, as has been done historically, to help sherpa through our nominee whenever that person is selected.

I can reiterate that we intend to have that team in place before the President makes a selection, and that team will be more than one person.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thank you, Jen. And thank you for the welcome back. Following up on the Supreme Court decision, a number of Republicans, as you know and as you've been asked about, have spoken out about the President's pledge to pick a Black woman for the High Court. How do you respond specifically to Ted Cruz who, overnight, called it "offensive" -- offensive to Black women that he would make that pledge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, here's what I would say first: Just over a year ago, the previous president also promised to select a woman for the Supreme Court. Not only were there no complaints about choosing a nominee from a specific demographic -- from the same corners -- but there was widespread praise of now-Justice Barrett on those grounds with Republican lawmakers widely highlighting that they thought this was positive for women in America.

So, take Senator Cruz himself: He had no objection to Donald Trump promising he'd nominate a woman in 2020. I repeat: No objection at all. In fact, he praised her on these grounds during -- praised her on these grounds -- the nominee. During her confirmation hearing, Senator Cruz said, quote, "I think you're an amazing role model for little girls. What advice would you give little girls?"

When President Reagan honored his campaign pledge to place the first woman on the Court, he said it symbolizes the unique American opportunity. There is no outcry around that.

The President's view is that after 230 years of the Supreme Court being in existence, the fact that not a single Black woman has served on the Supreme Court is a failure in the process, not a failure -- or a lack of qualified Black women to serve as Supreme Court justices.

Q And broadly speaking, we just heard from the President on how he is viewing this pick. He says he is taking the "advise and consent" role very seriously --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- of the Senate. If he thought -- and I know you've been getting questions around this, but just to kind of put a finer point on it: If he thought that a nominee could get more Republican support, how would that weigh on his decision?

MS. PSAKI: I talked with him about this exact question this morning because I know a lot of you are asking about it. And what he reiterated to me is that his focus is on picking the person who is eminently qualified, who is ready to serve and prepared to serve in a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court, not in navigating the legislative process.

Q Just yesterday -- on different a topic, HBCUs: A number of them have gotten more bomb threats today. You ca- -- yesterday said that the bomb threats were disturbing. Can you update us on what, if any, more information the White House, the President has about these potential threats? And is there a concern that it is, in fact, linked to Black History Month?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't have an assessment at this point. We are continuing to evaluate. Our homeland security advisor here in the White House, Liz Sherwood-Randall, is providing regular updates to senior staff, to the President as well. And he certainly is aware of the latest instance of bomb threats not just yesterday, but also those this morning.

And let me just reiterate that we condemn these disturbing threats, and our thoughts are with the students, faculty, and staff of these storied institutions.

We have been long supporters and have made historic investments in HBCUs and deeply value the significant role they continue to play in advancing opportunity for Black students across America. But, right now, we don't have any assessment or new assessment right now.

Q Any chance that the President -- or are there any discussions about the President visiting one of these HBCUs to reaffirm the commitment that the White House has to the protection of the students (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: He has certainly visited HBCUs in the past, Kristen. Obviously, right now, our focus is on ensuring we are working in close coordination with our law enforcement authorities and ensuring that the leaders of these institutions and the students know that we are watching closely and that we are standing with them as they face these threats.

But I don't have any trip to predict at this point in time.

Q Jen, can I follow on that, please? Just one --

MS. PSAKI: I'll go to you next, April. Let me just finish Kristen's --

Q One more, really quickly.

Q Tomorrow is the one-year anniversary of the Family Reunification Task Force. As you know, Secretary Mayorkas has told NBC News that the White House is 100 percent supportive of permanent legal status for families separated at the border. Is that a true statement? Is that a (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: We stand by Secretary Mayorkas.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go -- April, go ahead. And then, I'll come back to you. Go ahead.

Q Okay. So, Jen, back on the HBCU bomb threats. There is a historic issue when it comes to bomb threats in the Black community.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q And with that said, you have people like Lee Merritt calling it "terrorism." And he's asking for the DOJ, Homeland Security, and U.S. Attorney's Office to investigate -- to form a task force, particularly specifically on these issues. Is there talk around the White House for this to happen?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I can tell you, April, is that we take these threats incredibly seriously; that, again, our homeland security advisor is in close touch with law enforcement authorities at a federal and local level. And we are assessing what we think the origin, the reasoning, the motivation behind it is. We don't have an assessment of that quite yet. And I don't want to get ahead of that process.

But we absolutely are behind these HBCUs. We are -- want to make very clear that we take these threats seriously and we deeply value their contributions.

But it's important for law enforcement authorities and others to make an assessment before we make any determinations about next steps.

Q And does the White House see the irony in this moment with these continued bomb threats of HBCUs, particularly as much of the power structure up and down Pennsylvania Avenue are graduates of HBCUs, starting with the Vice President, Howard University; Cedric Richmond, Morehouse; Joyce Beatty, the head of the CBC, Central State; the House Whip, James Clyburn, South Carolina State. So, is there irony in this moment?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure I would say -- call it "irony," April. But I would say that it is -- it is scary. It is horrifying. It is terrible that these students, these faculty, these institutions are feeling under threat.

Now, again, we don't know more details at this point in time, and I don't want to get ahead of law enforcement authorities. But certainly, given the history you referenced, you know, this is something we're very mindful of and that is why we're so focused on providing regular updates and seeing what our law enforcement team assess.

Q And lastly, on the policing executive orders: Reverend Al Sharpton says that there is now a move to break apart the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act for standalone pieces that could possibly go up for a vote and, one way or another, pass or fail. And they're doing that because the executive orders don't have as much teeth as a law. What do you say to this effort to break apart the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and make each portion a standalone bill?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I can't assess from here, April, is whether there'd be support for getting that across the finish line and signed into law.

As you know, the President very much wanted to sign the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act into law, and we did not take executive actions because -- at the time, because we wanted to leave room and space for that process to proceed in a bipartisan manner.

So, I'd really point you to leadership and committee chairs in Congress to see what is possible on that front.

And certainly, we agree, a law is more permanent than executive orders. That is absolutely true. But we have not even

finalized, nor do I have a preview of exactly when it would be, a police reform executive order. So, I would also encourage people to wait to assess what that looks like.

Go ahead, Weijia.

Q Thank you, Jen. Back to the Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I know the President said he wanted to seek the advice of the Senate, in addition to consent. Is there anything you can share about his conversation with Senators Durbin and Grassley, and whether he shared his list of potential candidates with them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think they were still meeting when I came out here, or I had not spoken with him yet if it was breaking, so I have not gotten a rundown from him quite yet.

I think he wanted to have an open and engaging conversation with them. In terms of what specific information he shared, I think it was more of him looking to listen to them and hear what they had to say about -- there are a range of names, a range of candidates out there. But also look to them for their advice and their counsel.

As we have noted before, Senator Durbin has been through seven confirmation hearings for Supreme Court justices. Senator Grassley is certainly a veteran of these committee processes. The President takes his role seriously and, as he said today and as your referenced, takes the role of consent of the Senate seriously. But I don't think we're going to read out too many specifics other than to say he was looking forward to having an engaging conversation.

Q And since Justice Breyer announced his retirement, has the President spoken personally with any of the candidates who he might be considering?

MS. PSAKI: We're not going to give a process update or assessment from here, just as a policy. But I can tell you that what we're focused on now is -- obviously, the President is continuing to consult with leadership in Congress, as is evidenced -- as was evidenced by this morning. He'll do more of that this week.

There is obviously an ongoing process as we look to name and nominate a Supreme Court justice before the end of this month. As is, you know, related to Mary's earlier question, we'll also be announcing soon a team that we will be bringing in from the outside. So, there are a number of steps that are happening at the same time. But we're not going to be going into specifics of confirming the internal processes.

Q And you mentioned just a bit ago that he is looking for -- to someone who will obviously serve for a lifetime. Will age be a factor as he considers who to nominate so whoever it is can have a longer imprint on the Court?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to get into more specifics of what he's looking for. I mean, I think the President outlined, when he spoke earlier, that he's looking for somebody who is qualified -- who is eminently qualified, who is prepared to serve in this role.

There is a range of candidates he's been reviewing bios of for some time now. But beyond that, I'll let him speak to more specifics.

Q Thank you. And then one more question on Russia: How soon could the U.S. move troops to the eastern flank? And just to clarify: When the President said "it will happen in the near term," did he mean troops that are already stationed in Europe? Or would some of those troops be the ones based here at home?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we've said previously that there's NATO troops, of course; there's 8,500 of them that we've

committed to the NATO -- the NATO effort. That would be a decision made by the Alliance. Some of those troops are in the United States; some are in Europe.

I don't have anything to preview for you in terms of any additional troops. Obviously, there are troops currently that are stationed in Eastern European countries. Some of those troops, of course, are not -- many of them are not under the NATO Alliance.

But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A couple quick ones on the Supreme Court first. Last week, I know you said you'd look for an answer on whether you thought the Vice President could break a tie on a Supreme Court vote. Have you guys come to a determination on that?

MS. PSAKI: So, the Vice President has been the tiebreaking vote for a number of judicial appointments -- or nominees in the past. But our intention is, of course, to get broad support for an eminently qualified nominee.

Q In the Oval, the President evoked the Ninth Amendment as he was talking about the qualifications he's looking for for a judicial nominee. In the past and in committee hearings, he's certainly brought that amendment up in the context of abortion rights. Is it a fair reading that that is what he was specifically saying that he was looking for from a candidate here?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to give any more detail on any qualifications he's looking for at this point in time. I'm sure we'll have more conversations about that in the days ahead.

Q And there was a kind of long New Yorker story over the weekend in which a former NSC aide, Andrea Flores, made two claims. One was that Susan Rice and Ron Klain had opposed expanding asylum access for political reasons, and that the White House, partially because of that, wasn't doing contingency planning for the lifting of Title 42 whenever we get to that point in the pandemic and hadn't, kind of, built out capacity to do that.

So I was wondering if you could kind of respond to, I think, those two points that would suggest that immigration policy has shifted within the White House from the campaign.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I can tell you is that -- I did not work with Andrea Flores, so I don't know her well, nor can I speak to her role here -- but that our policy as an administration has been entirely consistent with what the President committed to on the campaign. And his effort has been to build a fair, humane, and lawful immigration system and bring it into the 21st century.

Hence, he obviously proposed an immigration bill on his first day in office. And beyond that, he has taken steps to protect DACA recipients, ended the Muslim ban and the Public Charge Rule, put together the Family Reunification Task Force, restarted the Central American Minors Program that the previous administration ended, extended or newly designated Temporary Protected Status for a number of countries, and worked with DHS to give clear guidance for internal enforcement.

It's also true that we're still in the midst of a pandemic. And that is not something, of course, as we've talked about here a bit in the past, that everybody anticipated still being at, at this point in time. The CDC is obviously the determinant of having Title 42 in place, and that still is in place because of the pandemic that we're in.

But I would also note that we have -- and I think this was noted, I believe, in the story -- but that we have also been very clear about our views on the MPP program and very clear on our views about the inhumanity of the prior administration and

clear about our view on the MPP program and very clear on our view about the inhumanity of the prior administration and how they handled immigration and that we had every intention of implementing a different approach.

Q And one last one. There's been a bit of a controversy this week on the other side of the pond. Prime Minister Johnson and the actions of him and his staff -- a report came out this week.

I'm wondering: Is the President aware of what's going on? Is he at all worried that that political controversy is impacting, you know, the U.S. and UK's ability to, sort of, press President Putin on the Ukraine situation? And, you know, has he ever been "ambushed by a cake"? (Laughs.) How --

MS. PSAKI: Has the President ever been ambushed by a cake? (Laughs.) Not that I'm aware of.

Q But just what his reaction is, sort of, to this controversy that's been blowing up.

MS. PSAKI: You know, I have not spoken with him specifically about the reports in the UK. But what I can tell you is that he is confident in the important partnership we have with the United Kingdom, the role they play as an important partner in making clear to Russia the unacceptable nature of the buildup of troops and their bellicose rhetoric as it relates to Ukraine. And that certainly has not changed, despite cakes in anyone's faces.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Starting quickly just with Ukraine. You guys keep holding up this, kind of, diplomatic path for Vladimir Putin. But as he noted today, you've already rejected both of his, kind of, central demands. So, what exactly is this a diplomatic path to if you've already rejected what he's asked for? And can you kind of sympathize with the fact that he may be feeling like he's strung along and wants to pursue things on another battlefield?

MS. PSAKI: As in invading a sovereign country? Which would be the alternative, right? Right? Is that what you're saying?

Q Perhaps. Perhaps.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, here's our view: We don't know what President Putin is going to do. And it is our responsibility to -- and it's an imperative to keep the door to diplomacy open. That does not mean that we are going to not stand by our own values, which includes the -- our belief that -- and the belief of NATO countries -- that it should be up to NATO members to determine who is able to join NATO and that the door to that should be open.

So if that is one of their claims, we have reiterated the same thing privately that we have reiterated publicly.

In our view, do we have sympathy? I mean, this is -- you know, Secretary Blinken has used some of these analogies in the past, but when the fox is screaming from the top of the henhouse that he's scared of the chickens, which is essentially what they're doing, that fear isn't reported as a statement of fact. And as you watch President Putin screaming about the fear of Ukraine and the Ukrainians, that should not be reported as a statement of fact.

We know who the fox is in this case. We have seen the buildup of troops at the border. We have seen them move troops to Belarus, on another border.

And our role in the United States is to work with other countries around the world to keep that bor- -- door to diplomacy open, because certainly all of our preference is to de-escalate and to prevent an invasion from happening.

But that is up to President Putin to make that decision.

Q And do you think a possible endgame here could be just mutual de-escalation and then live to talk --

MS. PSAKI: De-escalation in what regard?

Q -- about the issues another day?

MS. PSAKI: "Mutual de-escalation" -- tell me more what you mean by that.

Q I mean, it's up -- I suppose it's up to you to define. But I mean, you guys have asked for him to move troops back from the border.

MS. PSAKI: But here's what I'm getting at: We are defin- -- it's a mistake, I would say, to define things by the terms that President Putin is defining things. This is a country and a leader who has, you know, used chemical weapons, who has invaded multiple countries in the past several years, who has taken aggressive steps on the global stage on many occasions.

So, when we talk about mutual de-escalation, Russia has 100,000 troops on the border; they are the aggressor. We are working with NATO countries to make sure they feel secure in this moment. NATO is a defensive alliance. It is not the same thing. And I think we need to be careful about comparing them as the same thing.

Q Thank you. And just to switch gears to Supreme Court. You guys, obviously, have got this big nomination that you're working on, but there's also huge existential questions hanging over the Supreme Court. Does the President plan to decide what he's going to do on Supreme Court reform before he makes this nomination?

MS. PSAKI: He is reviewing the Supreme Court Commission report. I don't have a prediction of when he will conclude his analysis of that.

Q And I just asked because the report includes suggestions about things like changing the number of people on the Court, and you would think he would want to know who -- if he's going to increase the size of the court, who he's going to put on first. Right?

MS. PSAKI: I think, Trevor, his focus right now is on going through a process that takes it -- that values the seriousness of the role he has as president, that cons- -- where he consults, as you saw today, with Democrats and Republicans to select and nominate an eminently qualified Black woman to serve on the Court. That's his focus right now.

Q And finally, there have been some ethical questions about Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. His wife is -- has a number of political affiliations with groups that file amicus briefs before the Court, have other business before the Court. It's his choice whether or not to recuse himself from those cases; he hasn't. Does the President feel that there is an ethical issue there that he'd like to see dealt with?

MS. PSAKI: I have not had a discussion about that with the President or our counsel's office. I will see if there's any comment we have from here, or it might be a Department of Justice comment. I'll get back to you.

Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. How's it going?

MS. PSAKI: Good.

Q The Center for American Progress put out a memo today focusing on specific priorities for a more narrow Build Back Better bill, but not listed is the extended Child Tax Credit. Could the White House (inaudible) support a revised bill that didn't include the extended Child Tax Credit?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to make a prediction or negotiate from here. Obviously, the President proposed an extension of the Child Tax Credit -- as you know, because it helped cut the -- child poverty by 40 percent last year. It's

extension of the Child Tax Credit, as you know, because it helped cut the child poverty by 40 percent last year. It's something he would absolutely like to be extended.

There is a question here as to what 50 members of the Democratic caucus will support. And they support, as we were talking about a little bit earlier, some big fundamental goals, which is important: lowering cost of childcare, healthcare; negotiating prescription drugs. That's important. But I can't predict for you here what all 50 of them will support.

Q Sure. Last week, the Surgeon General also was asked on MSNBC about Joe Rogan's vaccine comments on Spotify. And he said that tech companies have an "important role to play" in stopping misinformation because he -- they are the "predominant places" where misinformation spreads.

Spotify is putting out advisory warnings on episodes that have to do with COVID-19. Does the White House and the administration think this is a satisfactory step? Or do you -- do you think that companies like Spotify should go further than just, you know, putting a label on there to say, "Hey, go do your own -- you know, check this out. You know, there's more research you can look at -- you know, scientific research regarding COVID"?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, last July, I -- you probably know, but the Surgeon General also took the unprecedented step to issue an advisory on the risk of misinformation and public health, which is a very significant step. And amid that, he talked about the role social media platforms have.

So our hope is that all major tech platforms -- and all major news sources, for that matter -- be responsible and be vigilant to ensure the American people have access to accurate information on something as significant as COVID-19. And that certainly includes Spotify [sic].

So, this disclaimer -- it's a positive step. But we want every platform to continue doing more to call out misinformation -- mis- and disinformation while also uplifting accurate information.

I mean, look at the facts, right? You are 16 times more likely to be hospitalized if you're unvaccinated and 68 times more likely to die than someone who is boosted if you're unvaccinated. That's pretty significant. And we think that is something that unquestionably should be the basis of how people are communicating about it.

But, ultimately, you know, our view is it's a -- it's a -- it's a good step, it's a positive step, but there's more that can be done.

Q And I have another tech question for you --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- which is: There have been some recent reports that the White House is planning to issue a series of executive actions on cryptocurrencies in the next few weeks. Can you give a timeline on when those are coming and what actually might be in those executive actions?

MS. PSAKI: I would have to check with our NEC team on that and see if that's something that is coming down the road. But I will check and see if there's anything to predict for you.

Go ahead, Brian.

Q Thanks a lot, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: I wanted to first follow up on something you said about the Supreme Court process.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

O You said that President Biden has been looking at bios for some time now. How long has that been that he's been

looking at bios of potential candidates?

MS. PSAKI: Since last year.

Q So that was something that started in the transition process? Or --

MS. PSAKI: No, since last year, not during the transition process.

Q And what prompted that for him to start looking at bios last year?

MS. PSAKI: He takes his role incredibly seriously. And we certainly know and he committed, of course, to the American people he would nominate a Black woman -- a qualified Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court. And so he's just been reviewing a range of bios.

Q And Justice Breyer notified him on the 27th of January. Did he get advance notice before that --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into any more details. If Justice Breyer wants to get into details about our communications, he can certainly do that.

Q And I have a question on Russia as well. This is -- the jailed Russian dissident, Aleksey Navalny --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- in an interview with Time Magazine, said that the U.S. is repeatedly falling into Putin's traps -- that Putin makes escalations, like he's doing now, and then seeks concessions.

I want to quote Navalny here, where he says, with Putin, the U.S. is acting "like a frightened schoolboy who's been bullied by an upperclassman." What's President Biden's reaction to this? Is he -- is the U.S. reacting like a "frightened schoolboy"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that we have great respect for Aleksey Navalny and the role he's played in speaking out and being vocal, even under duress himself. And that's to be hugely admired.

I think the President's actions, the administration's actions that have been broadly supported in a bipartisan manner speak for themselves, whether it's our engagement and leadership on the global stage, having more than 200 engagements, leading an effort to have a unified front and making clear about the severity of economic consequences there will be should Russia decide to invade, or whether it is making clear that we are going to continue to stand up for what is a global value, which is the fact that no country should be able to invade another country and take their territory.

I'll let others define that. I don't think that's a "frightened schoolboy."

Q So when the President talks about economic actions that -- and economic consequences for Russia if it does invade, why not enact some of those sanctions now? Why not enact those economic consequences now? Why wait for an invasion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have enacted some sanctions. But I would say that we think it's an important point of leverage in the discussions.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. To clarify something you said earlier about the BBB talks --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- you know, to the extent that you're going to tell us about them: You said that -- you know, rest assured the President -- you said, "We've been in touch with every member of the Democratic Caucus." "We've been in touch..."

MS. PSAKI: We in the White House.

Q So that's the leg affairs team, mainly, and the --

MS. PSAKI: The leg affairs team and senior members of the White House. We're just not going to detail more specifics.

Q So you can't say if the President has been involved personally in any of the conversations with (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: The President has talked to a range of senators. He always does.

Q Okay. On the Ukraine-Russia stuff, any plans in the works for another conversation between the President and President Zelenskyy?

MS. PSAKI: He has talked to him a couple of times in the last few weeks, and we've been in regular contact. We also are in very close contact from Jake Sullivan's level and Secretary Blinken's level. So, certainly, it's possible. We've been in regular touch, but I don't have any call to predict at this point. He just talked to him a couple days ago.

Q Sure. And one other question. Today, obviously, is the start of Black History Month. The President issued a couple of tweets about that.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q I wonder what the administration -- the President's response is to what has been happening in Texas and other states where a number of books have been banned by school districts. These are, generally, books that have focused on slavery, on Jim Crow, on civil rights, even on the Obamas. Does the White House have a position on the books that are being banned by these local school boards?

MS. PSAKI: I have not discussed this with the President, but I can tell you that, as an administration, we believe in the freedom of speech and expression. And certainly, we have never been advocates of preventing people from understanding and reading history.

Q And does the President plan to do more to recognize -- commemorate Black History Month this month?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. Let me see if we can get you some more details.

Go ahead.

Q Good afternoon, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Good afternoon.

Q A couple of questions for you. Back to the Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q How will the debate over abortion shake the President's selection process?

MS. PSAKI: The President is going to select an eminently qualified Black woman to serve on the Court, someone -- and he's going to do that through consulting with a range of members of Congress, through outside experts, and obviously through engagement with them directly. But I don't think I'm going to give you more specifics from here.

Q But that person -- will that person have to be pro-abortion?

MS. PSAKI: I think somebody asked a similar question. I'm not going to outline litmus tests from here today.

Q Okay. Following up on that, the President has said in the past he does not believe that life begins at conception. When does he believe it begins?

MS. PSAKI: You know the President's position. He believes in a woman's right to choose.

Q But that's not the question I asked. I said --

MS. PSAKI: And he's spoken -- he's spoken to this in the past. And I know you ask this every time you come in here, which is your --

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: -- your absolute right, but I don't think I have anything new to --

Q But I -- that's not -- that's not --

MS. PSAKI: -- reveal for you.

Q The question is: When does he believe life -- and essential to the debate over the question of a baby's viability, pro-life Americans -- don't you agree? -- should know where the President stands on his thinking on this. It's a fundamental question.

MS. PSAKI: The President believes in a woman's right to choose.

Q But his -- when does he believe life begins?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I think we're going to move on unless you have another question. Go ahead.

Q Oh, let's do another question. One more question --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- unrelated to that.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Following up on the question for -- on the expanded Child Tax Credit.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q You have said time and again that this has taken lots of kids and families out of poverty.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q A tremendous success there.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But with that now gone -- it looks like it's gone, dead -- inflation creeping up, high gas prices, high food prices, how quickly are those same kids and families going to go back into poverty, do you fear?

MS. PSAKI: Well, how it's implemented -- first, the President is going to continue to fight for the Child Tax Credit. It's something he very much believes in. I just can't predict what a package will look like and what there will be support from 50 senators on.

What I can tell you is that as individuals who are eligible file their taxes, they will get the other half of the Child Tax Credit benefit from last year. That is not a forever solution, but that is something that many can look ahead to.

The other part of the Build -- the President's Build Back Better Agenda that's important, as you're talking about rising costs for people: You know, we have -- we have a proposal -- the President has a proposal, many Democrats across the board support it, which is -- that will lower costs for Americans across the country and all the issues you talked about, things that really weigh on people's family budgets, whether it's healthcare, which is a huge -- has a huge impact on people's budgets; childcare, which is contributing to preventing 2 million women from rejoining the workforce. That's the Build Back Better plan, and that's something that we know will help lower costs for families.

Q And finally, does the President have a message for those struggling families who are very worried right now not seeing that extra \$500 or \$1,000 a month or whatever that are saying, "I can't afford the groceries. I can't afford the gas. This is getting very stressful"? A message from the President to those families.

MS. PSAKI: The President would say, "I am here to fight for you, and I -- that's why I'm going to continue to fight to pass legislation that will lower your costs." And that is a top priority for him.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I want to go back to what you said in the beginning about the money that's going to be flowing down to states and that there's going to be an appointment of --

MS. PSAKI: Infrastructure?

Q Infrastructure. Mm-hmm. An infrastructure lead. Can you tell me more about who is -- who's going to be appointing that person in each state? Because there may be concern over states when you get to, like, Florida, where you have Governor DeSantis saying that the President is trying to implement "woke-ification" policy and saying that there is no racism within some of the (inaudible) that have been in the past. How can there -- when you talk about accountability, how is that process going to go? And what information may be accessible to the public as far as reporting?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a huge -- several -- 100-page book that we put out yesterday about how people can apply for a range of funding. And I just outlined for you the money to date that has been allocated. And we have taken steps, and we will continue to, to make sure that is as transparent as possible.

Now, some of these -- the funding in this package -- as I mentioned, 90 percent of it will go to local, Tribal, and territorial governments. So, that really gives the opportunity for a range of leaders to apply for funding. And the book is meant to give them the information and access they need so they don't have to hire lobbyists to do that, so that they can do that on their own. And we're doing that in part to ensure that equity is at the center -- is central to how we're implementing this bill.

Q My final question is: What do you say to many organizations -- I've talked to several civil rights organizations -- on the

process of selecting a Vice President? They feel like some of the desires of the Black community have been put on the backburner. So, when it comes to selecting a Vice President, why is there no need or no push to speed up the process? The President has said he --

MS. PSAKI: You mean a Supreme Court justice?

Q A Supreme Court justice.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I m sorry. I m sorry.

MS. PSAKI: No, it s okay.

Q A Supreme Court justice. Why is there no need to speed up that process --

MS. PSAKI: Of selecting a nominee? Well, he s going to --

Q He s going to name one (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: He s going to name one this month.

Q Right -- name one this month. But there has been a little bit of pushback as far as comparing the process -- the timing to Amy Coney Barrett, as opposed to what the President is going to do during this time.

We ve heard Chuck Schumer say that, but is the -- does the President feel the same way as far as moving -- how long, how quickly and expeditiously he wants to move this process along?

MS. PSAKI: I just want to make sure I m answering the right question. So, you were saying there s unhappiness in the civil rights community about the pace? Or are you talking about the Schumer call for the 38 days?

Q Well, is the President going on board with that to push -- to push it that fast?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President takes the decision to select an eminently qualified individual to nominate to the Supreme Court very seriously. He wants that to be a thorough process. And he s still doing that expeditiously by nominating someone this month.

And he wants, of course, the Senate to move forward expeditiously, but we re not setting artificial deadlines beyond that.

Go ahead in the back. Okay, we actually have two more, so let me get to them quickly. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have a couple of questions on two different topics.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q One is Russia and then immigration. On Russia, I know the President has -- spoke with the Amir of Qatar regarding the role of that country exporting natural gas to the European Union. But is the U.S. considering increasing its role as a natural gas exporter to the European Union to serve as an alternative to Russian gas?

MS. PSAKI: We are having a conversation with not just countries but also suppliers about how to help meet any shortage of natural gas that could come about if -- if there s an invasion.

Q Also on Russia: Since Ukraine is not a NATO member, according to the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO cannot really respond militarily to Russia in Ukrainian territory. But are U.S. unilateral military actions on the table to support Kyiv?

MS. PSAKI: You mean sending U.S. troops to Ukraine?

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: No.

Q Okay, no.

And on the other topic that I wanted to ask real quick: This administration is now sending Venezuelan migrants arrested at the U.S.-Mexico border to Colombia under Title 42. What agreement has been reached with the Colombian government? Is it similar to the MPP with Mexico?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what we tried to do from the beginning is ensure that, for Venezuelans who are coming -- who were coming from a third country, right? -- that they were able, at some point, to return to that country.

So, in this case, pursuant to Title 42, we began repatriating Venezuelan nationals who had attempted to unlawfully enter the United States to Colombia, where they had previously resided. So, it was, you know, a place where they had been living before.

Flights to Colombia with Venezuelan nationals who have legal status are expected to take place on a regular basis and will be operated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Of course, that requires agreement with the government.

Q When did that started? And how temporary is that supposed to be -- this program?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it s -- it s just starting now. And I can -- I m sure I can get you a timeline of when it actually started to commence.

Q And is there a deadline until when this will be implemented?

MS. PSAKI: I don t believe we ve set a deadline, but I can -- I can get that information for you as well.

Go ahead. Last one.

Q Thank you, Jen. One on the Supreme Court and two on COVID, if you ll indulge me.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q First, on the Supreme Court: Does President Biden have plans to talk to Senator McConnell -- McConnell at all today or this week?

MS. PSAKI: I expect he will have many more consultations with Democrats and Republicans. I don t have anything yet for you at this point, but hopefully we ll have more in the next 24 hours.

Q Okay. And then two quick ones on the pandemic. First of all, I was wondering if you d be able to provide an update on the free mask program that the White House was doing? I m just curious if there s an update on the how many of the -- of the hundreds of millions of masks have been distributed already.

And also, is there a way for Americans to know, you know, if there are masks in their area, if they ve been delivered to the area pharmacies -- just, you know, sort of, when -- when they know that they can go find them in their area?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So, we just announced this last week, but we've already cranked up our shipments. We've shipped 100 million N95 masks [sic] -- masks so far, which is incredible progress. They're available at thousands of locations around the country.

The initial wave of health centers or for people who are looking to see if they're available near them is available on the Health Resources and Services Administration's website.

And the program, we -- we're working to expand it to make it available across all health centers over the coming weeks.

Q And then lastly, one from our colleague who couldn't be here. At NewsNation, they reported hearing from people who signed up to receive the free COVID tests through the website -- the government website, but they had issues where either the tests were shipped to the wrong address or they never received a confirmation email.

So, what should people do in that case? Is there a way for them to rectify that? Does the White House have, like, a response team in case somebody never gets a test that they ordered or anything like that?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. There's a -- there's a -- there's a "Help" component on the website. Hopefully, it should be easy for people. There's also a phone number -- I'm sure we can get that to you after the briefing -- as well that people could call should they have any concerns.

I will note that we confirmed last week that 60 million tests have been -- had been ordered as of then. I don't have an updated number. Tens of millions of tests have gone out the door and reached the right -- right doors. I think that's the vast, vast, vast majority.

That is earlier than we were scheduled and were planning to get those tests out the doors.

But we can -- we can get you the phone number and you can publicize that in your publication.

Thanks, everyone.

Q Can you make sure we all get a list of what's going on for Black History Month?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

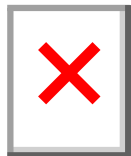
Q Thank you.

3:13 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 1, 2022 9:57 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Dr. Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey. They underscored their shared commitment to both ongoing diplomacy and joint efforts to deter further Russian aggression against Ukraine. They also discussed regional issues, including efforts by Turkey and Armenia to normalize relations.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 3, 2022 2:58 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 3, 2022

Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki

Aboard Air Force One
En Route New York, New York

11:36 A.M. EST

MS. PSAK : I know this is a short flight, so I thought I would just start. And I know we've done a number of briefings, but just giving you all just a couple of key points on the President's engagement in the operation that happened overnight last night.

The operation has been months in -- was months in planning. The President was first briefed on this operation in depth over a month ago by the actual operational commanders. He was regularly updated by the national security team on the planning details of this operation, to include a briefing in the Oval Office on Monday.

Last night, the President monitored key aspects of the operation in real time in the White House Situation Room. I think you all saw the photo that we released on that.

I also want to stress that the President directed the Department of Defense to take every precaution to minimize noncombatant casualties in the operation, hence how they proceeded with their -- the operation.

Unfortunately, as we know and we saw, S S once again revealed its barbarity in a final act of cowardice, and displaying a never-ending -- ended -- disregard for innocent lives. Hajji Abdullah detonated an explosive device shortly after U.S. forces arrived on site, killing himself, a woman, and three children.

Of course, there will be more assessments. mean, the Department of Defense will do an assessment, as they always do.

But just wanted to outline that at the top.

know we also did a briefing on the trip today to New York, but why don't we get to your questions?

Q Sure. Two subjects. First, obviously, news of the day.

MS. PSAK : Yeah.

Q Big picture: Strategically, what does this mean for U.S.? What does this mean for the Islamic State? And what does this mean for Syria?

And did you coordinate or communicate with Russia at all, given the airspace issues in Syria?

MS. PSAK : Let me start with the first question. Hajji Abdullah's death delivers a catastrophic blow to S S and shows that the United States will take out terrorist threats no matter where they stand to hide in the world -- try to hide in the world.

Last night's effective action took a major terrorist leader off the battlefield and makes it clear that we will hold anyone accountable who seeks to harm Americans at home or around the world.

Would also note that while this planning was taking place, of course, we were also leading a coordinated effort, as you all know -- more than 200 engagements with leaders around the world -- to stand up for the sovereign -- the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

And so, it shows the competence of U.S. leadership, the effectiveness of U.S. leadership, and our ability to keep the American people safe while also standing up for our values at the same time.

In terms of international coordination, it's a good question. will have to check with the State Department on the specifics of it.

Q Was there a video component to the scene unfolding in the Situation Room? And who else was in there with him?

MS. PSAK : I'm sure can get you a complete list. know some individuals were shown in the photo we released. Members of his national security team were there, including Jake Sullivan and Liz Sherwood-Randall. think you could see John Finer in the photo. Obviously, the Vice President. We will venture to get you a full list of

attendees.

Q Jen, can you -- on the trip today, there was some reporting by the New York Times that the White House is trying to move more to the center when it comes to crime, and there's concern about reaching out to police organizations. And obviously, there's a policing executive order that's supposed to be in the works. Can you talk a bit about: s there a conflict between civil rights groups who want more accountability for police, want less use of force unnecessarily, and what the White House is doing right now, like on this trip?

MS. PSAK : Well, would say, first, we would direct the -- reject the notion that we were moving into any political direction. The President has a decades-long record of fighting -- of being an advocate for fighting crime and supporting local COPS programs with necessary and appropriate resources and funding.

He has never been an advocate for defunding the police, as you know, but his record on these issues long precedes his time as President.

would say that he is also committed and he believes that both need to come hand in hand -- that pursuing police reform is a step that will help rebuild trust in communities and is something that is welcomed by many communities and police forces across the country, and he believes that goes in hand with public safety. Having effective, accountable community policing to help us -- helps us fight crime, and it also makes us safer.

So, while we are here in New York, what you will hear him talk about today, as we've previewed a little bit, is his, you know, decades-long commitment to supporting law enforcement, to ensuring that communities have the resources they need too.

And you'll hear him talk about his sweeping and comprehensive plan to adjust gun frime [sic] -- gun crime and our focus on implementing that, but also, again, ensuring that communities have the funding that they need, including his proposal to double federal support for community policing with \$300 million more for cities, plus another \$200 [million] more for community violence intervention program.

But you will also hear him -- and he also remains very committed to taking steps we can to put in place police reformmeasures that he thinks are long overdue. Obviously, his preference was to have had that through legislative processes, but we are looking at what can be done through executive actions.

think you may have seen Susan Rice convey we're not close on that front, but we are working on it.

Q Jen, we've had six law enforcement officers killed by criminals this year. The President has not spoken out forcefully against any of these attacks. Even some of his supporters say the lack of forceful condemnation is demoralizing to police. Why hasn't he spoken out more forcefully against these attacks?

MS. PSAK : More forcefully against attacks against police officers?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAK : He went and gave an entire speech to the -- to the police forces just a few months ago. He -- we have put out statements, and he has condemned the violence and the attacks on these police officers. He's reached out to family members. He is somebody --

Q But why not (inaudible) --

MS. PSAK : Let me finish my answer, because I think that's an inaccurate characterization. And you haven't even given me names of who you're talking about.

Q Well, Charles Wilson is --

MS. PSAK : But the President's --

Q -- (inaudible) of the National Association --

MS. PSAK : -- the President's record --

Q -- of Black Law Enforcement Officers. He's one of the people who said it's demoralizing.

MS. PSAK : The President's record is very clear here. He has a long record of advocating for, supporting through funding, through speaking out, the role of local police, of national police and the important role they play -- they play in addressing crime and keeping communities safe.

Q Why not go to one of the officer's funerals, if you're going to come to New York, and show support for the law enforcement?

MS. PSAK : The President -- we have been planning this trip in coordination with the mayor's office. We've invited a number of officials to attend the trip. He also is, as you know, going to the police headquarters to make clear his strong support for them.

Q Jen, I know you gave a little bit of the lead-up to the raid. I mean, can you give more on the President's thinking ahead of the S S raid?

MS. PSAK : I can, but tell me more about what you mean.

Q I just mean like -- well, you know, a little bit more from either inside the room -- I know it's the Situation Room, but like -- or what the President was thinking as this -- as this raid was taking place.

MS. PSAK : I think the President, again, has been -- received a number of briefings, as I noted, from his national security team over the course of the last several weeks, including one from the operational commanders just a few days ago. And the President was thinking: We got to go after terrorists wherever they are and get them, and protect the American people. He also was -- made clear and reiterated this at every point in the process, to do everything we can to avoid civilian casualties.

So, I think you saw the photo of him in the room. You're always watching -- in those moments, you're always watching, you're thinking about the bravery and the courage of

the -- of the service members who are on the ground, you know, implementing an operation. And that is, of course, front and center from him -- for him always.

But, you know, he was also thinking about, you know, the role he plays as Commander-in-Chief in keeping the country safe. And, certainly, taking out the current head of S S is a big step forward in that.

Q Do you guys have a number on how many civilian casualties there were?

MS. PSAK : There -- again, that is an assessment being done by DOD. I would note that -- as was confirmed and I just confirmed again -- that, given that the intended target self-detonated and deployed a tactic used by his predecessor, that that shows, again, the brutality of S S -- and killed his own family.

We certainly know the facts of that, but I will leave it to DOD to give any additional assessments.

Q And if I could, just on US CA.

MS. PSAK : Yeah.

Q There are a number of House Democrats and Senate Democrats that really want to see this done by the President's State of the Union Address. Are you -- do you guys just want to see the House pass the Senate version of the bill, given that this -- the House version is taking a lot longer with all of these amendments?

MS. PSAK : Well, we're not going to make a calculation or direction of that from here. As you know, the process -- how it works -- is: Once it passes the House, it would -- we would expect it would go to conference and there would be a discussion about any disagreements or any final details that are not aligned between the two pieces of legislation.

That's a normal part of legislating. And we certainly support that. Obviously, the President has said he wants to sign it as quickly as possible.

Q A few things. Were you in the room last night -- the Situation Room?

MS. PSAK : No.

Q Okay. Let's start with this one -- today's event. The governor is there as well. This is an official event, but is this an endorsement of her reelection -- of her election campaign?

MS. PSAK : I think this is an event and an opportunity. The President is a big fan of the governor, but this is not a political event. This is an event for the President to stand with leaders in New York as they've seen, you know, the tragic deaths of a number of police officers recently -- people who have been serving on behalf of communities across New York -- and also for the President to make clear he stands with them in their efforts to address crime in their communities.

Q Two others from last night. Was he able to watch the whole thing live?

MS. PSAK : don't have a detail of how -- of that.

Q And were any of -- any members of the special forces team who conducted last night's raid involved in the Baghdadi operation?

MS. PSAK : would point you to the Department of Defense on that.

Q There's a meeting today -- remind me -- today with Presidents Putin and Xi --

MS. PSAK : Yeah.

Q -- in China.

MS. PSAK : Yeah.

Q How do we feel about that meeting and not being invited to it?

MS. PSAK : There are diplomatic meetings that happen all the time. Our National Security Advisor, believe, just recently spoke with his counterpart. Let me just get all the specific details on this so we can make sure it's accurate for you.

And, you know, our view and assessment is that -- oh, I should say -- sorry -- Secretary Blinken recently spoke to China's Foreign Minister Wang, his counterpart, and underscored the global security and economic risk posed by further Russian aggression against Ukraine and conveyed that de-escalation and diplomacy are the responsible way forward.

You know, that is the message we continue to convey, including the fact that a destabilizing conflict in Europe would impact China's interests all over the world. China certainly know that.

But we have our own means of communicating through counterparts. We'll continue to do that and continue to stand up for what we feel should be global values.

Q And on the Supreme Court, any update on when he might begin interviewing potential nominees?

MS. PSAK : I'm not going to provide an update on the process from here.

Q Hey. Hey, Jen, two things on Congress. It seems like, on the Russia sanctions negotiations, that Congress is intent to at least include some preemptive sanctions into that bill. Is that a red line for you? Or could you ultimately support something that has preemptive --

MS. PSAK : We have done some sanctions in advance already. Our approach -- and we are in very close touch with members of Congress about this legislation, which I don't think has been formally even proposed yet. So, we are in close contact, in conversations with them.

Our approach from the beginning has been based on our belief that, you know, the crippling economic sanctions package that we have been discussing and has been underway in our interagency process, which we briefed Congress on, is a -- has a

deterrent -- could have a deterrent impact as we're already seeing in the Russian markets.

But we've never set a red line. I'm not setting a red line. We've done sanctions in advance, and we're in discussion with Congress about the legislation.

Q And then, on the approps talks ongoing right now, can you detail a little bit about the White House's engagement in them? And do you support larger increases to the defense budgets to get Republicans on board?

MS. PSAK : Those talks are being -- we're closely engaged with them from the White House, from our OMB team. But I'm not going to detail specifics of those behind-the-scenes talks at this point.

Q f Russia --

Q And any -- sorry, one more, Steve.

Q No, go right ahead.

Q Any fear that the ongoing talks now will further delay your budget for next year, which I think Shalanda Young said is coming past the State of the Union?

MS. PSAK : I don't have any assessment of that. I know she confirmed that just a couple of days ago, so -- but I don't have a new timeline beyond that. That's my understanding of where it stands at this point.

Q So, if Russia and Belarus are having some military exercises, is this any cause for concern?

MS. PSAK : You know, we've raised -- our U.N. Ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, raised some concerns about this when she spoke at the United Nations, where she talked about her concern about -- our concern about 5,000 troops in Belarus, the potential for 30- -- up to 30,000 more. Clearly, this is an escalatory, not a de-escalatory action.

And certainly, we look at -- look at, you know, these developments as we make assessments about how to support and work with our other NATO partners in the region.

Q With regard to the civilian casualties in Syria, are -- is the administration saying that they were caused entirely by the bomb detonating or by crossfire from the one lieutenant engaging with U.S. forces? Like, what -- give us some clarity on that.

MS. PSAK : Obviously, these events just happened overnight. And so, I'm going to let the Department of Defense do a final assessment, which I'm certain they will provide additional detail on once it's finalized.

Q Jen, will there be any, like, evidence or, like, release to support the idea -- mean, I know the U.S. has put out its statement that, you know, they detonated the bomb themselves. But will the U.S. provide any evidence? Because there may be people that are skeptical of the events that took place and what happened to the civilians.

MS. PSAK : Skeptical of the U.S. military's assessment when they went and took out an S S terrorist -- the leader of S S?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAK : That they are not providing accurate information --

Q Yes.

MS. PSAK : -- and S S is providing accurate information?

Q Well, not S S, but, mean, the U.S. has not always been straightforward about what happens with civilians. And, mean, that is a fact.

MS. PSAK : Well, as you know, there's an extensive process that the Department of Defense undergoes. The President made clear from the beginning, at every point in this process, that doing everything possible to avoid civilian casualties was his priority and his preference.

just reconfirmed, and think our national security colleague who did a briefing this morning also reiterated, that the individual who was the target detonated himself, killing his entire family.

Given these events just happened less than 24 hours ago, we're going to give them time to make a final assessment. And they'll provide every detail they can.

Q Civil rights advocates have asked the President to visit Rikers Island. I know that's not on this trip. Can you speak to why this isn't on the trip? And is there a plan for the President to visit Rikers Island anytime soon?

MS. PSAK : I don't have any trips to preview at this point in time. Obviously, this trip today, which is a full trip, including the President's visit to thank law enforcement officials, to convey clearly to them that he has their back, that he is going to continue to support adequate funding and resources that they need to keep their community safe, and also to meet, of course, with leaders in the state who have shared concerns about rising crime.

But, you know, expect he'll be back to New York, you know, during his time as President, but I don't have any preview of a trip to Rikers.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q One thing, Jen. Do you have any updates on the German Chancellor visit -- if you're planning a press conference or anything to share on the details? Or --

MS. PSAK : I believe we are, but let me see if I can get the final details for all of you.

Q We're about to land, just so you know.

11:52 A.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 7, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 7, 2022 5:30 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 7, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:55 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Hi, everyone. I know we have a time limit because of the press avail with the Germans, so we will get to as many people as possible. I just have a couple of items for you at the top.

Today, the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, led by Vice President Harris as Chair and Labor Secretary -- and as well as Chair -- as Chair and Labor Secretary -- as well as Chair, and Labor Secretary Walsh as Vice-Chair -- released publicly the report it delivered to President Biden that includes nearly 70 recommendations to promote worker organizing and collective bargaining.

The recommendations include ways to increase private-sector workers' access to information about their existing right to join or organize a union -- a hugely important issue for the President.

The President accepted the recommendations, and as a follow-up, the task force will submit a second report to the President in six months, which will describe progress in implementation and contain additional proposals for further action.

I also wanted to note that, today, the Secretary -- Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack will be announcing that the Partnerships for Climate-Smart connection -- Commodities program, in which the Department of Agriculture will invest \$1 billion in partnerships to support America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners.

So these funds will go to projects that promote farming, ranching, and forestry practices that either remove carbon from

the atmosphere or cut greenhouse gas emissions. And the investment is the latest Biden administration initiative aimed at combatting climate change with a goal to cut the farm sector's greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and put the United States on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050.

Finally, I wanted to note: I have a Team USA water bottle out here today and a Team USA pin out here today. As you all know, we made a decision -- the United States -- not to send a diplomatic or official delegation to Beijing given the PRC's ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses. And that was a clear statement and a clear policy made by our government.

But at the same time, we wanted to note Team USA has our full support. We're behind them; we're watching from home. And we want to thank them and their families for everything they have sacrificed over the course of time.

Lots of athletes to watch. I'll just give a plug, because I'm an Olympics-obsessed person: Nathan Chen, we're going to watch him; Chloe Kim; Mikaela Shiffrin, you've got lots of more chances.

Anyway, we'll be rooting for our U.S. athletes even as we made a very important statement about our concerns about Beijing's and the Chinese human rights abuses.

With that, let's go ahead. Colleen, kick us off.

Q Okay. So, regarding Dr. Lander, I wondered if he should have been reprimanded more strongly, given the President's pledge on his first day in office to, you know, fire anybody who mistreated their employees.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me just give you an overview of what we have done to date. And I know there may be more questions on this, of course, which we welcome.

The President has been crystal clear with all of us about his high expectations of how he and his staff should be creating a respectful work environment.

And one of the steps we took early on in the administration was to institute a Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy across the Executive Office of the President -- something that was done early on.

It was because of this policy and this process that when these -- when the complaint was filed, a full and thorough investigation was conducted pursuant to that policy.

In addition, following the conclusion of the thorough investigation into these actions, senior White House officials conveyed directly to Dr. Lander that his behavior was inappropriate and the corrective actions that were needed, which were -- which the White House will monitor for compliance moving forward.

I'd also note that Dr. Lander also sent a message to his staff outlining some of the steps he's intending to take to build a respectful work environment. And certainly, we would encourage those. And again, the team -- the senior team will be watching for compliance to these steps.

Q It looks like he's had a history of, you know, possible mistreatment of his employees over a long period of time. How can you be sure that this reprimand will stick?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would just reiterate, again, that -- well, let me start with the first part of your question.

Each nominee undergoes a thorough vetting process as a part of their nomination and confirmation process. And, of course, we look carefully to ensure each candidate's suitability for the role they're chosen for.

Dr. Lander's record was thoroughly examined as a part of his confirmation, and he received bipartisan support, including

final confirmation with a voice vote.

But again, once we were made aware of the complaint, we launched a thorough investigation, and compliance with the recommendations is -- will be -- will be required in this regard.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. On Ukraine, Zelenskyy's office said yesterday that a diplomatic solution seems much more likely than war, and then we saw Jake Sullivan say yesterday that an invasion could come at any day. Can you help us square the difference here and why there still seems to be such a dark assessment -- a stark difference in assessing the threat?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what our National Security Advisor also conveyed during some interviews with a range of your networks yesterday was that we're pursuing a two-track approach, which includes deterrence and diplomacy, but that we are ready either way for whatever decision President Putin might make. And we don't have a new assessment of his decision and where he stands on it.

We also need to be prepared. Being prepared is exactly what we can do from the U.S. government, in coordination and in partnership with our NATO Allies, our partners in Eastern Europe, and of course, the Ukrainians. And that is what we're focused on. So, we don't actually see it as a conflict.

Q Is Kyiv wrong, then, on this?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of the preparations? Or --

Q A diplomatic solution being more likely than war. It seems hard to square that with Sullivan saying that an invasion could come at any day.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we would certainly prefer a diplomatic solution. I think that's everybody's preference and everybody's hope.

But again, this is up to -- remains up to President Putin to make a decision about which path he is going to take. We don't have an assessment of that, so what our focus is on is preparing for a range of contingencies, including in coordination with the Ukrainians, making sure they have the supplies they need, the humanitarian assistance they need, the security assistance they need. And we're doing that -- we're doing that consistently, even while we are closely watching the buildup of troops on the border.

Q To switch topics if I may, Delta's CEO is asking for the administration's help in creating this no-fly list for unruly passengers. Is that something the administration supports?

MS. PSAKI: I have not had a chance to talk to our team about that. I can see if there's any opinion on that from here.

Q Okay. And, quickly, a housekeeping thing: Do you have a sense of when the President will start meeting with SCOTUS candidates? And if any of these meetings happen in Delaware, where the President -- where there are not visitor logs, does the White House pledge to disclose that those meetings took place?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, at this point, I don't have any more details about the process to outline for you. As you know, what the President has been focused on over the course of the last several days is reviewing and consulting with internal team members on a group of qualified nominees. He also has been engaging, as you all know, with Democrats and Republicans and consulting closely to -- as a part of the "advice and consent," "consent" part of his -- the role of picking a nominee to move forward.

After last week's meeting with Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley, the President and Vice President and

their senior teams, including White House Counsel Dana Remus, have also spoken to the range of additional members of Congress and outside legal experts, and that engagement will continue.

There, is of course, a vetting process that takes place. We have not outlined that in detail from here. And, of course, we will venture to be as transparent as possible, even as we are working to protect the process as the President is making his decision.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. With the meeting today between the President and the German Chancellor, does the President view Germany as a reliable partner on this issue? When it comes to troop movements or sending weapons to Ukraine or talking publicly about sanctions, they've been much less aggressive than other NATO Allies.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'd also note that Germany is the second-largest donor to Ukraine and Europe. The President has also noted, as we have noted, that different countries make different contributions. I think that the Chancellor also did an interview with the Washington Post this morning where he spoke to that in more detail.

We have a close, abiding, important relationship with the Germans. That includes having forces stationed in Germany, which has a huge strategic value to the United States.

So today is an opportunity for the President to build on the relationship with the Chancellor, to continue to build on the long and abiding relationship with the Germans. And we are united in our view of the actions -- the potential actions of Russian leaders and united in our efforts to hold them accountable.

Q What's your understanding about where the Chancellor stands right now when it comes to including Nord Stream 2 in potential sanctions if Russia invades. They've really danced around that issue and haven't given a clear answer about whether they would, in fact, be willing to put that pipeline on hold.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know you all will have the opportunity to, I'm sure, ask him this question himself. And I, of course, don't speak for him. But what I can reiterate here is that we said we'd work with Germany to ensure that Nord Stream 2 does not move forward should Russia invade, and that remains the position -- agreed position.

Q And Emmanuel Macron is meeting with President Putin today, and Chancellor Scholz will be meeting with him in the coming weeks. So, has President Biden asked either of them to deliver a message to Putin when they meet with him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important to remember that there are a range of different diplomatic talks happening at the same time through different formats. Some are leader to leader; some are through NATO; some are through the OSCE. And this is reflective of that -- these conversations that are happening.

As you know, the President spoke with President Macron yesterday. And, of course, that close discussion and coordination with a range of leaders is part of how we're approaching this.

But this is multilayered diplomacy at work here. So -- and we are also directly in touch with the Russians ourselves. So, I wouldn't -- I wouldn't look at it through that prism.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You guys are -- said in a background call that part of the discussion with Germany today was about continuing to prepare this robust sanctions package, but we've been talking about sanctions for months.

So if Germany is as aligned with its Allies as they -- you all are conveying, why isn't this sanctions package already complete? Why isn't that done already, in terms of figuring out what it looks like?

MS. PSAKI: Our internal sanctions package? Or what sanctions package?

Q Because you've said consistently that the sanctions that you're preparing are in close consultation with Allies, including Germany. And that conversation is, you know, obviously happening again today, as we're getting warnings that Russia could at any moment take significant action.

So the discussion about sanctions has been over the course of several months.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Why isn't it done yet if Germany is as on board with the rest of the NATO Alliance as they're projecting to be?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, Jacqui, I mean, as we've said before: One, I think there is alignment that we will work with Germany to ensure that Nord Stream 2 does not move forward, which is obviously a key -- a key point of discussion.

I'd also note, just -- and reiterate that it's not operational at this time, and there's no oil flowing through the pipeline. That has been a key point of discussion, and that is agreed to.

I would also reiterate what we've said in here in the past is that: While we have our own sanctions package prepared, which we've been consulting with and briefing members of Congress on, and others do -- and we're united in the effort to put forward an economic sanctions package that has significant consequences, as are our European partners -- it doesn't mean it's identical. So --

Q One point to clarify: You said that that is agreed to on Nord Stream 2. I just want to clarify: The Germans have -- are you saying that the Germans have committed not to bring Nord Stream 2 online if Russia invades?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I'm not going to get into the private diplomatic conversations, but it -- we have said a number of times that if they invade, it will not move forward.

Q And then, I wanted to ask about Dr. Lander again. I know you got a question on this earlier, but does the fact that Dr. Lander has a job, still, cheapen the President's promise to fire anyone who treats colleagues with disrespect on the spot?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would just reiterate that the President takes his commitment to having a respectful work environment incredibly seriously. And it's something that he conveys clearly to all of us on a regular basis. That is why we put in place -- in part put in place a safe and respectful workplace policy, which is how -- which is the process through which this thorough investigation proceeded through and the process through which, again, that there was an internal investigation.

Dr. Lander -- obviously, his behavior was inappropriate, and corrective actions needed to be taken, and that was clearly conveyed through this process. And he will be held to account for delivering on that.

Q And then, real quick -- one third topic. We got announcements that in Delaware and New Jersey, the governors are going to be ending mask mandates coming up pretty soon. What is the White House view on these kinds of announcements, given that in Virginia, Governor Youngkin faced a lot of pushback from Democrats for making similar changes to the mask policy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, but they weren't actually that similar because what happened here in New Jersey and a couple of other states you mentioned is that they pulled back the requirement. They didn't make it more difficult for schools, school administrators, and local officials to keep requirements that they made a determination would keep their schools safe.

Go ahead.

Q Do you expect that President Macron and President Biden will have a follow-up conversation so that he can relay any, sort of, impressions that he got from his face-to-face meeting? And would you commit to letting us know if that conversation happens?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly would. On the latter, I would say that, as you know, the President spoke with President Macron just yesterday. Again, there's multilayers of diplomacy happening at many times. Sometimes those readouts happen at the Secretary of State level or National Security Advisor.

But I can assure you we are in close contact with the French; of course, the Germans; and all of our NATO partners and Allies.

Q At the Pentagon, John Kirby has talked about the possibility of additional U.S. forces being moved to Europe. Has the President requested any additional recommendations from Secretary Austin? And is he reviewing any other plans along those lines?

MS. PSAKI: I would just say that we are in constant contact, of course, with the Defense Department but also with our NATO partners about what their needs are. So, I don't have anything to predict for you other than to reiterate what was said last week, which is that we leave the door open to that possibility.

Q So that's an active possibility at this point?

MS. PSAKI: It always has been. And I would remind everyone that there are thousands of troops that are on the -- in Eastern European countries as a part of our NATO Alliance, so this is to bolster up the troops that are already there.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the mask mandate question in New Jersey and other states: The CDC is still recommending universal masking in schools, so --

MS. PSAKI: That's correct. And that still remains our recommendation.

Q So are you pleased with and fine with the New Jersey governor's decision?

MS. PSAKI: Again, our advice to every school district is to abide by public health guidelines. It continues to be, at this point, that the CDC is advising that masks can delay, reduce transmission. There are also a number of other mitigation measures that we've put in place, but that continues to be CDC guidance.

It's always been up to local school districts to determine how they implement.

Q What does it say, then, that a governor like Phil Murphy, who's been so closely aligned with the policies of this administration, would get ahead of the medical experts and say, "Never mind what they say; school districts, you decide"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's always been up to school districts. That's always been our point of view and always been our policy from here.

And our policy from the federal government is to continue to advise everybody to abide by public health guidelines.

Q Do you think it signals that perhaps the public believes it's time for a change in the federal guidelines -- the CDC's guidance?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly understand and have seen in polling that the public is tired of COVID. We understand that. So are we.

And there has been some good signs recently where there has been a decrease in hospitalizations around the country. And again, we're in constant touch about -- about what it looks like moving forward.

But our responsibility, as the federal government, is to rely on the data and the science that is being analyzed by our public health experts. And we'll continue to rely on that for what recommendations we're making.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah. A couple things. So, we've reported that U.S. officials are losing patience with the Chinese in these negotiations about them fulfilling their purchase commitments under the phase one trade deal signed by Donald Trump. What is the perspective from the White House in terms of what can you do? And does the President intend to weigh in on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's a good question, Andrea. I mean, we -- as you know, they did not abide by their purchase agreements. We know that factually; we've seen that. This is really under the purview of the USTR and our Trade Representative, Katherine Tai. We remain in close touch with her about that, but I'd really point you to them for any updates on the process.

Q Okay. And then, this situation on the Canadian border -- or in Ottawa, the truckers protest: There does seem to be evidence that these truckers are getting support from conservative forces or right-wing forces in the U.S. Are you investigating that at all? Is there any, kind of, you know, involvement of U.S. authorities in looking at those money flows going to these truckers? And are you concerned about it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say a couple of things. This doesn't answer your question, but I just want to get this out there too on this particular topic, and then I'll come around -- I promise.

We have been engaged since the outset -- well, some of it hopefully answers your question, I should say -- of the protests. There have been zero impacts to CBP operations, which is a question people have understandably been asking us. Some -- some shipments were rerouted by our law enforcement partners to other points of entry due to road closures. Some shippers have had to reroute. But CBP has been in communication throughout to ensure shipments can be cleared and onto the normal routes.

In terms of an assessment of any other engagement from here, we have -- we don't really have any update on that or any investigation to read out at this point in time.

Q And then, you know, the Federal -- the Federal Reserve nominees have run into a little bit of criticism from Republicans, in particular Sarah Raskin. Are you concerned that you're -- I mean, especially given the absence of Senator Luján, are you concerned that you might not get all those nominees through and that you may have to withdraw Sarah Raskin? There's just been another dust -- dustup overnight?

MS. PSAKI: She is one of the most, if not the most, qualified person to ever be nominated to this position. She just gave extensive answers at a hearing last week, and she would be someone the President would be proud to have in that role, as independent as it may be.

So, no, that is not an assessment or a prediction we're making.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, two questions for you. One, the Secretary-General of NATO has recently talked about the possibility of a more

permanent military presence in Europe in response to Russia. Where does the Biden administration stand on that issue?

MS. PSAKI: We've had a permanent military presence in Europe.

You mean in addition?

Q Oh, a longer -- a longer-term, more permanent presence in Europe.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've always had one. But you mean a plussed-up one?

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I would really point --

Q And the language that was used was "longer term."

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, but we've always had one, so it's been very long term to date. But I would say: If -- if he is asking -- and I have not seen his comments about increased, plussed-up presence in some of the places from U.S. troops that we've had -- I would really point to the Department of Defense.

Obviously, we would -- we would be in touch with our NATO Allies and partners about that. But that is really related to the aggression at the border that we're seeing in Ukraine, but there's been tens of thousands of troops in Europe for some time now.

Q And just on the topic of masking in schools, if you could just clarify -- I know you've talked about this a little bit already: Do you think that at some point in the future, even if that point isn't now, it would be appropriate for there to be updated federal guidelines just to avoid confusion? I think the administration has been clear that on other issues, there are sort of messaging issues that could have been a little bit more clear coming from the administration. So on this issue, do you think that that might be appropriate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the guidance is very clear, which is that we recommend masking in schools. That is the recommendation from the CDC. It is also true that at some point, when the science and the data warrants, of course our hope is that that's no longer the recommendation. And they are continually assessing that. But the guidance is very clear.

It is also true that it has always been up to local school districts to make determinations about how to implement these policies.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow on that, you had said that you guys are in "constant contact" with the CDC about what it looks like to move forward. Can we expect the President to provide some sort of roadmap for how states can transition out of a state of emergency -- kind of akin to what he did with the winter strategy?

MS. PSAKI: We're in constant discussion internally about the moment we're in, as it relates to COVID. And, of course, as the President said, I think during his press conference just two weeks ago -- a week and a half ago -- you know, we certainly don't see this moment now as the new normal, right? And we -- but we want to get to a point where we are not -- where COVID is not disrupting our daily lives.

And I'm sure you will hear more from the President about that, but that's -- we're constantly discussing that internally.

Q And can I ask one more just for our colleague? The Education Department announced Friday it was going to withdraw its appeal for a \$100,000 student loan forgiveness court decision. I'm wondering if you could shed any light on why the Biden administration reversed its decision to appeal the case and if there are any plans to fight other bankruptcy cases

given administration reversed its decision to appeal the case and if there's any plans to fight other bankruptcy cases.

MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Education and the Department of Justice, potentially. But I will check and see if there's anything more we can offer on that from here.

Go ahead.

Q I got one more on masks. I just -- I was wondering if I could just ask it this way --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- the President's wife is an educator. He just heard from governors across the country last week, many of whom were saying, "This is enough. It's time for a new normal." Where is he on this after taking all of these inputs?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President is not a private citizen; he is President of the United States, right? So his --

Q But you're his spokesperson, so I'm asking you --

MS. PSAKI: Well, but I guess I'm saying it's different than asking kind of a person on the street. Right? I mean, I'm just -- you know, it is different because he is the President; he needs to project the -- what the data and the science is telling us. And the data and science -- where we get that guidance from is the CDC and our health and medical experts. Their guidance remains -- continues to be that, in schools, people should mask up. So that is what we are continuing to convey and recommend.

Q And then, can you tell us any more about where he will be going on Thursday?

MS. PSAKI: Not quite yet, but hopefully -- maybe by the end of the day. We hope to have some more details very soon.

Q Okay. Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Going back to Dr. Lander, "the investigation found credible evidence of multiple women having complained to other staff about negative interactions with him," with a pattern of abusive and disrespectful behavior.

Again, the President, at the outset of this administration said, "I will fire you on the spot. On the spot. No ifs, ands, or buts." So why is he not being fired?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, let me first say that no one is suggesting that this behavior is acceptable -- quite the opposite.

And that since he's -- he made the comment he did -- which I think was one of the first few days in office, if I remember correctly -- we put in place this "Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy" to ensure there was a mechanism -- right? -- to conduct investigations, as was conducted in this case, that can be thorough, that result in some actions and some steps.

That's exactly what happened here.

But again, this is not acceptable behavior. Dr. Lander is expected to comply. And he will be monitored for compliance, because having a safe workplace environment is imperative to the President, the Vice President, the First Lady, the Second Gentleman -- all of us who work here.

Q But are there ways in which he's being held to account if he's not being fired?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, as I outlined a little bit earlier, but let me reiterate a little bit: In addition to a full and thorough

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, as I outlined a little bit earlier, but let me reiterate a little bit. In addition to a full and thorough investigation, he was -- it was conveyed through meetings with senior White House officials directly that his behavior was inappropriate, corrective action was needed, and we will monitor for compliance to that -- to those actions that were required.

Again, I think you may have also seen, or it was reported, that he also sent a note to his staff conveying his commitment to abiding by that. And we certainly hope that that is the case.

Q But it doesn't sound like a zero-tolerance policy if that's the case.

MS. PSAKI: Well, our objective and the President's objective is to prevent this behavior from ever happening again.

Q So --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. On the Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I just -- I wanted to ask about the President's efforts to engage with Republicans --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- and whether that's the best use of his time, considering what he has said about the public not wanting him to be the "President Senator."

MS. PSAKI: That is true. And I think he has -- he has not been the "President Senator" over the course of the last period of time.

It's also true that he takes his role as President and going through the process of selecting and nominating an eminently qualified nominee very seriously. And in his experience as the former Chairman of the Judiciary Community [sic] -- Committee, that includes consultation with key members of the Senate, and that is an important part of the process in this case.

I think what he was referring to in those comments was hours and hours and hours of endless closed-door meetings as it related to negotiating through the course of the fall. But this is an opening to a lifetime appointment -- an opening on the Supreme Court, which is a lifetime appointment -- something the President takes very seriously. And consulting with Republicans and Democrats is an important part of that process, in his view.

Q Thank you.

Q On Nord Stream 2, you have -- you've made clear the administration's position. I did want to understand, though: Is the administration ready to take some type of action without Germany to stop Nord Stream 2?

MS. PSAKI: I understand your question. I just am not in a position to detail further, other than to convey that it will not move forward if Russia invades.

Q On Dr. Lander, if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Can you talk about what some of the specific corrective changes that were ordered -- what some of those were? And

Q Can you talk about what some of the specific corrective changes that were ordered -- what some of those were? That also, has the President spoken with Dr. Lander since the investigation was completed? And does he worry about this overshadowing Moonshot?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that the President's hope -- all of our hope -- is certainly that Dr. Lander will abide by -- making changes, that he will be held to account to -- to comply fully with the steps that needed to be taken.

I can see if there's more specific details. I certainly understand why you're asking. But overall, it's ensuring that he is creating a work environment that people feel safe, they feel supported, and that is respectful. And that is the overarching policy that needs to be implemented moving forward.

You saw him send a note to staff last week, and now it is whether he is implementing those policies moving forward.

Q Have they spoken?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any conversations between them to read out.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. Just following up on a question asked earlier about the -- what you said isn't a split between Ukraine's messaging and your guys' messaging --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on the risk of an invasion.

Can you walk us through the communication strategy -- like what you're trying to highlight, given the risk of invasion, and why you're trying to highlight it more strongly than Ukraine?

Do you see it as -- you know, sounding the alarm more vocally, is there an advantage that you see in sort of preventing Putin from taking any further steps here? Have we --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, it's a good question. And I can't -- I can't speak for the communication strategy of the Ukrainians; only they can speak to that. But I can tell you that what we have been trying to do -- we obviously have a range of information -- a broad range of information that we have been able to gather here and also through partnership with our allies across the country.

Our objective, as we talked about a little bit on Friday, is to deny Russia the opportunity to use some of the tactics, sometimes some of the lies that they have done in the past to justify an invasion of Ukraine. That's straight out of their playbook.

We have seen tactics they have used in the past, where a few years ago, Russia's Defense Ministry falsely accused the United States of running a clandestine biological weapons lab in the country of Georgia, enabling them -- their efforts to destabilize the Georgian government.

They used to fabricate stories in Syria about how attacks on international aid convoys were undertaken by rebels or terrorists.

We've -- so we have undertaken an effort to, in some cases, declassify information; in other cases, describe in as great of detail as we can without putting at risk sources and methods what we're seeing, what information we're evaluating so that they are -- it is -- it makes it more difficult for them to lay a predicate for invading Ukraine.

So that is why we're doing it. I'd also note that a number of your news organizations of course have reporters near there

... that is why we're seeing a... also note that a number of our... organizations of course have reported that there are who are seeing the troop buildup. Right? So there is justification and validation from even that, but also from our partners around the world as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Senator Manchin expressed confidence over the weekend that reforms of the Electoral Count Act will pass. Would the President be supportive of signing reforms to the Electoral Count Act if it were to pass? Or would he require that there be elements of the bill -- voting rights bill included in order to do so?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would really point you to Senator Klobuchar, who is really one of the point people leading this effort.

Obviously, we have said many times that the Electoral Count Act, while we support the effort, is not a replacement for voting rights legislation for a range of reasons.

I know there's a lot of discussions on the Hill about what that may look like or what a final package. I can't outline that from here.

Q Okay. And China used a young Uyghur athlete to carry the Olympic Torch during the Opening Ceremony of the Games in Beijing. What did the administration make of that, given the ongoing genocide against Uyghurs in Xinjiang?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know that our U.N. Ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, spoke to this yesterday. So let me reiterate what I thought were some very powerful comments -- if I'm remembering -- I know someone spoke to it, but I believe it was her -- that we can't allow this to be a distraction from, exactly as you said, the human rights abuses, the genocide that we're seeing in parts of China.

That is why we did not send a diplomatic delegation, even as we're cheering for our U.S. athletes. Diplomacy is complicated, as we know, but we can't allow it to be a distraction from what we know is happening to many people in China.

Go ahead.

Q Just to reiterate, on Inauguration Day, President Biden said he would fire anyone that treated another colleague with disrespect, talked down to someone -- and they would -- he would fire them "on the spot" -- "No, ifs, ands, or buts." So what is the White House's message to people that work in this building and throughout the federal government that took the President at his word and don't understand why Dr. Lander has not been fired?

MS. PSAKI: Our message -- and thank you for your question -- is that the President has crystal-clear expectations with all of us about how we are to treat our colleagues, treat people who work for us, and that is what he expects for people across the building.

It is because of those comments that he made early on, in part, that we put in place a Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy that was the mechanism for which this thorough investigation went forward. And it also -- it is based on that that their investigation -- from that came the meeting that Dr. Lander had with senior White House officials where it was made clear what steps he was required to take and that we will be complying and watching for compliance with those steps.

And our objective is, of course, to prevent any of this behavior from happening again in the future. That's the overarching objective.

Q But those weren't comments; those were a promise.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. That's why he -- we put in place a policy to ensure there is a mechanism for investigating and a mechanism for preventing this type of behavior from repeating itself.

Q But he promised to fire people that did this, and he hasn't fired the individual the White House found violated what he said. (Inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I understand. And, again, let me just reiterate: Nothing about his behavior is acceptable to anyone here -- at all. Quite the opposite. Let me be clear about that.

But there is now a process in place, that was not in place at the time, to evaluate and determine what the next step -- the steps should be taken in the event that any behavior like this occurs to prevent it from happening in the future. That is exactly what happened in this case.

Q So, fellow federal employees shouldn't expect that people will be fired if they treat colleagues with disrespect?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think I've outlined very clearly what the process was.

Go ahead.

Q You're just saying it's legal -- that it's legal what you're doing. Correct?

Q Two questions, Jen. Two questions for you. Excuse me. Two questions --

MS. PSAKI: It's more than -- it's more than that. I think it's clear that we are putting in place -- we had put in place a process -- an internal process -- to ensure that there was a thorough investigation, that the -- that it was evaluated, that steps were taken for this individual, Dr. Lander, to meet with senior officials to make clear that there were requirements that would be put in place and he was expected to comply with them to prevent this behavior from ever happening again.

Go ahead.

Q Two questions. First, on Senator Manchin, on Build Back Better: He reiterated again his view that that structure is done. And he said he wants regular order for any pieces of that (inaudible); that means potentially weeks -- hearings, all of that. Is the President on board with that idea of hearings, markups? And if not, what's his plan for elements of Build Back Better to move forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak for Senator Manchin; I know you're not asking me to, but what there is broad agreement on and support for is taking steps to lower costs for the American people, whether it's Medicare or whether it's the ability to negotiate the price of prescription drugs -- something broadly supported; whether it's lowering the cost of childcare, eldercare; making sure that the tax system is more fair.

In terms of the mechanisms and the legislative process, I just don't have any more predictions for you in terms of how it will proceed.

Q And then, on jobs, a positive report on Friday, by and large. However, Black unemployment is still twice the rate of white unemployment. What is the White House doing? What does the White House think needs to be done to deal with that, especially for Black men?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, just as a reminder, that there is still -- as much as the President oversaw the largest creation of jobs -- job creation ever in one year in American history, it means there's more work to be done, because there are still a lot of work that needs to be done to level the playing field, to ensure that small businesses have the assistance they need, including Black-owned small businesses; that we are doing everything we can to ensure there is opportunity for a range of parts of the economic world.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A few on the Supreme Court. Congressman Clyburn says that the President will need bipartisan support for his Supreme Court pick, citing Senator Luján's stroke and hospitalization. Is it the White House's position that Republican votes would be helpful in the Senate, or do you view them as necessary?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've, I think, conveyed from here that we haven't set a deadline for when a vote should be. We have said we want it to happen as expeditiously as possible. We have also said, and I'll reiterate, that because the President has every intention of nominating an eminently qualified Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court, that this is a person who should warrant bipartisan support. And that is certainly what we hope for.

Q Speaking of the timeline, the President has said that he intends to make that announcement by the end of the month.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Has that timeline shifted in any way? Might he make this announcement before President's Day weekend?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything -- February is February, so I don't have anything to predict for you in terms of when in February, quite, at this point, it will be.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. And one more question, if you don't mind.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q As far as where and when he could meet with the potential nominees -- he's going to Camp David this weekend. Is the President going to meet with potential Supreme Court justices at Camp David this weekend?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything for you on the process of how the President will interview nominee -- potential candidates.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Does the White House have a reaction to the death of the Navy SEAL candidate who died after completing what's known as "Hell Week"? And has the President spoken to his family, or does he have plans to?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have -- not -- not yet, Karen. I will -- we will check and see where that is at this point. Obviously, there'll be an investigation here. I'd point you to the Department of Defense for any specifics.

As a starting point here, obviously, our heart goes out to the family members, the community, the friends, and we look -- we will look for more details to come out of an investigation.

Q And would there be any thought given to reexamining that training as part of that?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question. I would really point you to the Department of Defense, and the President would certainly look to his Defense Department and leadership to make any recommendations in that regard.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions. First, on the Olympics: Does the White House agree with Speaker Nancy Pelosi that American athletes shouldn't speak out against Beijing for their own safety?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know we saw those comments, obviously. I think they were last week, if I remember correctly. The

President's view is that, first, we support our athletes 100 percent. (Holds up Team USA water bottle). Yay. All athletes have the right to freely express themselves, and that is the case in Beijing at the Olympics; it is the case anywhere. They will make those choices as individuals.

It's the responsibility of China to live up to its own obligations to maintain a safe environment for all athletes at these games. The world will be watching.

But we leave it up to individuals. We certainly support the right to peaceful protest.

Q And then, on the First Lady's comments this morning about -- she said -- she conceded that free tuition for community college is dead; it's out of Build Back Better.

I'm wondering, kind of, what was the thought about having her give that message. Is the White House trying to restart negotiations on Build Back Better? Was there some sort of underlying intent to have the First Lady come out and say that this morning?

MS. PSAKI: I think it was speaking from her heart about her view that free community college would benefit kids, young people, level the playing field across the country. It's something the President agrees with.

I think you all have seen many, many iterations of the Build Back Better legislation -- or options -- in recent months. It hasn't been in there in a while, so I think it was speaking -- she was speaking from her heart about how beneficial she thinks that funding and that support would be.

Go ahead, April.

Q Jen, two topics. One, recently, a Black man was killed in Minnesota over a no-knock warrant. Has the White House taken note of this? And does this bring a fresh -- a renewed call for this executive order -- this police reform executive order, as well as the standalone pieces that are potentials on police reform on Capitol Hill?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. And it should. Let me reiterate, because I asked a little bit about this, this morning, as well.

So, one, let me first say that we mourn the tragic death of Amir Locke, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

The President is committed to ensuring fair, impartial, and effective policing in keeping our communities safe. These goals go hand-in-hand, in our -- in his view, with what we can achieve by building trust between the police and communities they serve.

So, back in September, Attorney General Garland issued a new policy improving [sic] -- imposing restrictions on the use of no-knock warrants, chokeholds, and carotid restraints by federal agents. Obviously, that's for federal agents, so that's limited -- not to local. But -- you know, I know you follow this closely but for others.

President Biden -- the reason he has been such a strong supporter -- one of the reasons -- of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is that it would further restrict the use of no-knock warrants across the country, incentivizing funding -- by using funding as an incentive.

We have been engaging with, as you know, civil rights groups, a number of law enforcement groups. All agree on the need to reform the use of no-knock warrants. That is -- there's a lot of agreement on that to keep both citizens and law enforcement officers safe.

And the President is examining the possibility of extending those restrictions to other federal agencies through actions -- executive actions that he would have the power to do.

I think you all saw Susan Rice convey last week that we're not there yet. We want to make sure we do any action through the administration the right way and it's thorough, but certainly, that's part of what's being looked at.

Q All right. And on the second topic: There is a serious shroud of secrecy around the nominees of the Supreme Court, understandably. And I've got two questions on this. One, what's traditional about the process? And then, what is very unique to the process because of the historical nature? If you can tell us. And I'm sure you can give us something.

MS. PSAKI: No, no, no, it's a good question. It's a very thoughtful question. I was just trying to --

Q Yes, it is. Yes, it is. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: There you go.

I walked right into that one.

Q Yes, you did.

MS. PSAKI: I walked right into that one.

What I think is unique in this moment is that the President is someone who has served as the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, as the Vice President when there were a number of nominees -- historic -- many historic -- a number of historic nominees who were nominated and confirmed by the Senate. And he takes the process and the seriousness -- the need for it to be thorough -- he's very focused on it.

You know, I don't know that that's unique. Obviously, every President, I would hope, takes the process seriously. But he also takes, as is -- there was a question earlier about this -- the component about advice part of it very seriously, in terms of consulting with Republicans and Democrats in the process.

You know, what is unique about this moment? You know, that's a good -- I want to read your article about this to hear what you have to say.

Q Oh, you -- we've got a lot of articles already. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, your next article about it.

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: You know, I think it's safe to say that there are some criticisms that have been out there, without any names being confirmed, that are unique to -- to having the possibility, the likelihood, the plan for a woman of color being nominated for this position. And the types of language that are used by some to describe who the President might pick as a nominee are unique to that.

Q And you just spoke, a moment ago, about advice on --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- his nominees. We know the internal advice, particularly from the Counsel's Office, as well as the Vice President.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But externally -- when is the last time the President talked to Anita Hill?

MS. PSAKI: To Anita Hill?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: I would have to check on that for you, April.

Q Is she part of this process? Because we know there are -- we know that he talked, and they had a very real conversation before he, you know, became President-elect.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is she -- I want to know, one: Has he consul- -- when is the last time he consulted with her? And if she is part -- because the names of those who are on the outside are dribbling out -- and is she one of those, and he respects her opinion.

MS. PSAKI: I will check with our team who are overseeing the process. And you -- you're familiar with who that internal team is.

I know we probably have to wrap up soon here. Go ahead, Ed.

Q Yeah. Two things. On gas prices: So, if President Biden has said, with oil prices, that he released the Strategic Petroleum Reserves and that brought down prices -- actually, on that day, the price of oil actually rose and went down for the Omicron variant as the fears of lockdown. Today, oil prices are \$91 -- more than \$91 a barrel. Is there any consideration by the administration to reversing any of the policies or regulations or removing some to encourage more drilling in the U.S. for future demand?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me tell you what we are doing. Of course -- we, of course, tapped the Strategic Petroleum Reserve; sometimes they take some time to be digested into the system. We've also worked with a number of countries around the world to do something similar. We've been engaged with OPEC nation countries about the need for the supply available to meet the demand.

We've also called out the record profits made by oil companies, which should not be lost as an issue as consumers are looking at the price that they are paying at -- the prices they are paying.

And then I would also note that you should check with oil companies on whether they are tapping into all of the land leases they have available at their disposal.

Q But what about the -- what about --

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe they are.

Q What about encouraging the investment in drilling in other places in the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think the President's view is that we are -- it is a huge advantage to us to be a leader in the clean energy transition. And over the course of years and decades, we've become a clean energy superpower because, ultimately, that's such -- not just where the jobs are, it's where the strategic advantage will lie in 10, 20, 30 years.

I would note again -- and you can ask the oil companies this -- there is land they're not all drilling on. Every lease is not used. I'd encourage them -- you to ask them that question.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, the President provided to continue (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the middle.

Q Is this time for him to --

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Can we -- just finish. I think we just -- go ahead, in the middle right there.

Q I'm asking if it is the time for the President to --

MS. PSAKI: Simon, let me just -- let me just --

Q -- (inaudible)? His approval rating continues to sink.

MS. PSAKI: -- let me just -- let me just have him ask his question. Okay? Go ahead.

Q Is the American people (inaudible) sending a different message?

Q Thank you. Quickly back to Nord Stream 2.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q We know the American position to that; you made that crystal clear. Did the pro- -- did the President know the German position before the talks in the Oval Office began?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I'm sure this will be a part of the discussion. I would bet someone will ask about this when we're having a press conference in just a little bit here.

But what I can just reiterate is that it will not move forward.

Q Jen, one on Russia.

Q And quick question on President Macron's visit in --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- Moscow today and the Minsk agreement. What is the White House's position on the question of autonomy or more autonomy for the different regions in Ukraine? For instance, the Donbass with a majority Russian population, should they have an increased say in the Ukrainian national politics, including the question of which alliance Ukraine wants to be a member of?

MS. PSAKI: Again, our position on this has not changed. Obviously, the Minsk agreements is part of the discussion, as has been reported, between President Putin and President Macron. We'll wait for those discussions to conclude. And we certainly support any means of diplomatic engagement.

All right, thanks, everyone.

Q Are you going to give us water bottles? (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: I have enough water in here for everybody. (Laughter.)

2:43 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 8, 2022 4:41 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

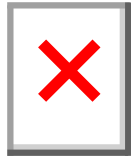
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. They discussed their shared concern about Russia's build-up of forces along Ukraine's border, and underscored their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They discussed the readiness of the U.S. and NATO to continue engaging in dialogue with Russia to find a diplomatic path toward de-escalation. They also underscored the readiness of Allies to defend against any threat to NATO Allies' territory, including by reinforcing the eastern flank in response to potential Russian aggression.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 8, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 8, 2022 7:00 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 8, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:41 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, happy Tuesday, everyone. As you all know -- just a couple of announcements for all of you at the top. As you all know, the pandemic-induced global supply chain backlog has strained our transportation industry and created a critical shortage of truck drivers.

Almost two months ago, the Biden-Harris administration launched a Trucking Action Plan to strengthen America's workforce.

A key element of this plan is encouraging the trucking industry to recruit and retain well-trained drivers by creating a safe, welcoming, and stable career path with good-paying jobs and family-sustaining wages.

We can think of few Americans better prepared to take on this challenge than our nation's veterans, since many have military trucking experience, are familiar with safety culture, and have maintenance skills.

On Friday, the administration met with veteran service organizations representing nearly 4 million veterans to discuss ways that we and the industry could attract, train, place, and retain veterans in trucking jobs.

And today, we're pleased to announce the Departments of Labor, Transportation, Defense, Veterans Affairs, and the Small Business Administration will be raising awareness about 16 different federal programs that can -- that can connect transitioning military personnel and veterans to rewarding careers in the trucking industry. A highlight of these efforts is

the Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Program.

So, we see this as a win-win-win -- getting more veterans to work, addressing the shortages in the trucking industry.

I also wanted to note that, as you've heard the President talk about a fair amount, he's committed to using every tool at his disposal to bring down prices. And you're going to hear him talk and the administration talk a lot about this as the -- as the week proceeds.

That's why we're working to ease supply chain bottlenecks and give consumers more choices. That's why we continue to push for legislation like Build Back Better and a competitiveness bill that will make our economy stronger, lower the costs of essentials, bring more manufacturing to the United States, and strengthen our supply chains.

This week, the President is also going to be meeting with business leaders and traveling in the country -- to Virginia, as you know -- to highlight his plan to address prices. While we're made -- we've made remarkable strides with the fastest economic growth since 1984 and the most jobs created in one year ever, he knows there's more work to do to keep prices down.

He will al- -- he also talked this afternoon, as you just all heard him do, about how we can build more in America, bring down costs through making more in America, and rebuilding our supply chains.

And as I noted, tomorrow he'll be hosting CEOs at the White House to talk about how Build Back Better can lower energy costs.

As you know, he's going to Virginia on Thursday to talk about lowering the price of prescription drugs.

With that, Colleen, why don't you kick us off?

Q Okay, a couple things. Do you have any information about a possible security threat at Dunbar High School where the Second Gentleman was? I think he was just taken from the event and it was postponed, but we don't know --

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any updates on this. We will venture to see if we can get to anything, even if it's during the briefing.

Q It just happened, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Excellent.

Q And then, second, the remaining Child Tax Credit is -- you know, the Biden administration is encouraging people to use what's left of the remaining tax credit. So, to what extent do you hope that you can show the benefits of the program to overcome skepticism about the program, kind of by getting this last bunch of money out there?

And one more thing after.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, one of the steps we're trying to take here, which is -- which is showcased by the fact that today the Vice President, Secretary Yellen, and Gene Sperling are hosting a Day of Action with over 100 nonprofits and community-based organizations to encourage all Americans to take advantage of critical tax credits, including the expanded Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit when they file their taxes this year.

Part of the reason we're doing that is because we know how effective it is. We know that it helped cut child poverty by 40 percent last year. We know it helped give many families some extra breathing room at a time where the economy was still recovering. And studies show that the Child Tax Credit also helps working families with development -- with developments and opportunities for their children.

It's important to remember -- and this one of the things they'll be talking about today -- that Americans that qualify for the extended Child Tax Credit will still receive half of the entire benefit when they file their taxes this year.

And yesterday, we launched a new version of ChildTaxCredit.gov to help Americans get the full Child Tax Credit as tax filing season begins.

So, part of our effort here is to continue to talking about -- continue talking about the benefits: how they're helping working families; how they're helping many women who need -- who need an extra hand to cover childcare costs; and how they're helping give people a little extra breathing room.

Q And then lastly, if Dr. Lander -- the President accepted his resignation last night, I think. Right?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Or this morning.

MS. PSAKI: Last night.

Q Last night. I mean, not to go back to yesterday's discussion, but should he have just fired him to begin with, if he was just going to offer his resignation anyway, and spare all of the criticism from yesterday? I mean, I don't know, should there have been things done differently, I guess?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me reiterate something I said yesterday, because I think it's important for people to hear that, from the outset, Dr. Lander's behavior was unacceptable. Senior White House officials conveyed that to him directly at the conclusion of the investigation. And, of course, we talked about that yesterday.

And what happened here is we took -- we -- as a part of the implementation of the Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy -- something that we implemented and announced last May, or put out there last May -- we implemented a process -- including an investigation, including a meeting that Dr. Lander had with senior White House officials -- to convey the severity of his actions and what steps he was expected to take and the fact that there would be compliance -- he would be expected to be compliant.

As you saw, we released Dr. Lander's note last night to all of you -- or his letter of resignation, I should say. It was made clear to him -- through the course of the day yesterday, I suppose -- that he could no longer lead OSTP effectively. And he conveyed that in his letter. The President accepted his resignation.

So, I think we're now focused on looking forward. There's obviously a lot of important work that OSTP will do, continue to do, and continue to lead on moving forward. And the President is eager to continue working with them.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A couple on Ukraine. President Macron says that he believes that he achieved this objective of preventing an escalation after his day with Vladimir Putin. What have the French shared with the White House about that meeting? And does the White House believe that we are, today, closer to seeing de-escalation as a result of this meeting than we were yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the meeting and the press conference, as you may have seen, ended very late last night. So, obviously, we are -- will continue to be in very close contact with our French counterparts at a range of levels.

The President has spoken with -- with President Macron twice in the last week. I expect he'll be engaged with him soon, which we will, of course -- to go back to Kelly's question yesterday -- make you all aware of.

I would just say we encourage and we're encouraged by any efforts at diplomacy. We can't -- we still don't have any prediction of what President Putin will do. We can't control what Russia will do next.

What we can do and what I think President Macron played a role in doing yesterday is making clear with our Allies and partners that there will be massive consequences should Putin choose to further invade Ukraine.

But in terms of an assessment, we don't have any new information or new prediction about where President Putin's head is.

Q Has the White House not received a readout from the French on this?

MS. PSAKI: We -- we are -- we remain in close touch with our counterparts, but I don't have an update on any specifics of behind-the-scenes diplomatic talks.

Q And one more one Ukraine. We heard the President and the Chancellor yesterday emphasize this united front. We did not hear the Chancellor mention the phrase "Nord Stream 2." What assurances did this White House get from Germany -- the German government -- about Nord Stream 2 and the future of that pipeline if Russia invades?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you heard the President very definitively say yesterday at the press conference: If Russia further invades Ukraine, there will no longer be a Nord Stream 2 and we will bring an end to it.

You heard the German Chancellor also convey yesterday that we are working in lockstep and that we are very coordinated in our efforts.

In terms of the specifics, we'll let those conversations happen through diplomatic channels.

But I would also reiterate that Nord Stream 2 is not currently operational. We agree that it is a point of leverage with President Putin and the Russians. German regulators have suspended certification of the pipeline. And we have been very clear privately, as we have been publicly, about the fact that it would not continue should Russia invade.

Q And I have just one last one. Your reaction to the RNC declaring what happened on January 6th as "legitimate political discourse"? And Democrats on the Hill today are being very vocal about this. Hakeem Jeffries says the "C" in "RNC" stands for "cult." Does the White House agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's clear to Americans that what happened on January 6th was not "legitimate political discourse." Storming the Capitol in an attempt to halt the peaceful transition of power is not legitimate discourse, neither is attacking and injuring over 140 police officers, smashing windows, and defiling offices.

It's telling to all of us that some leading Republicans have rejected that characterization, including the former President's National Security Advisor and the Chief of Staff to the former Vice President, who, as he put it, had a front-row seat that day, including as rioters chanted for the former Vice President to be hanged.

So, again, we certainly reject the notion that that was "legitimate political discourse," as we think very -- a large number of Americans would as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I want to ask you about this Army after-action investigation into the Afghanistan withdrawal that was obtained by the Washington Post. First of all, is this a report that the White House has had an opportunity to review and absorb? And if so, were there any lessons that were learned from it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know, obviously, our national security team, as we said at the time, was going to conduct after-action reports as they would as it relates to the end of any conflict or any engagement of that sort.

You know, we have always believed that the end of a 20-year war was always going to have significant challenges. We -- as you know and we talked about at the time, through the summer, we were pressing our system hard on whether we were meeting previously established tripwires that would require us to adjust operations at Embassy Kabul. That's how we looked at it and evaluated it at the time.

The NSC led that process and convened regular interagency discussions. And, of course, earlier in the summer, we prepositioned U.S. forces in the region to be ready to facilitate a NEO in preparation of exactly that scenario.

I know I -- I reiterate all of that because I know we haven't talked about this in great detail in some time, so I just wanted to lay it all out there.

All that work, of course, took months of planning. But we always look at and assess -- that's why after-action reports are so important and so essential. In terms of additional reports out of any of these findings, I don't have anything to report from here. I'd really point you to the Department of Defense.

Q But has the White House had an opportunity to review this particular report? (Inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, internal -- internal discussions and internal reviews of any -- of any after-action reports, I don't have any updates on or assessments from here.

Q Among the criticisms from military commanders in the document is that, as late as early August of last year, the NSC, quote, "appeared to lack a sense of urgency" about planning for an evacuation because "it would signal [that] 'we have failed.'" What's your reaction to that criticism?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, again, earlier in the summer, we prepositioned U.S. forces to be ready to facilitate a NEO if needed -- meaning an evacuation, if needed, of our embassy there. That is fact in terms of what was planning, what was done at the time.

And that -- in advance of that, that required months of planning to ensure there were a range of contingencies planned for, as we always do, through the national security team and through the military team.

And as we prepared in the early summer to leave Afghanistan, we prepositioned military assets in the region that enabled us to execute one of the largest airlifts in history.

So, I would just say, if you look back at the specific planning steps we took, we did plan for a range of contingencies even while, as we talked about at the time, there wasn't an anticipation that -- that the Afghan National Security Forces would fall as they did or as quickly as they did. And that was not anticipated by anyone. But we still had done a range of contingency planning.

Q So, broadly then, do you reject the assertion that was made by various military commanders in this report that they were trying to convince members of the administration of the urgency of planning for the evacuation, but that they were rebuffed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, there was a range of contingency planning that was done in close coordination by all of the players on the national security team at the time to prepare for a range of options and a range of outcomes.

No one predicted, as we know and as we talked about a lot during the period of August and September, that the Afghan National Security Forces would fall at the pace they fell. But if you look back at the history of what we actually did and what planning was done, there was a range of planning -- including positioning military forces, including ensuring that we

had a plan for a NEO operation for evacuation at the time should that be needed.

So, we always look back and assess, but I would say the facts of what was planned for at the time show that we were preparing for a range of contingencies.

Go ahead.

Q Following up real quick on this last exchange. That report did paint a pretty damning picture of the NSC and the State Department pretty much having blinders on while generals sounded the alarm over Afghanistan.

But we're hearing sort of the same bleak, blunt assessments right now from the Pentagon about Ukraine. So, is there -- I guess, any -- is there any closer relationship between the White House and Pentagon -- are the generals being listened to differently now -- post Afghanistan, post this report?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's really important to separate the two. Because, first, we are not in a 20-year war with U.S. troops in Ukraine. That's a very different circumstance. I would say that we believe and we continue to view our relationship -- both from the White House, from the diplomatic team, and from the Defense Department -- as one where we are closely coordinating, where there are healthy disagreements as there can be, and the President certainly welcomes them.

And the after-action reports are very important because you can look at and make assessments about anything you would change moving forward.

But Ukraine and the circumstance -- the situation on the border of Ukraine with Russian troops building up is not the same as ending a 20-year war. That is something the President had talked about for some time, where we were spending an enormous amount of not just money but blood of American service members for the -- over the course of decades. That's a different circumstance.

Q And then on this meeting between Putin and Macron yesterday, it sounds like the White House does not have a clear idea yet about whether there was in fact a deal or not for Russia to de-escalate or pledge, rather, not to go -- give any further escalation. Obviously, the Kremlin denied reports that the French put out about having struck a deal.

If the U.S. is not aware of where things stand, doesn't that signal that there's a separate negotiating track happening between the Europeans and Russia right now that could put the U.S. at risk of being sort of shut out from that discussion?

MS. PSAKI: Not in any way. I completely disagree with what you just conveyed.

First of all, there are a range of diplomatic conversations happening all the time. And that's been the case for many weeks. The United States is a key player in the vast majority of those negotiations.

At the same time, there are important formats, whether it is bilateral leader-to-leader engagement, which President Macron was a part of yesterday; or the Normandy Format, which is something we fully support, which is the format that the Minsk agreement would be discussed through, which includes Ukraine, Russia, Georgia [Germany], and France. That's another format that we fully support.

Those are conversations that have been happening. And typically, through a diplomatic process, there are a range of conversations that are happening at the same time.

Again, as I noted a little bit earlier, the President spoke with President Macron twice over the last week -- including on Sunday, the day before he spoke with President Putin. And I expect to speak with him soon again.

But it's also important to note that there are others -- German -- the German Chancellor, who was just here yesterday, is

also meeting with President Putin tomorrow. And certainly, if there is diplomatic progress, we would welcome that. But we will believe it when we see it with our own eyes at the border.

Q On the warships that moved into the Black Sea, there are some people who are fearing that this is another invasion force potentially targeting the city of Odesa. Obviously, the Kremlin is saying it's just exercises. But is there a concern in the White House that, you know, while we're buying time for this diplomatic push, that Putin is just bolstering his forces, building his forces while we're all talking?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I know that my colleague, John Kirby, has spoken to this from the Pentagon, so I'd point you to his comments. But I would say that we are not -- we are always going to leave the door to diplomacy open because we think as long as we don't know what President Putin is going to do -- and we don't; and he has not invaded Ukraine at this point -- then it is important to always keep that door open because that's always the preferred path.

At the same time, we are not just talking; we have built, through 200 engagements -- talking is engaged in part -- is an important part of it, I guess. But to build a -- an agreement with our partners and allies in Europe about putting together a severe set of economic consequences should they decide to invade.

We have provided an enormous amount of security assistance to Ukraine to make sure they are prepared. So, we are working on a number of paths, as you should do, but diplomacy is always going to be the preferred path.

Q One last one on masks.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q When are we going to hear from the CDC on this guidance? California yesterday changed their guidance. Randi Weingarten -- teachers union -- is vocally asking for the White House and the CDC to weigh in. So when are we going to hear from the CDC about updating the guidance on masks?

MS. PSAKI: You'll have to ask the CDC. The CDC moves at the pace of data and science. I would note that our goal remains continuing to ensure that there is guidance that helps school districts stay open. That's our goal. We want kids to be in school. Ninety-eight percent of schools are open. That's a very --

Q Do --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish. That's a very good sign.

Q Do you believe --

MS. PSAKI: We know what works. The CDC is always going to be reviewing their guidance, including mask guidance. But in terms of when they will provide additional new guidance, that is up to them.

Q Do you believe then that the Democratic- led states who are breaking with the CDC on this guidance, that they're not -- that they're throwing science away and that the CDC is -- has access to different science somehow?

MS. PSAKI: We don't look at it through that prism. These states, I think it's important to note, they still allow for decisions to be made by local school districts.

Where we come up with concern -- where we have great concern is if a kid or a parent chooses to wear a mask or a school district decides they should keep mask guidance in place and there are leaders who are preventing them from doing that. That is the place [case] in some other states.

But our hope is that states, leaders will look at the science and data about what's going on, they'll make decisions about local

school districts. Local school districts have always made these decisions. That remains the case.

Go ahead.

Q I wanted to ask about Supreme Court process.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q About three weeks left before the President's --

MS. PSAKI: Who's counting? (Laughter.)

Q We are.

MS. PSAKI: I know.

Q Has any of this process moved to a point where you are requesting documents, background materials directly from those women who are among the potential choices?

And also, how are you facilitating the President in getting advice from allies and so forth, on the outside, who may want to pitch their favorite contenders? We're certainly seeing lawmakers and others speaking publicly. That's a little different than speaking directly to the President. How is that information getting to him?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me start with the second part, and then I'll come back to the first, to the best of my ability.

So you all have seen that the President has met with, very publicly, both Chairman Durbin [sic] -- Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley. The Chairman and the President and Vice President have also spoken with a number of members to engage with them, get their feedback.

I had also noted, I think yesterday, that the President has also spoken with a wide range of outside legal experts, as he's seeking to consult and to get feedback and advice from them.

So, he is receiving and engaging with a range of people as he considers this process. I would note also that as he's looking at the process, he's reviewing not just bios, but he's also reviewing cases. And he is looking at binders of cases because he is very -- taking this approach very seriously. He's taking a very thorough approach to it.

In terms of the process, that is -- that is a part of the process, as you know, from covering these, Kelly -- vetting documents -- and that requires engagement with individuals.

I'm not going to get into specifics about where that sits. What I would reiterate from the -- and those of you who've covered this know this well -- is that we -- later in the process -- the very end of the process is typically when the President would interview candidates.

We remain -- we remain on track to announce a nominee by the end of the month. But that is typically the very end of the process.

Q Can you say that the field has narrowed a bit from the dozen or so that we were originally talking about?

MS. PSAKI: That is a natural part of the process, but I'm not going to get into specifics of the numbers.

Go ahead.

Q Going back to the after-action report on the Abbey Gate investigation: It's incredible what is in this report. Some of

Q Going back to the after-action report on the Abbey Gate investigation: it's incredible what is in this report. Some of the military officials say things such as, "[The Department of State] did not get one message right to the Afghans during the NEO." "Marines at Abbey Gate were forced to play God by identifying who would be allowed into the airfield."

One of the reasons you do an after-action report, as you said, is to go back and assess. But isn't it also to allow for accountability? Does the President intend to seek any accountability?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're going to allow a discussion internally to continue about any after-action report. I have no predictions beyond that at this point.

Q Speaking of accountability -- last night, accepting the resignation of Dr. Lander. It's been postulated here in town that perhaps Dr. Lander would still be working for this administration if POLITICO hadn't reported the story yesterday morning and if reporters in this room hadn't asked about it yesterday. Is that a fair assessment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, again, given that Dr. Lander made the decision himself to submit his resignation, that would be a question best posed to him.

Q So the President was not involved?

MS. PSAKI: No, he was not.

Q And he did not seek Dr. Lander's resignation?

MS. PSAKI: He did not. He made that decision himself.

Go ahead.

Q Frontier has announced plans to buy Spirit Airlines. Is there any concern in this administration about reduced competition?

MS. PSAKI: You know, broadly speaking, we always have a concern about reduced competition. But in terms of this potential merger, I don't have any specific comment from here.

Q Is it under discussion, at least?

MS. PSAKI: Again, you know, that would be reviewed by the Department of Justice and not from here. So I don't have any additional comment from here.

Q China, as has been widely reported, has largely missed its phase one purchase commitments. There's been talk about administration officials voicing, this week, its disappointment over that and frustration. What is the President prepared to do on that front?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that -- hold on, I have some update on this. Let me just make sure I have the most up-to-date information. One moment. Thanks for your patience.

So, as you know and have been following this closely, Alex, the USTR has been in conversations with China about its performance regarding purchase commitments under phase one, which they did not meet in 2020 and did not meet in 2021.

And they have conveyed -- and I would just reiterate on their behalf, the USTR officials -- it is on China to show up and follow through on its commitment.

So, our -- again, this is under the purview, as you know, of Ambassador Tai. We have expressed our concerns; we have

So, our -- again, this is under the purview, as you know, of Ambassador Tai. We have expressed our concerns, we have them. In terms of specifically what the President would be prepared to do, we're going to continue to engage with Ambassador Tai and the trade team to determine next steps.

Q Well, just to be clear, what is the President prepared to do though?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the USTR, our -- Ambassador Tai is the one who runs point on this. And I would point you to her for any additional comment on the current status.

Q Finally, there's some talk on Capitol Hill about congressional staffers unionizing. Does the President support that?

MS. PSAKI: He does. He supports the right of any individual to seek to join a union, to collective bargain. And of course, Capitol Hill staffers are certainly individuals who are pursuing that.

Q Has the staff been in touch with those folks?

MS. PSAKI: Our staff --

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: -- been in touch with them? I would really point you to congressional leadership. I know Speaker Pelosi and her team have spoken to this as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, truckers in Canada last night shut down the Ambassador Bridge, which carries about a quarter of U.S.-Canada trading goods. So what's the administration's response to this action? And what steps are being taken to ensure the free flow of goods? And also, any preventative steps being taken to address a possible blockade on the Michigan side of that bridge?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first start by saying: I know there's been some suggestion -- not by reporters necessarily at all -- but that this congestion is related to the vaccine requirements. It's not. I mean, I -- I'm saying -- I'm going to get to the protests. But the protests going on across Canada, which have spread to a bridge, are leading to sporadic congestion and blockages.

I would -- just to go back to my point I was trying to make is that across -- what we've seen with these requirements is, across indus- -- a range of industries, vaccine -- vaccination requirements have been implemented with no disruptions, have helped increase vaccinations.

These requirements help protect more people from COVID. And there's been zero indication across these industries that they would lead to disruptions, including on this policy.

We, of course, support, as you know, the right to freedom of speech and protest. But we -- and while we do see some of these congestions due to protests, this is clear that these disruptions have broadened in scope beyond the vaccine requirement implementation.

We -- beyond that, we are, of course, in touch with our Canadian counterparts, but I don't have any updates in terms of specific steps.

Q And on Ukraine: So, yesterday -- in yesterday's briefing, you mentioned that the Minsk Agreements would possibly be a part of these Macron and Putin talks. And now that it's over, is the U.S. discussing directly with any of the parties the use of the Minsk Agreement as a possible way out of the conflict, as President Zelenskyy has suggested? Do you see that as, sort of a fruitful pathway toward a diplomatic agreement?

sort of, a natural pathway toward a diplomatic agreement.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we see the Minsk Agreements -- which are discussed through the Normandy Format, which I was talking about a little bit earlier -- as certainly a format to move things forward. And we stand ready to support these sincere efforts. And, again, we welcome calls for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and the Minsk Agreement is a format that those could take place through.

Q Well, I guess, you know, there's been some suggestions that the Minsk Agreement would be unfavorable toward Ukraine if implemented in the way that the Russians want it implemented. So, is the U.S. coming down in any way on one side or the other?

MS. PSAKI: We are not. We just seem them as a format through which there could be discussion and continued engagement.

Q And then, lastly, quickly on competition. You know, Tyson Foods' stock went up very high yesterday -- I think its highest in about two years -- on the back of record profits on rising meat pri- -- partially on rising meat prices. So how is that posing a challenge to your administration's efforts to address competition in that industry?

MS. PSAKI: Well, just four large conglomerates control the majority of the market for beef, pork, and poultry products. And the data shows -- and I think their record profits are evidence of this -- that there have been increases in meat prices while the companies have generated recent record profits. And that's a good example of it.

Q And I would just note, just if you look at historical precedent here: Fifty years ago, ranchers got over 60 cents for every dollar a family spent on beef; today, they get about 39 cents. Fifty years ago, hog farmers got 40 to 60 cents for each dollar they spent; today, it's about 19 cents. And the big companies are still making major profits.

It certainly shouldn't work that way. And as the President has said many times: Capitalism without competition isn't capitalism, it's exploitation. And we have continued concern about the lack of competition in these industries.

Go ahead, Mara.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have a Lander and Ukraine question. First of all, will Rachel Wallace get her job back?

MS. PSAKI: I will have to check and see in the internal HR process. I'm happy to do that.

Q Okay. And then, since you've made it clear that he was -- he resigned, he was not fired, how does this comport with President Biden's pledge to fire you, quote, "on the spot" if he found about any kind of mistreatment of employees?

MS. PSAKI: So, what we did early in the administration, after he made those comments -- which I think that were the first or second day in office -- was: Our team -- our HR team, our legal team, others -- worked to put in place a Safe And Respectful Workplace Policy.

And that policy, which is about a six-page document -- I think we made it available to all of you, and we're happy to reshare it if useful -- that was the process through which there was an investigation into these allegations. There was a conclusion of that investigation. At the conclusion of that, Eric Lander -- Dr. Eric Lander met with senior members of our officials who made clear what steps needed to be taken and that he would be required to be compliant with those.

So that was actually an implementation of the President's commitment and in an effort to create a process for a large administration to maintain a healthy work environment and create a channel to address issues as they come up.

Q So, "on the spot" meant "on the spot after an investigation"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think in any workplace and one where -- like the White House, you need to have a process and a

process through which employees can present any concerns they have, any allegations they have, and that there's a process that those can be seen through. And that's exactly what happened in this case.

Q On Ukraine, if you could explain to ordinary Americans who find the domestic politics of other countries very mystifying, why couldn't Chancellor Scholz say the words "Nord Stream pipeline"? He was asked numerous times, not just in the press conference yesterday, but also later in interviews. Why? Why can't spit out the words that President Biden said?

MS. PSAKI: Well, here's what I can speak for, which is the U.S. government, of course, and President Biden and our commitment and agreement that if Russia invades, Nord Stream 2 will not move forward. It is still not operational at this point in time.

Q Right. We know your position. I'm just asking if you can give us any insights into why Germany can't say that.

MS. PSAKI: I -- you are a very industrious reporter, Mara, and I'm sure you can pose that question to the Germans as well. But I can only speak for our government, and I can -- you heard the President say and reiterate many times yesterday how, you know, strong our relationship and our alliance is; how Germany is one of the most important alliances -- allies we have in the world; how we have full confidence and faith in their commitment to implementing a strong outcome -- or strong consequences should Russia invade.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. If I heard you correctly, earlier you were saying that President Biden was not involved in directly seeking Dr. Lander's resignation. But can you clarify if he accepted the resignation because of the investigation or because of the public outcry around it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, if you go back to the letter that Dr. Lander submitted -- this is very small type; I don't know if this means I'm getting older -- but, you know, what he conveyed in that letter was that he did not feel that it was possible to continue effectively in his role. He conveyed that, and he felt -- and he also conveyed that he felt the office -- the work of his office was too important.

And the President -- that was -- was that the result of the public response or the response of his team? You'd have to ask Dr. Lander that question. But the President accepted the resignation letter he submitted last night.

Q But it sounds like the investigation was completed in December. So --

MS. PSAKI: Actually, it was it was completed -- the full process was completed at the very end of January.

Q And so, why was it -- why did it not occur that there was any repercussions until after it became public?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there was an entire process that was -- went -- was underway, including a meeting with Dr. Lander conveying exactly what steps he would take, would be required to take, that he would be expected to be compliant with those requirements, and that his actions were absolutely unacceptable and would not be tolerated in this White House, and we wanted to prevent them from happening again.

So that process had under -- had been undergone. It's standard. And, of course, these things are reported sometimes, as they were -- but to keep HR processes private, in part because you're protecting the range of officials who came forward. And that is -- that is the standard process. Sometimes officials speak publicly, as they did in this case, and that's their prerogative.

Q And then, can you say when the President learned of the internal investigation and if he was briefed on it before this became a more public subject yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: He was made aware in advance of the -- after the conclusion of the investigation. But beyond that, I don't have any updates on the timeline.

Q Okay. And just one more. A few weeks ago, the President had talked about in his press conference about the desire to get out of Washington.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Since then --

MS. PSAKI: He's still trying. He's trying to get on that plane.

Q That's my question, I guess. He's had a trip to Pittsburgh.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q He's had a trip to New York. As you alluded earlier, he's going to Virginia. Is this the robust kind of schedule that he's looking for? Or is there something that's keeping him in Washington? Can you talk a little bit?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there are a couple things that, obviously, every president juggles, and including this president is juggling right now. If he could spend every day on the road, he probably would do that. And, you know, any -- when you're traveling as president, you know, the world comes with you a bit.

But there's certainly an open Supreme Court spot that he needs to fill and he takes very seriously. He wants to approach that very thorough -- with a thorough approach.

Of course, he's getting regular updates on Russia, Ukraine, from his -- Russia and Ukraine and the buildup of troops on the border.

So there are a number of, of course, important priorities that, at times, can keep a president here and are -- maybe are keeping the President here.

However, I think we'll be getting out there more; he'll be getting out there more in the country. Otherwise, maybe he'll fire one of us -- I don't know. But he's eager to do that. He wants to be out in the country.

And I think as we get to the period of time post State of the Union, I think you'll see more of that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just a quick follow-up on Kelly. Has the President spoken with Congressman Clyburn about his advocacy that has been very prominent for Judge J. Michelle Childs for the Supreme Court?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any updates on specific members he's engaged with beyond the ones I've -- we've read out or you've seen publicly, though I would say members of our Supreme Court team -- you're very familiar with -- have been engaged with a range of members, including Mr. Clyburn.

Q Okay. And back on Ukraine: What was the President's response to this U.S. assessment that a Russian invasion of Ukraine could kill 25- to 50,000 civilians and cause a humanitarian crisis that would end up with 5 million refugees?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say we're -- I'm not going to get into intelligence assessments from here, obviously. But we, certainly, prepare for a range of contingencies and work and engage with our European partners and counterparts to

prepare for them. And that relates to the potential for refugees; it relates to the potential for natural gas or oil shortages.

And those are part of the discussions the President is a part of, our Secretary of State is a part of, and that is why we are doing so much engagement at this point.

Q On Nord Stream 2: The President was pretty confident yesterday that it would not go forward if Russia invaded Ukraine, even though the German Chancellor would not say that. So, I guess, logistically speaking, how would the President ensure that that would not happen?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to get into more specifics from here. But I can assure you that that is a commitment and one we will deliver on.

Q But would that include sanctions on anyone or any company that does business with the pipeline? What does that look like?

MS. PSAKI: I understand why you're asking, I just don't have more details I can outline from here at this point.

Q In hindsight, does he regret waving sanctions on the company behind Nord Stream 2, as the administration did last year?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Nord Stream 2 is not operational at this point in time.

Q But does he --

MS. PSAKI: And it remains a point of leverage.

Q But it could quickly become operational.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's not -- the German regulators have not approved it. So, it's not operational. It hasn't been. So, I don't think we're looking in the rearview mirror; I think we're looking at it as a point of leverage with the Russians.

Q But I guess the question is that Putin has been quite aggressive in his stance with Ukraine. He's amassed over 100,000 troops on their border. He clearly is seeking to use leverage over them. So why let the pipeline go forward at all, regardless of invasion, given the tactics that he's been using?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would say that we -- there's a disagreement -- I'm not sure this is what you're asking, but -- between us and some in Congress who suggest that sanctioning Nord Stream 2 now would be effective. We don't agree. We believe that it is a point of leverage and that making clear it will not proceed if Russia invades is a point of leverage. And that's why we're proceeding on the path we are. We don't think that approach would work.

Go ahead.

Q There's been some reporting that President Biden has kind of refused to mention Tesla when he's talking about electric vehicles. There's kind of been some reporting around that.

Today, he mentioned Tesla when he was talking about electric vehicles. Anything noteworthy there? Any change in how he approaches this?

MS. PSAKI: I would just note: I think we all know that Tesla is a major producer of electric vehicles; I think that's fair to say, factually. And, certainly, the electric vehicle industry is one that we feel is a huge opportunity for the United States to move towards our clean energy goals and objectives, and a range of auto- -- of automobile makers are a part of the effort.

Q Sure. The House version of the China competition bill includes a measure that would require a broad screening process of outbound international investments into China -- not in the Senate one. Does the White House support that particular measure? I know National Security Advisor Sullivan has discussed that in general.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, right now, as you know, they're in conference, or they're discussing. And we are looking at the impact of outbound U.S. investment flows that could circumvent the spirit of export controls or otherwise enhance the technological capacity of our competitors, which is something I think our National Security Advisor has touched on, in ways that would harm our national security, which we would certainly be concerned by. We are in touch with Congress about the proposal and also our efforts broadly in this regard. But again, we're going to keep working that through Congress, and that's with leaders there. And that's where the focus is at, at this point.

Q Last question. Does the climate of high oil gas prices influence how the White House, the administration approaches sanctions on Iran and Venezuela with an eye at getting more supplies into the market?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me just outline for you -- and I know -- I don't know if Edward is here. Oh, there you are. He asked me this question yesterday, and I just wanted more detail, so I'm just coming back to it a little bit.

You know, the President is focused on doing everything we can to address the squeeze that we know gas prices can have on families. As he has said, supply of oil around the world should be keeping up with the demand as we're exiting the pandemic.

So, there's a couple of areas that we are focused on, and you're familiar with them, but let me just outline them from here.

We're engaging, one, internationally, both with oil-producing and oil-consuming countries. These discussions are happening right now; they're ongoing. With oil-producing countries, we're talking about prod- -- proposed production increases. With oil-consuming countries, we're talking about releases from strategic reserves. Of course, we're not going to outline every conversation, but that's largely how we're approaching it.

Two, the President is going to continue to use every tool at his disposal to reduce prices. We've already announced a historic release from the strategic petroleum reserve last fall 40 -- of 50 million barrels. Forty million barrels of those barrels are contracted for delivery, including a num- -- thirteen million that we just released in January.

So, as you -- this is not -- it wasn't that 50 million released at once; they're continuing to be released. We saw a drop in prices, which fell more than 10 cents a gallon in the course of the holiday season after some of that initial release. And all options remain on the table.

Third, we're focused on protecting consumers from abuse. We know markets have been volatile. Often, firms exploit market volatility to extract excess profits from consumers.

We're looking at every legal and regulatory authority we have available to ensure consumers are protected. That means responding to any sign of manipulation in the oil commodities markets or gauging [gouging] at the pump.

So, we are looking at it. We are approaching it through all of those forums. And the President's overarching view on prices, of course, is that he wants to address the squeeze on consumers; is that nobody -- now that we -- that even with barrels -- even with those barrels released, prices are rising, and that's because supply is not keeping up with the demand. We know that is the issue -- the core issue.

Nobody should hold back supply at the expense of the American consumer, particularly as the recovery from the pandemic continues, and oil producers around the world have the capacity to produce at levels that match demand and reduce the high prices. That is what we are going to continue to convey.

Q Just one real quick point of clarification?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You announced that the -- the cooperative releases are ready. And in a statement, you suggested that maybe those conversations are ongoing.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Should we assume then there may be future cooperative releases then?

MS. PSAKI: All options remain on the table, but I don't have anything to preview at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, Jen, following up on the trucker question from earlier. Inspired by the so-called "Freedom Convoy" in Canada, a group of U.S. truckers say they're planning a similar protest in Washington, D.C., possibly for March 1st, to oppose COVID vaccine mandates. That date is obviously -- would coincide with President Biden's State of the Union Address.

As you know, the trucker convoy in Ottawa has been very disruptive and paralyzed parts of the city's downtown. Is the administration making preparations to be ready for an upcoming "Freedom Convoy" planned for D.C.? And does the White House have any concerns about this similar -- a similar protest happening here in the nation's capital?

MS. PSAKI: And do you mean, by "preparations," like security preparations? Or do you mean --

Q Yeah, security preparations. Or is it on your radar?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check with our team on security preparations. I think what I would just reiterate here is that we know that requirements work. We have not seen a disruption as it relates to requirements to the industry. Where we have seen disruptions has been related to these convoys and protests.

Now, everybody can peacefully protest; we fully support that. But it's important to note where the disruption is occurring.

Q So, on a different topic -- and forgive me if I missed this earlier -- does the White House plan to fill Dr. Lander's position? How quickly would you want to nominate somebody?

MS. PSAKI: We do. I don't have an update on the timing. But certainly, the President is confident in the expertise of the OSTP team and their ability to move forward on key components of the agenda they are responsible for.

Q And my final topic: The White House has recently held kind of local ECD announcements here -- with the Intel project two weeks ago in Ohio, today with the electric vehicle station facility in Lebanon, Tennessee. And so I'm trying to -- I'm curious, what is the federal government's role been in these sorts of announcements versus the governors of these two states, in terms of getting these projects?

MS. PSAKI: So, just so I understand your question, what are we -- in terms of how do we get them the mon- --

Q Yeah, these are traditionally the kind of projects you might expect the governor to announce. Instead, we're seeing them here in the White House. What kind of role is the Biden administration having -- I mean, are you working in tandem with these governors? Or is it --

MS. PSAKI: Typically -- yes, exactly. And if the governor can attend, we typically invite them. And sometimes they've taken place in states. And, you know, I think it's important -- the President believes it's important to lift up the ingenuity of American businesses and companies, and especially companies that are creating jobs here in the United States and putting people back to work.

Go ahead, Katie.

Q Thanks, Jen. As most people in this room have asked about, the President said yesterday that he would shut down Nord Stream 2 if there was a military invasion. He kind of defined it traditionally as "tanks on the ground."

So if Putin attacks but doesn't send massive forces over the border, perhaps through cyberattacks or through paramilitary forces, does the President feel the Western alliance could still present a united front, given his conversation with the Chancellor yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, we have a range of contingency. I certainly understand your question, but I don't have anything more to detail here. Obviously, we don't think Nord Stream 2 is a good deal or a good project; we've been very clear about that.

And I think, right now, what we're focused on is what we think the right diplomatic tactic is, as it relates to deterrence, which is part of approach. And that includes making clear that Nord Stream 2 will not proceed, given, of course, President Putin and the Russians want it to proceed.

But we have a range of contingencies should Putin invade, should he take other additional steps, and we're going to continue to work to be lockstep with our partners.

Q Just to clarify: So, if it's a cyberattack or paramilitary or anything besides tanks, would he pull -- well, I know it's not operational, but would he stop Nord Stream from going forward?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I don't have anything more to update you on. We have a range of contingencies, depending on -- if any steps that President Putin takes.

Q And then would he still keep the science advisor post -- would that still be Cabinet level? I know that was a first --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- with him. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President said yesterday he believes President Putin still has a diplomatic off ramp -- that de-escalation is still possible. But last month at the press conference, less than three weeks ago, the President said, about Putin, "My guess is he will move in. He has to do something." Does he no longer believe that President Putin has to do something? And if that's the case, what has changed in those couple of weeks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I mean, he either has to de-escalate or invade. Obviously, our preference is that he de-escalates. So, I'm not sure -- I think that's what the President likely meant in the time. We still -- we didn't at the time, nor do we now have an assessment of him making a decision. Our -- and we can't control what Russia will do next.

What we can do is we can prepare. And we can prepare for a range of contingencies, and we can stay coordinated with our partners and Allies. And that's what our focus has been.

Q You mentioned at the top that the Thursday event in Virginia is prescription drugs. Can you tell us more about that?

Where he's going? Why Virginia? And will we have an announcement on prescription drugs?

MS. PSAKI: I expect we'll have more tomorrow as we get a little bit closer, but he's going outside of Richmond to Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger's district. I think she's -- she will be at the event as well, as I understand it. And certainly talking about the need to -- to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, something that is bearing a lot of weight on seniors, on families across the country. It's something that is still a initiative -- a priority that we still have more work to get done.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. On that Thursday trip, has the President invited the Republican Governor of Virginia to join him?

MS. PSAKI: Let me check and see if we have more details on the specifics. It's still all final -- getting finalized. And I expect we'll have more as we get closer to tomorrow, but I'll see if we have any more we can get you after the briefing.

Q And if so, would he plan to talk to him about their, sort of, differences in opinion on masking at schools?

MS. PSAKI: Let me just see who's been invited to the event and who's planning to attend. And we'll get you more details from there.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Another one on Ukraine. Yesterday, after meeting Putin, President Macron said that one of the options for Ukraine would be to get a status like the one Finland had during the Cold War -- a status of strict neutrality. Is that also an action the President would consider?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I saw that President Macron said this morning that was not a formulation he used and that ending NATO's "open door policy" would be a problem. We agree with that. And as we've said previously, we're committed to the right of sovereign nations to make their own decisions about their security.

Q And maybe -- we see there is a very intense diplomatic battle going on around Moscow. And does the President believe that it is really helpful or maybe that it creates, like, uncertainties around the situation and could ultimately benefit the Russians?

MS. PSAKI: You mean President Putin engaging in diplomatic conversations?

Q In a lot of diplomatic conversations. And after every encounter, there is a press conference and there are new questions about "are the Allies really aligned?" Is there maybe concern that there is maybe too much going on?

MS. PSAKI: I think what you hear from the Allies time and time again is that we are aligned and we -- there will be severe consequences. And that does not mean that consequences will be identical from every country. It means we agree that invading Ukraine, a sovereign country, is -- violates global norms. And we have worked hard, through more than 200 engagements, to -- it doesn't happen by accident, I guess is my point -- to ensure that we remain coordinated and closely working together.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Two topics. The first one is going to be the truckers and then Russia, but first the Canadian -- the movement in Canada -- the truckers. So, the Ottawa mayor has asked for 1,800 additional police officers to quell what he called the "insurrection." You know that it's been a rallying cry for the far right -- this movement. And Prime Minister Trudeau yesterday accused the protestors to -- of trying to blockade Canada's economy and democracy. Does the White House share this perspective on the movement?

MS. PSAKI: That's not how we've described it.

Q Do you -- you said yesterday, just again, that the CBP was not impacted by the movement at the moment. Now with what happened at the bridge, it has had an impact. Isn't that -- considering that now trade is concerned, shouldn't the White House give more emphasis -- put more emphasis on what's going on on the other side of the border?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we've ever deemphasized. I just think I was trying to convey that while there was kind of a view by some that it was related to vaccine requirements, it wasn't; it was related to congestion created by the protests, which I think is for -- important for people to understand.

In terms of what's being done, of course we're closely engaged. The Department of Homeland Security would be the right entity to talk to.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Just the last question on Russia. Sorry.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The Russian President yesterday with Emmanuel Macron commented, and I quote, "They're trying" -- "they" being the West, the U.S., NATO -- "trying to calm us down with assurances that NATO is a peaceful and defensive organization." But then he cited Iraq, Libya, Belgrade as counterexamples. What do you say to that?

MS. PSAKI: NATO has always been a defensive alliance. It is Russia that is --

Q In Libya --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish my answer.

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: It is Russia that is building up tens of thousands of troops -- troops at the border, not NATO. We are working to plus-up support for our partners. They have the ability to deescalate, and we certainly hope they do that.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, Jen. This afternoon, the White House issued a statement criticizing Florida legislation that would restrict classroom discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity. It's relatively rare for the White House to weigh in on state-level legislation. So can you speak about the decision to weigh in on this particular bill and why this issue rose to the level that the White House wanted to put something out there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, for those of you who weren't following this -- maybe all of you were -- but let me first say that every parent, as one myself too, hopes that our leaders will ensure their children's safety, protection, and freedom. And today, conservative politicians in Florida rejected those basic values by advancing legislation that is designed to target and attack the kids who need the support -- support the most: kids from the LGBTQI+ community who are already vulnerable to bullying -- and we've seen that in study after study -- and violence, just for being themselves and just for being who they are.

Make no mistake: This is not an isolated action in Florida. Across the country, we're seeing Republican leaders taking

action to regulate what students can or cannot read, what they can or cannot learn, and most troubling, who they can or cannot be. This is who these kids are. And these -- these legislators are trying to make it harder for them to be who they are.

So, we felt it was important to speak out against this action and speak really -- and felt it was important to do that today.

Go ahead.

Q What's the White House reaction to the Supreme Court, late yesterday, restoring an Alabama voting map that a lower court ruled was discriminatory?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. This is a very important story. So I would say that we need to make sure, as you've heard the President say, that our sacred voting rights are fully protected. We should be moving forward, not backward. That is always the view of the President, the Vice President, and this White House.

That means ensuring fair election maps that protect the rights of Black voters to have an equitable and meaningful opportunity to elect candidates of their choice as the Voting Rights Act and Supreme Court precedent have guaranteed for decades.

It is deeply disturbing to us that the Supreme Court gave Alabama a free pass to use a map that -- in 2022 -- that three federal judges found to discriminate against Black voters. This is exactly what the Voting Rights Act is in place to prevent and what -- and one of the reasons it's so important to pass a reauthorization into law. Without -- and they did this without the Supreme Court finding any reason to doubt that conclusion. That is concerning to us.

And certainly protecting people's rights -- not taking steps backward -- is our objective.

Q The administration, as you know, through the Justice Department took legal action against Texas.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q They challenged those maps perceived as being discriminatory. Given that voting rights legislation here in Washington has basically been put on pause for a number of reasons, has the White House considered any sort of unilateral or preemptive actions against states that might try to take similar steps as Texas and Alabama did?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I understand the question. I would point you to the Department of Justice. As you know, but for others, we're not a party to this lawsuit, but I would point you to the Department of Justice.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, thanks. A couple on Dr. Lander. I want to be precise, first, I guess on his resignation, because you said it became clear to him yesterday. Was -- did the President or anybody else in the White House encourage him to resign, or was this 100 percent totally voluntary?

MS. PSAKI: This was a decision made by Dr. Lander.

Q Okay. And what does it say to the staff, I guess, in the administration that the President appeared happy to keep him in his role until essentially this became public and became untenable, at least in Dr. Lander's mind? What does that say to the staff?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say that's an accurate depiction of how the President feels or we feel. And so, I appreciate the opportunity to restate that Dr. Lander's behavior was not acceptable at all, and the President did not view it as acceptable either.

There was a full process that was undergone; that was an implementation of the policies put in place last spring -- the Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy. That included a thorough investigation. It included a meeting of Dr. Lander with individual -- senior officials from the White House team. And it included specific steps he had to take to prevent this from happening ever again.

And I think what people should be assured of in the White House is that the President is committed to maintaining a healthy work environment, to creating a channel also to address any issues that come up, and that channel was created through this policy last May.

Q And lastly, are there any other senior White House staff or Cabinet members who have been subject to investigations like this? And can the White House commit to making them public in the future, given that it was a public scrutiny here that ended up in a resignation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I certainly understand the question, and we want to create an environment here that's safe and people feel comfortable and they also the know the channel where they can express concerns as they have them.

But this is an HR process, and an internal process because of that, and we typically keep those processes private to respect the individuals -- the privacy of the individuals who come forward, if individuals come forward. And that's how we would proceed moving forward.

Q So, you can't say "yes" or "no" whether there are other investigations similar to this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, those are private processes and HR processes. And if individuals choose to speak publicly, that, of course, is their prerogative. But as is true of any HR process in any company, we would certainly keep that process private as a policy.

Q Is there any reevaluation of the workplace policies and goals here, given this -- given everything that's happened, I guess, here? Is there any feeling needing to go back and revisit whether those are effective and not effective?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, again, our objective is to prevent this behavior -- unacceptable behavior from ever happening again.

And the Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy, which was implemented in this case, provides a channel for any individual to come forward if they have concerns, where their concerns can be addresses through a thorough process. And hopefully people know that. And it is part of an effort to maintain a healthy work environment.

Go ahead.

Q Hey. Thanks, Jen. Immigration reform seems like a nonstarter in the current Congress. But today, freshman Republican Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar presented an immigration reform bill that would legalize millions of undocumented. And she's calling it a starting point. She's got Republican backing. Will the President agree to invite her to the White House, listen to her ideas and incorporate them somehow?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President proposed an immigration bill on his first day in office, and certainly he's eager to work with anybody who wants to put in place compr- -- immigration reform policies that would create a safer system, a more effective system, a more humane system at the border. I'm not familiar with all of the specific details, but certainly we engage with a range of members about their policies.

Let me just do one last one here. Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask for an update on how many COVID-19 rapid tests you've received from the President's pledge to provide free testing

pledge to provide free testing.

MS. PSAKI: Have been sent out?

Q Received to you and then sent out to Americans.

MS. PSAKI: Oh. Sure. I know there's a COVID briefing, I think tomorrow or Thursday. Let me check with them and see. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I can see if they're in a position to provide an update on that.

Okay, everyone.

Q On the Olympics --

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry. I think we've got to wrap up, but more tomorrow. Let's do this again.

Q Jen, can you finally take a question on Africa?

MS. PSAKI: I'm often answering questions on Africa. I'm happy to do some more tomorrow.

Q We didn't (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I'll look forward to talking to all of you tomorrow. Thanks, everyone.

Q Thank you.

3:40 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Senior Officials from the Federal Republic of Nigeria
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 9, 2022 8:11 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 9, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Senior Officials from the Federal Republic of Nigeria

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met yesterday with Nigerian Presidential Chief of Staff Professor Ibrahim Gambari and Nigerian National Security Advisor Babagana Monguno at the White House. Mr. Sullivan affirmed the Administration's commitment to collaborate with Nigeria to tackle shared global challenges, including ending the COVID-19 pandemic, building a more inclusive global economy, and combatting the climate crisis. The leaders discussed shared concerns about democratic backsliding and political instability in West Africa and the importance of ongoing efforts by the Economic Community of West African States to reverse military seizures of power and restore constitutional order in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali. Mr. Sullivan conveyed U.S. support for Nigeria's important preparations to hold free and fair elections in 2023 and counter violent extremists and terrorist groups.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout from NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Meeting with Israeli National Security Advisor Eyal Hulata
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 10, 2022 4:00 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2022

Readout from NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Meeting with Israeli National Security Advisor Eyal Hulata

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan hosted Israeli National Security Advisor Dr. Eyal Hulata at the White House on Feb. 9 to consult on a range of global and issues of mutual concern. They underscored their shared determination to address security challenges impacting the Middle East, including the threats posed by Iran and its proxies. Mr. Sullivan reiterated President Biden's unwavering support to Israel's security and to ensuring Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon. The National Security Advisors also exchanged views on security challenges outside the Middle East, including the potential for further Russian aggression against Ukraine. They discussed as well ways to deepen U.S.-Israeli cooperation on science and innovation. Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Hulata agreed to maintain the close coordination between their interagency teams on a range of global and regional security challenges.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against Saudi Arabia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 10, 2022 11:32 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against Saudi Arabia

The United States strongly condemns today's terrorist attack against Abha in Saudi Arabia, which injured at least a dozen innocent civilians. The Houthis have claimed responsibility for this attack, and we will work with our Saudi and international partners to hold them accountable. As the President told His Majesty King Salman yesterday, we are committed to supporting Saudi Arabia in the defense of its people and territory from these attacks. America will have the backs of our friends in the region.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement on National Security Advisor Sullivan's Meeting with Karin Wallensteen, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister of Sweden
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 11, 2022 6:08 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2022

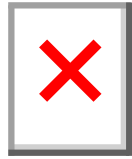
Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Karin Wallensteen, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister of Sweden

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Karin Wallensteen, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister of Sweden. They discussed their shared concerns about Russia's continued build-up of military forces around Ukraine, reaffirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reviewed transatlantic efforts to coordinate diplomacy and deterrence efforts. In addition, they discussed the close defense partnership between the United States and Sweden. They agreed on the importance of boosting our bilateral cooperation in promoting democracy and human rights worldwide as well as addressing climate change, global health, and health security.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, February 11, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 11, 2022 6:15 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, February 11, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:00 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone.

Q Happy Friday.

MS. PSAKI: Happy Friday. So, we are joined by our National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, today. He will give a brief update and then take some questions from all of you.

And with that, I will turn it over to Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Good afternoon. Thanks, everybody, for giving me the opportunity to be here. I'd like to make a few comments on the situation in Russia and Ukraine, and then I'd be happy to take your questions.

We continue to see signs of Russian escalation, including new forces arriving at the Ukrainian border.

As we've said before, we are in the window when an invasion could begin at any time should Vladimir Putin decide to order it. I will not comment on the details of our intelligence information. But I do want to be clear: It could begin during the Olympics, despite a lot of speculation that it would only happen after the Olympics.

As we've said before, we are ready either way. We are ready to continue results-oriented diplomacy that addresses the security concerns of the United States, Russia, and Europe consistent with our values and the principle of reciprocity.

We have continued to make that clear to Russia in close coordination with our European allies and partners.

We are also ready to respond decisively, alongside those allies and partners, should Russia choose to take military action. Our response would include severe economic sanctions, with similar packages imposed by the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries. It would also include changes to NATO and American force posture along the eastern flank of NATO. And it would include continued support to Ukraine.

The President held a secure video conference today with key allies and partners to coordinate our approach to this crisis. The participants were the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Poland, Romania, the Secretary General of NATO, and the presidents of the European Union.

We have achieved a remarkable level of unity and common purpose -- from the broad strategy, down to technical details.

If Russia proceeds, its long-term power and influence will be diminished, not enhanced, by an invasion. It will face a more determined transatlantic community. It will have to make more concessions to China. It will face massive pressure on its economy and export controls that will erode its defense industrial base. And it will face a wave of condemnation from around the world.

If, on the other hand, Russia truly seeks a diplomatic outcome, it should not only say so, it should pursue that diplomatic outcome.

We are prepared to do that. We have put concrete proposals on the table. They are now out there for the world to see. We're prepared to engage on them and to discuss the principles and parameters of European security with our European partners and with Russia.

Whatever happens next, the West is more united than it's been in years. NATO has been strengthened. The Alliance is more cohesive, more purposeful, more dynamic than at in any time in recent memory.

In terms of immediate next steps, President Biden and his team will remain in close contact with our allies and partners to coordinate both on the potential for diplomacy and on any response that is necessary should Putin decide to order military action.

We are continuing to reduce the size of our embassy footprint in Kyiv.

And I want to take a moment to echo what both President Biden and Secretary Blinken have already said: We encourage all American citizens who remain in Ukraine to depart immediately.

We want to be crystal-clear on this point: Any American in Ukraine should leave as soon as possible, and in any event, in the next 24 to 48 hours.

We obviously cannot predict the future. We don't know exactly what is going to happen. But the risk is now high enough and the threat is now immediate enough that this is what prudence demands.

If you stay, you are assuming risk with no guarantee that there will be any other opportunity to leave and no prospect of a U.S. military evacuation in the event of a Russian invasion.

If a Russian attack on Ukraine proceeds, it is likely to begin with aerial bombing and missile attacks that could, obviously, kill civilians without regard to their nationality. A subsequent ground invasion would involve the onslaught of a massive force.

With virtually no notice, communications to arrange a departure could be severed and commercial transit halted. No one would be able to count on air or rail or road departures once military action got underway.

Now, again, I'm not standing here and saying what is going to happen or not happen. I'm only standing here to say that the risk is now high enough and the threat is immediate enough that prudence demands that is the time to leave now while commercial options and commercial rail and air service exist, while the roads are open.

The President will not be putting the lives of our men and women in uniform at risk by sending them into a warzone to rescue people who could have left now but chose not to. So, we are asking people to make the responsible choice.

With that, I'm happy to take your questions.

Q Jake?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q Thanks, Jake. I know you don't want to get into the intelligence, but can you give us any sense what has changed over the past 24 or 48 hours to lead to your new level of concern?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, first, I would say: When I appeared on the Sunday shows last weekend, I made the point that we were in the window, that Russian military action could begin any day now. And that remains true. It could begin any day now. And it could occur before the Olympics have ended.

I'm not going to get into intelligence information. But if you look at the disposition of forces in both Belarus and in Russia -- on the other side of the Ukrainian border, from the north, from the east -- the Russians are in a position to be able to mount a major military action in Ukraine any day now. And for that reason, we believe that it is important for us to communicate to our allies and partners, to the Ukrainians, and to the American citizens who are still there.

I want to be crystal-clear though: We are not saying that a decision has been taken -- a final decision has been taken by President Putin. What we are saying is that we have a sufficient level of concern, based on what we are seeing on the ground and what our intelligence analysts have picked up, that we are sending this clear message. And it remains a message that we have now been sending for some time. And it is -- yes, it is an urgent message because we are in an urgent situation.

Q But just to clarify: So you now believe that Russia has all the forces it needs to mount a full-scale invasion of Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: What I'm saying is that Russia has all the forces it needs to conduct a major military action. I'm not sure exactly what you mean by, quote, "full-scale invasion," but Russia could choose, in very short order, to commence a major military action against Ukraine.

Yes?

Q Has NATO told the President that it will call up the NATO Response Force of Americans who have been put on that short leash? And is the President prepared to send additional unilateral forces to our partners in the border region of Ukraine?

And is it your judgment and the judgment of U.S. intelligence and the U.S. government that Putin is behaving as a rational actor in his judgments at this point?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, on the question of the President authorizing more unilateral U.S. forces to Europe: He's been clear all along that he is open to doing so as circumstances warrant.

But I want to be very clear about something: These deployments of U.S. service members to Poland, to Romania, to Germany -- these are not soldiers who are being sent to go fight Russia in Ukraine. They are not going to war in Ukraine. They are not going to war with Russia. They are going to defend NATO territory, consistent with our Article 5 obligation. They are defensive deployments. They are non-escalatory. They are meant to reinforce, reassure, and deter aggression against NATO territory.

In terms of the U.S. forces that have been put on heightened readiness to be deployed in the event of a NATO decision to deploy them: The President had the chance, as part of the discussion today, to hear from the Secretary General. No decisions have been taken in that regard, but those forces stand by should a decision be taken by the North Atlantic Council to call up the NATO Response Force and a request comes in for American forces to be a part of that.

Finally, I can't get inside the head of President Putin. I'm not going to speculate as to his motivations, his intentions, or, at this point, his decisions. All I will say is that we are ready either way.

If President Putin wants to engage in diplomacy, we are prepared to engage in diplomacy. We would like to find a diplomatic path forward, and we've sketched out the parameters and principles for that.

If President Putin chooses to move forward, we will work in lockstep with our allies and partners to respond decisively.

Yeah.

Q Thanks, Jake. It sounds like you're saying that the assessment previously -- that Putin has not yet made a decision -- still stands. So, I guess based on that, is it your estimate that it's more likely that an invasion could happen now than previously believed?

MR. SULLIVAN: Look, it's hard to assign percentage probabilities to any of this. We have to think about the range of scenarios that we confront, and it's our job to be ready for all of them.

So, what I will say is that the way that he has built up his forces and put them in place, along with the other indicators that we have collected through intelligence, makes it clear to us that there is a very distinct possibility that Russia will choose to act militarily, and there is reason to believe that that could happen on a reasonably swift timeframe.

Now, we can't pinpoint the day at this point, and we can't pinpoint the hour, but what we can say is that there is a credible prospect that a Russian military action would take place even before the end of the Olympics.

Q In the warning that you just delivered to Americans who are in Ukraine, saying that they should get out now while they still can, do you have a picture of how many Americans right now are in Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: I would refer you to the State Department for the specifics on this because --

Q They said they don't know.

MR. SULLIVAN: -- I don't want to do it off the top of my head. There is basically two categories: There are those who have registered with the embassy and those who have not registered with the embassy. In the first category, obviously, they have a number, although some of those folks have already left and didn't deregister. In the second category, we don't know because, of course, no American is obligated or required.

So, you can't fix a perfect number. But they're the ones who are best positioned to be able to explain what our current picture is of American citizens in Ukraine.

What I can do is stand before the world media and send a very clear message to all Americans. And to any American who's

in Ukraine right now who needs help -- needs financial help or needs logistical help to take advantage of a commercial option to get out: Please call the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv because we stand ready to provide that help.

Yes.

Q Thanks, Jake. I got two quick questions. One, are you looking at this being some kind of attack on Kyiv, on the Donbas, on another region? Do you have any sense of that?

And then, what is the level of confidence that the intelligence community has in what they're hearing about this plan, especially about the potential for it to come before the end of the Olympics?

MR. SULLIVAN: When you say -- I'm sorry, can you repeat the second question?

Q Just around the confidence that the intelligence world has around whether this will happen before the Olympics.

MR. SULLIVAN: The intelligence community has sufficient confidence that I can stand before you today and say what I have said, which is that there is a distinct possibility that Vladimir Putin would order a military action and invasion of Ukraine in this window, in this time period, and that could include the time period before February 20th, before the Beijing Olympics have been completed.

And so, they believe that that -- everything I have just said is well-grounded in both what they are seeing on the ground and what they are picking up through all of their various sources.

Now, to your question about what type of action it would be: We've been clear that it could take a range of different forms. But I want to be equally clear that one of those forms is a rapid assault on the city of Kyiv. That is a possible line of attack, course of action that the Russian forces could choose to take. They could also choose to move in other parts of Ukraine as well.

The last point that I would make -- and I know this has been the subject of a fair amount of back-and-forth between the administration and the press over the course of the past week: We are firmly convinced that the Russians, should they decide to move forward with an invasion, are looking hard at the creation of a pretext -- a false-flag operation -- something that they generate and try to blame on the Ukrainians as a trigger for military action.

And we are calling that out publicly because we do believe that if Russia chooses to do that, they should be held to account; the world should not believe that a false-flag operation that they conducted is a legitimate *casus belli* for going into Ukraine.

Yes.

Q Thanks. Thanks, Jake. You mentioned that you do not want to say that Putin has made a decision. But can -- does the United States believe that the President -- pardon me, that President Putin has made a decision? Because PBS NewsHour just reported a little bit ago that the United States does believe that Putin has made a decision and has also communicated that decision to the Russian military. Is that accurate?

MR. SULLIVAN: The report that you just referenced, which I have not seen yet, it does not accurately capture what the U.S. government's view is today.

Our view is that we do not believe he has made any kind of final decision -- or we don't know that he has made any final decision. And we have not communicated that to anybody.

Yes.

Q To follow up on that -- it's my colleague, Nick Schifrin, who's doing that reporting. And he's citing three Western and

defense officials who say the U.S. does believe that Putin has made up his mind, has communicated that to the military, and that they've been shown intelligence on that. You're saying that's not true?

MR. SULLIVAN: What we have communicated to our Allies and partners -- all 30 Allies in NATO, plus a range of other partners -- our latest intelligence information. And it does not include a statement that Vladimir Putin has definitively given an order to proceed with the invasion.

Yes.

Q You haven't been shown anything from your NATO Allies either?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm sorry?

Q You haven't been shown any evidence or briefed on intelligence that speaks to that from NATO Allies?

MR. SULLIVAN: We have not seen anything come to us that says a final decision has been taken, the go order has been given.

What I will say -- and the reason I'm up here talking in the way I am to American citizens, the reason we are taking the various actions we're taking, the reason the President convened our closest Allies and partners from across the NATO Alliance and the European Union is because we believe he very well may give the final go order. That is a very distinct possibility. But we are not standing here before you today and say, "The order has been given. The invasion is on."

It may well happen. It may well happen soon. But we are not saying -- I think the way that you've just characterized it -- and I have not seen this PBS report yet, but as you've characterized it, that does not capture the communication that we are making to our NATO Allies, nor what we understand internally.

Q Jake --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q Given the risk that you've laid out, the fact that you're not 100 percent certain that Putin has made a decision yet -- we have seen other world leaders meeting with Putin. Has there been any more thought to President Biden engaging with him directly?

MR. SULLIVAN: I would expect that President Biden will engage by telephone with President Putin, but I don't have anything to announce for you on that right now.

Yes.

Q And just -- because this is getting so close now and the concern that you're weighing towards the American people, is there a need to provide some underlying evidence of just what you're seeing that shows Americans -- this is a country that went through Iraq -- and concerns about what the intelligence is showing? Does the administration see a need to just provide underlying intelligence?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, let me just start with a fundamental distinction between the situation in Iraq and the situation today.

In the situation in Iraq, intelligence was used and deployed from this very podium to start a war. We are trying to stop a war, to prevent a war, to avert a war. And all we can do is come here before you in good faith and share everything that we know to the best of our ability, while protecting sources and methods so we continue to get the access to intelligence we need.

But there's another big difference between what happened in 2003 and what's happening in 2022, and that is -- in that case, it was information about intentions, about a hidden thing, stuff that couldn't be seen. Today, we are talking about more than 100,000 Russian troops amassed along the Ukrainian border, with every capacity out there in the open for people to see. It's all over social media. It's all over your news sites.

So you can believe your own eyes that the Russians have put in place the capabilities to conduct a massive military operation against Ukraine, should they choose to do so.

And then, finally, I would just say: If you look at the course of the past few months, as we have said, we predict there will be a buildup of this kind. Our information is telling us that the Russians are likely to move in these ways. Thus far -- in November, in December, in January -- that has borne out.

So I think when you take all of that together, we put forward a credible case. But it's not my job to stand up here and convince any of you of anything. It's your job to ask the questions and do what you can do. All I can do is, based on the best information I have available -- that I can share, that the President can share, the Secretary of State can share -- put that out there in close consultation with our Allies and partners. That's what we've done.

Yes.

Q At what point, Jake, would you expect the country would hear directly from the President on this and the risk to world order of Vladimir Putin rolling tanks or bombing a foreign capital?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, first, the country has heard from the President directly on the Ukraine subject many times over the course of the past three months, and they will continue to.

So it's not like President Biden has been silent on this question. He has been very vocal on it. He has spoken to every aspect of it. He has read out his calls on it -- with world leaders, his meetings, et cetera. But he will continue to speak directly to the American people as we watch the situation unfold.

Q But no plans for any kind of address to the nation from the Oval Office? No kind of speech specifically about this issue with prepared remarks?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't have anything to announce in terms of a speech or prepared remarks at this point.

Yeah.

Q Thank you so much. So, you and other administration officials have been quite transparent in describing the strategy towards Ukraine to us, the press. Do you believe that that strategy is actually helping to reduce tensions? Or do you feel that that may be part of the reason why it's boxing Vladimir Putin even further in airing your strategy so publicly like this?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, only one country has amassed more than 100,000 troops on the border of another country with all of the capabilities and capacities to conduct an invasion. That country is Russia; that country is not the United States.

So, the fastest way to deescalate this situation for all involved would be for Russia to choose to deescalate its mobilization of forces.

The United States is responding to the active, sustained buildup of military pressure on Ukraine. We are doing so in lockstep with Allies and partners. And at the same time, we have been extremely forward-leaning in our willingness to engage in diplomacy to address the mutual concerns of Russia, the Europeans, and the United States when it comes to European security.

7 10

Yeah?

Q Thank you so much, Jake. Two questions for you. Next week, the Vice President is going to Germany for the Munich Security Conference. Why isn't President Biden going? Wouldn't it be a good time to engage with his allies in person? Is he doing enough to avoid a war?

And the second question: Next week, the Brazilian president is going to Russia to meet with Vladimir Putin. How does the White House see this visit and the timing of this visit? And do you guys expect anything from the Brazilian president during his meeting?

MR. SULLIVAN: If you simply looked at a catalog of the engagements the President has had with his allies and partners, including the engagement he had today, that catalog alone would be a rebuttal to the proposition that he's not doing enough to rally the West and to offer Russia a credible diplomatic path out of this. That's included phone calls. It's included meetings. It's included video conferences. It's included just countless sustained effort over the course of months, and we will continue with that.

And we're also very proud to have the Vice President representing the American delegation at the Munich Security Conference.

Q But what about the question about the Brazilian president meeting with Vladimir Putin next week?

MR. SULLIVAN: The Brazilian president is obviously, you know, free to conduct his own diplomacy with other countries, including with Russia, and I really don't have anything else to add on it today.

Yes.

Q Thanks, Jake. You mentioned the possibility of an assault on Kyiv, specifically. What is your sense, if Putin does decide to invade Ukraine: Is he looking to invade and take over the entire country or a part, like Crimea in 2014?

And just one follow-up as well. How do you explain the disconnect between the rhetoric that we're hearing -- or the warnings we're hearing from you and other Western countries and what seems to be a playing down of the risk from Ukraine itself?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I won't speak to the decisions that the Ukrainian leadership is making in terms of how they're communicating on this issue. I will only say that we are coordinating extremely closely with them. President Biden has spoken multiple times with President Zelenskyy. I speak nearly every day with senior aides to President Zelenskyy. Secretary Blinken is deeply engaged with both his counterpart and the President in Kyiv.

So we will continue that level of coordination, sharing of information across every dimension of our government. But I can't characterize why it is that they're choosing their course.

I can only say that, based on the information we have, we've chosen to be as transparent as possible with what we see as a significant risk of military action in Ukraine.

And as to your other question, I can't obviously predict what the exact shape or scope of the military action will be. As I said before, it could take a variety of forms. It could be more limited. It could be more expansive. But there are very real possibilities that it will involve the seizure of a significant amount of territory in Ukraine and the seizure of major cities, including the capital city.

(Cross-talk.)

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'm going to let Aamer go.

Q The President's departure is at 2:25.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And so, if people want to leave, they need to leave now?

MS. PSAKI: If people want to leave, they should leave now. We'll proceed, but --

Q Jake is not one of those people. (Laughter.)

Q Jake, you're good.

MS. PSAKI: People that are going to the departure for the President, you should depart now. But Jake will --

Q Jake, real quick. Do you think that -- do you --

Q Jake? Jake? Thank you.

Q -- do think that Russia --

MR. SULLIVAN: Sorry, I'm just going to give people a moment to, I guess, if they have to.

Q Yeah, the pool has to depart.

MR. SULLIVAN: Okay. Yeah, all right.

Q Thank you, Jake. I'll wait until people get out.

MR. SULLIVAN: Okay.

(Members of the press depart the briefing room.)

Q Thank you for taking my question. Did the U.S. wait too long to arm Ukraine, especially with respect to weapons that could defend against an airstrike like you laid out? Did they wait too long to move U.S. forces to NATO countries? And does the President still view the idea of pre-invasion sanctions as a stupid question?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, as to the question of waiting too long on arming the Ukrainians: Over the course of the past year, the United States has provided more than half a billion dollars -- \$650 million -- in defensive assistance to Ukraine. That's more than has ever been given by any President in any year at any time. And that began more than a year ago under the presidency of Joe Biden.

Second, we have made good on the commitment to get those deliveries into the hands of the Ukrainian armed forces. Those are defensive weapons intended to defend Ukraine against aggression. They are not meant for offensive purposes against any country.

So we feel very proud of the contribution and commitment that we have had to helping the Ukrainians be able to defend themselves.

With respect to the question of the deployment of forces to defend NATO territory: Our view is that, in addition to the 80,000 strong U.S. force presence in Europe today, that -- showing in Poland and Romania, in particular, but also through

60,000 strong U.S. force presence in Europe today, that -- showing in Poland and Romania, in particular, but also through the deployment of air squadrons to the Baltics, as we had a few days ago, and other significant moves we've made -- a carrier in the Mediterranean that, for the first time in 30 years, actually flew the NATO flag as well as the American flag -- that we have been forward-leaning and robust in defending and reassuring our NATO Allies.

And you don't have to take it from me. You can talk to the President of Poland or the President of Romania about the satisfaction they have with the fact that the United States has stepped up alongside other NATO Allies to deter and reassure and reinforce our presence along the eastern flank.

Yeah.

Q What about the pre-invasion sanctions? You didn't answer that part of my question. Is the President looking at sanctions ahead of an invasion any differently than he has been up until this point, given the escalation that we're seeing from Russia?

MR. SULLIVAN: The President believes that sanctions are intended to deter. And in order for them to work -- to deter, they have to be set up in a way where if Putin moves, then the costs are imposed. We believe that that is the right logic, both on its own merits, but equally importantly, we believe that the most important fundamental for anything that unfolds in this crisis, whether through diplomacy or as a result of military action, is that the West be strong, be united, and be determined to operate with common purpose.

And he believes that the sanctions approach he's taken in lockstep with our European partners, the Canadians, and others puts us in a position for the West to be able to respond to this contingency in the most united and purposeful way possible. That will pay dividends for us in this circumstance, but it will also pay enormous strategic dividends for the United States in the years and decades ahead.

Yeah.

Q Thanks, Jake. Our understanding is that there was a sudden meeting last night in the Situation Room to talk about Russia. And now you and Secretary Blinken are obviously using sharper rhetoric about the timing of the invasion. I know you don't want to get into specific intelligence, but is there something that prompted the meeting last night and that has changed the administration's assessment overnight?

MR. SULLIVAN: So I'm not going to speak to internal deliberations, and I'm not going to get into the specifics of intelligence information.

What I am going to say is that for some time now, including out of my own very mouth, we have been talking about how we had entered the window where any day now a military action could be taken. That was the formula I was using several days ago.

Now, as we gain more information, our view that military action could occur any day now and could occur before the end of the Olympics is only growing in terms of its robustness -- so that I can stand here and say that is a very, very distinct possibility.

But I just want to say two things. First, we can't predict the exact determination that Putin would make if and when he makes a determination. So all we can say is that the strong possibility of action, the distinct possibility of action in a relatively near-term timeframe -- including along the timeframe that I've laid out, that Secretary Blinken talked about -- that is backed up by our view of what's happening on the ground, and it's backed up by information that we continue to acquire day by day, including over the course of the past few days.

All right, yes. Yes.

Q Do you believe that --

Q Do you believe that

Q Jake, why would -- why would -- can you delve into a little bit more: Why would Russia risk provoking China with an action during the Olympics? And secondly, can you just speak more broadly to the China-Russia -- what looks like an emerging alliance here on certain issues? And how much does that concern you?

MR. SULLIVAN: So I'd say three things about this. First, you know, Russia's calculus vis-à-vis China -- whether they're going to make Beijing upset or not -- you know, that's kind of between Russia and China. And Putin will obviously have to decide what he wants to do on that front.

China also has its own decisions to make. And to the extent that they are giving a wink and a nod or a green light to a Russian invasion of Ukraine for no justified reason -- I believe that China will ultimately come to suffer consequences as a result of that in the eyes of the rest of the world, most notably in the eyes of our European partners and allies.

And then, finally, I would just say that we do not believe that China can compensate Russia for the economic losses that would be sustained in the event of an invasion, due to sanctions and export controls and the like.

Just one more thing on the broader issue of China and Russia, because there was quite a bit of hype about the statement that they put out. And it was a notable statement that we have taken careful -- a careful look at.

I've said this before, I want to say it again -- and then I'll leave because Jen is now standing up, and I think it's -- (laughter) -- it's well past my time to go: The United States, under the Biden administration, has confidence in us and in the West. We are 50 percent-plus of global GDP. China and Russia are less than 20 percent. We have innovation. We have entrepreneurship. We have freedom.

And when you put all of that together, the tools and capacities that we can bring to bear -- now that we are more united, more purposeful, more dynamic than we have been in a very long time -- we are well situated to be able to deal with any threat or challenge that would be posed to us by any autocracy in the world, including the two that you just mentioned. So let me just leave it at that.

Thank you, guys.

Q You don't think China can bail them out from sanctions, right, Jake?

MS. PSAKI: To be clear, you can come as long as you want. (Laughter.) I just don't want to get in trouble with your team when we ask you to come back the next time.

Q Can we get a read on the pool situation?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. I apologize for the confusion. So he's -- the President is still in a meeting. Karine here is going to monitor when he gets out of the meeting, when you all need to depart. Aamer or others, if you want to come back. Sorry, we did not want you to miss the President's departure, but we had a little miscommunication internally.

Q This is for the chopper? I just want to make sure.

MS. PSAKI: We -- yes. And he is still meeting, so it will not leave without him. We have been assured of that.

Okay, I don't have anything at the top. I know you've covered a lot of topics, but I know there's a lot going on in the world, so why don't we go to whatever else -- or that -- that you'd like to discuss.

Q Well, on that -- if you could just stay on that -- what should we expect this weekend? Things have obviously escalated or moved forward. Is the President going to be talking to European leaders? What should we expect this weekend as this moves forward?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, as you know, the President just spoke with a number of his European counterparts, as well as Prime Minister Trudeau. I believe we put out -- did we put out -- have you seen a readout yet of our -- of his call with Prime Minister Trudeau? If not, I will give it to you right now. Have you seen it yet in your inbox?

Q I don't think.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, this is what happens when you don't bring your phone out here. (Laughter.)

So here you go: Today -- Prime Minister Trudeau was obviously a part of the planned meeting as well. He also had a separate meeting with him where he -- they discussed the ongoing blockade of key bridges and crossings between the United States and Canada, including Detroit/Windsor, Sweetwater/Coutts, and Pembina/Emerson.

The two leaders agreed that the actions of the individuals who are obstructing travel and commerce between our two countries are having significant direct impacts on citizens' lives and livelihoods.

The President expressed his concern that the United States -- that United States companies and workers are experiencing serious effects, including slowdowns in production, shortened work hours, and plant closures. The Prime Minister promised quick action in enforcing the law. And the President thanked him for the steps he and other Canadian authorities are taking to restore the open passage of bridges to the United States.

In turn, the Prime Minister also thanked the President and his administration, the Governor of Michigan, and U.S. officials for all of the assistance that we have provided to resolve the disruption. And the two leaders agreed to stay in close touch.

In terms of this weekend -- I just wanted you to have that component; another important thing happening right now. In terms of this weekend, as you know, the President will be in Camp -- at Camp David, which is fully equipped to have engagements of all sorts, including with his -- including with his national security team or European counterparts.

We are making these decisions about who he'll engage with on a day-by-day basis. We will keep you all abreast of that as we have done to date. But he is -- he'll be at Camp David, and I would expect that he'll be engaged closely with his teams here, as well as his foreign counterparts.

Q And on Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q When will President Biden meet with Senate Republicans on the Judiciary Committee? And also, just a point of clarification --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- from the interview with Lester Holt. About -- I believe he said "about four people" that he's doing the deep dive on. Three and a half, four and a half? (Laughter.) Where --

MS. PSAKI: There's no three and a half people, Aamer.

Q If you could just offer -- are we down to four finalists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to build on what the President said. It is natural that as this process has proceeded, that the list would become smaller. That's a natural part of the process.

But again, as he said many times, he is looking at a range of qualified individuals, strong legal minds, individuals with strong

credentials who have strong character and a dedication to the rule of law.

But in terms of the specific numbers: I understand your question. It's natural to be growing smaller. But I don't have any - anything to build on to what he said.

Q And as far as Senate Republicans?

MS. PSAKI: He will continue to consult closely with Democrats and Republicans. That will continue into next week. But I don't have anything to preview for you at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The diplomats that are being moved out of the U.S. embassy in Ukraine, where are they going? Are they going to other countries? Are they being taken to safer locations within Ukraine? What can you tell us?

MS. PSAKI: It's a great question. I'd really refer you to the State Department. Typically, when we reduce a presence at an embassy, that means they depart the country, but I can certainly check with them and get you more details on that. Typically, it means they would return to a home base.

Q And then, what's the administration's current assessment of Putin's strategy in the Black Sea? Is it to cut off Ukraine's naval access?

MS. PSAKI: In terms of the exercises?

Q Mm-hm.

MS. PSAKI: I mean, our assessment is that this is a part of ongoing escalatory actions, whether it's military exercises or the buildup of more troops that we have seen at the border.

In terms of what it means and what he's preparing for, I would point you to what our National Security Advisor just said, which is that, you know, we continue to watch closely, to assess. Our role here is to prepare for a range of -- a range of steps he might take. But beyond that, I don't have any prediction of what that means.

Q Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Has the U.S. shared the latest intelligence with Ukraine? And do -- does the U.S. feel that the Ukrainian government is properly preparing its citizens for the possibility of a war? Because it seems like they keep downplaying it.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to speak for how the Ukrainian officials, leaders speak or engage with their citizens. But we do engage very closely with them -- sharing of information -- as we do with our European counterparts. And that has been the case at every point in this process.

Q And is the State Department doing anything right now to help Americans get out of Ukraine, or just warning them to get out on their own?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have been warning for several weeks now, if not longer, that American citizens should depart. And I think you heard our National Security Advisor give a pretty stark warning of what would happen -- on purpose -- what would happen if Russia were to invade, and the difficulty of not just being in the middle of a military zone, but also the difficulty of departing or getting out, and the fact that departure -- means of departure could be cut off. And that was, we feel, important for American citizens in Ukraine to understand.

We have been conveying that if American citizens don't have the means to depart, that we would provide assistance for those purposes. That has been the case for several weeks now.

Q If we don't know if Putin has made up his mind, why are we hearing this warning from Jake Sullivan that Americans should get out, ideally within the next 24 to 48 hours specifically? I don't believe we've heard that window from him before.

MS. PSAKI: Because I -- we recognize that if President Putin were to decide to invade, that this would make it a very difficult circumstance on the ground for American citizens. We don't have an assessment, as he -- as you heard him say, of him making that decision. But he could make that decision at any point. And we want to be very clear and direct with American citizens about the risk that that would pose to them, that the risk -- the risks that would be posed to any civilian if they remain in the country.

Q And this is now the second evacuation of Americans in the course of --

MS. PSAKI: It's not actually an "evacuation." To be clear, American citizens can depart Ukraine. There are means of departing Ukraine. This is not a country where we are at war, where we have tens of thousands of troops who have fought -- been fighting a war for 20 years. So, it's incredibly different.

Q Correct. You are correct in that. But you're -- it's the second time we've urged American citizens to get out of a country.

MS. PSAKI: Actually, we've urged American citizens to depart a number of times. And that is --

Q Well, I'm referring to Afghanistan --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think this --

Q -- because the question is --

MS. PSAKI: -- but let -- let me finish here, because I think it's important for people to understand: We urged American citizens to depart Kazakhstan. We urged American citizens to depart Ethiopia. This is a responsibility that the State Department and our diplomat -- diplomats who are serving there and serving around the world take on to keep American citizens safe.

And it may -- it may not be front and center on the news in the United States, but those are conflict areas and zones where we are constantly monitoring.

Q But these are the two major events that have happened under this administration. And what does the --

MS. PSAKI: I would say the --

Q -- what do you guys say --

MS. PSAKI: -- people in Ethiopia would differ with that, as would the people in Kazakhstan or other parts of the world where there has been -- they have been under dangerous circumstances and they look to the United States to provide up-to-date information of their safety and security in the country.

Q The President has frequently talked about getting out of Afghanistan as a major event. It has impacted his polling. This isn't a current event that is underway. The question is: What does the administration say to critics who are looking at these two events and questioning his administration's foreign policy approach?

MS. PSAKI: Who is questioning us? Give me names.

Q Plenty of Republicans.

MS. PSAKI: Like who?

Q I could name off any number of Republicans. I think that --

MS. PSAKI: I'd love to know a name.

Q Goodness. Mitch McConnell.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, here's what I would say to Mr. McConnell: The President ended a 20-year war in Afghanistan -- a war that had cost us thousands of American lives, billions -- trillions of dollars, and was a failed enterprise after 20 years. He was the first President to do that after many of his predecessors failed to take exactly that step. We knew it would be complicated. We knew it would be challenging. He had the courage to get our troops out of there and end a 20-year war.

This is entirely different because we are not ending a 20-year war. We are trying to prevent war here. We are trying to keep American citizens safe in Ukraine by encouraging them to depart, by providing them information about what the security circumstances are on the ground.

And I think it's important for the American public to understand the significant differences between these different scenarios.

Go ahead.

Q Back to the Supreme Court for a moment. Can you rule out that the President would be meeting with any of his candidates this weekend at Camp David?

MS. PSAKI: Here's what I can tell you: There's not plans for that. But I can tell you that it could be as early as next week. I would not echo reporting that it is definitely next week.

Q Given the heightened state of concern about Russia and Ukraine, does that at all affect the timetable for the President on his Supreme Court pick, simply because of the time and attention he would need to devote to that?

And because Senate Democrats were very upfront saying they were encouraging the President to move quickly, do you sense that there is an increase in the tempo for the President to move on his selection process?

MS. PSAKI: We remain on track for the President to make a decision and an announcement on who he's going to nominate to the Supreme Court this month -- in the next few weeks. That was his intention from the beginning, remains his intention now. And he will continue to read a range of cases, study the materials about a range of candidates. That has not been changed by whatever decision President Putin makes.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, in the NBC interview, the President said he rejected the findings of the after-action report about the State Department and the military response to Afghanistan. Does that mean the President has ruled out any action that might be viewed or read as accountability?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Steve, I think it's important for people to understand there was no "after-action report." The Washington Post report was not an after-action report; it was based on a range of FOIA documents -- which is their right

to do -- based on individual interviews of members of the military, including many who were not a part of policymaking decisions in the Situation Room -- some were, many were not. But that is not an after-action report.

There was also a report from CENTCOM on the attack at Abbey Gate, on Friday, which the President certainly stands by. And that was important work -- vital work, a formal report and review that was done internally.

So, I just want to separate the two for people's understanding.

What the President was rejecting is the notion that there weren't a range of preparations done in advance over the course of last spring and last summer.

And it's important to remember that we made the decision -- he made the decision to end a 20-year war. He came into office without any plan -- well, there was a -- there was a deadline, but without any plan for departure or for helping the -- the Afghans who had served by our side for 20 years. We put in place -- and this is in the same documents -- beginning last spring, a plan -- a range of contingency plans should we need to bring American citizens out or bring Afghans out.

We put in place -- we positioned military troops on the ground, working with Department of Defense, back in early summer, to ensure that we could execute on that plan.

And in every single meeting last August, the President asked the team and often ended the meeting with this: "Is there anything you need to implement what your plans are? Is there anything you need on the ground?" He always ended with that.

I'd also note that he always raised the question of whether we needed to evacuate our embassy and people -- our Americans who were serving in our embassy there. That decision was always posed to the group at the table. That decision was not made until August 12th.

So, reporting that suggests otherwise is incorrect. That is the -- that is the state of play that happened last summer.

Go ahead.

Q A question on inflation, since this is the first time we've --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- had a briefing since those numbers came out. The President has said the administration is going to continue to be all on deck to try and bring prices back down. Can you give us a sense of what that really looks like? Because, you know, you've pointed many times to parts of the Build Back Better agenda. That remains stalled. In fact, one of Senator Manchin's big objections to the bill was the high rate of inflation. So, if the Build Back Better plan sort of remains at this impasse, what's plan B to try and bring down some of these costs?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's a couple steps that the President is very focused on as it relates to addressing inflation. One, I would note that economists and the Federal Reserve still predict that inflation will come down -- will moderate over the course of the year.

And the President has also said that he supports the steps that the Federal Reserve -- an independent body -- has announced about recalibrating over the course of the coming months. And he's obviously nominated a number of individuals to fill the board, which is an essential part of addressing this.

But I would also note: Beyond that, how the President really looks at this is how you're addressing core costs for the American people.

So, you referenced the Build Back Better plan. First, we believe there's a path forward, and the President is going to continue to fight for it. Otherwise, he wouldn't have gone to Virginia earlier this week and talked about negotiating the price of prescription drugs.

So, his view is that in order to address costs that have been affecting inflation but also affecting families for many decades -- the cost of prescription drugs, the cost of child care -- we need to move that forward.

But it's not just that. We also need to address supply chains in the short term at the ports, rebuild our manufacturing infrastructure, make sure that we are implementing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and continuing to press for the competitiveness legislation that will help ensure we have funding for chips for manufacturing of cars here in the United States.

And you've also heard him talk a fair amount about promoting competition. And that addresses issues -- like we've seen price increases in the meat industry and others. And that will help bring down costs for Americans.

So, there is certainly a significant, an important, a vital role that the Federal Reserve plays. They are independent. He wants that board to be completely filled.

But there are a number of other steps we are working to take to lower costs for the American people.

Q And just one follow-up on the question about the embassy in Kyiv.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You said that you're continuing to reduce the size of the embassy. To be clear, you're not talking about closing the embassy just yet, so what size are we talking about? How much of a reduction here?

MS. PSAKI: I would really -- I can check with the State Department. It's a good question. But they really have purview over those numbers. And that's where we are in the process at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, what does the White House make of the reporting that former President Trump is still in touch with Kim Jong Un?

MS. PSAKI: Well, former President Trump is not the President. And we -- President Biden is the President, and he is the one who conducts diplomacy on behalf of the United States.

Q And on one other topic: I see that the President spoke with the Prime Minister Trudeau --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- about the blockade. What is the White House doing to help, sort of, alleviate that -- the trade issues that he raised in that call?

And more broadly, is the White House or is the government preparing for any kind of similar types of demonstrations here?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so two different questions.

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: So let me try to answer them both. So, we've continued -- obviously, the President speaking with Prime

Minister Trudeau about this is part of our effort. But our team -- Liz Sherwood -- Dr. Liz Sherwood-Randall, other members of our administration have been in close touch with their Canadian counterparts over the last few days about how to address this blockade and the challenge it is posing to the supply chain.

I mean, fundamentally, how we view this is that the impact of these protests, while we certainly believe in peaceful protest, is impacting -- has the potential to impact -- and this is why we are very focused on this -- communities; workers being able to travel back and forth across the bridge who are going to work, who may work on different sides of the border; the ability to get food on the table to American families, to get auto parts to manufacturers who are trying to make vehicles.

So, this is -- whatever their intended, stated purpose is, this effort is going to have -- has the potential to have a huge impact on workers and the American public.

But to go back to your question: We are in very close contact with Canadian officials. We've also taken steps to help detour routes so that a number of these trucks can move in different routes and be able to cross the border.

So, for example, while the Windsor-Detroit Ambassador Bridge continues to remain closed, Port Huron is fully operational. Customs and Border Patrol is rerouting traffic to Port Huron where all nine commercial lanes are open. The Detroit-Windsor Tunnel is open, which is a way that individuals who are trying to work on different sides of the border are able to travel as well.

And Secretary Mayorkas has also spoken with local officials in affected and potentially affected states, as has -- Secretary Buttigieg has been deeply involved with this as well.

On your second question: You know, we are, of course -- on reports of a similar "Freedom Convoy" -- I think you're asking about, right? -- in D.C. -- event in D.C. in early March, the Department of Homeland Security, obviously, put out a statement on this the other night. They're aware of these reports. They're taking all necessary steps to ensure that the convoy does not disrupt lawful trade and transportation or interfere with federal government and law enforcement operations.

On reports that this convoy is causing disruptions at the Super Bowl, the Department of Homeland Security -- or could, I should say -- the Department of Homeland Security is surging additional staff to its incident command post. There's strong cooperation with the California Highway Patrol, the Los Angeles Police Department, and state and local authorities.

And the Department already has a lead field coordinator and emergency operations center in place, as would be standard protocol, given this is a large event -- the Super Bowl. And they will build on that. There's already 500 DHS personnel providing extensive air and maritime security resources.

So, we are in both close touch with our Canadian counterparts, also with local officials through our Department of Homeland Security. Our Secretary of Transportation is also deeply involved in this. And we're working to address this on all fronts.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to follow up on Jeff's question -- is it still accurate to say that the Biden administration has not heard back from the North Koreans, despite the outreach?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Q Okay. And on the conversation that President Biden is expected to have with President Putin, is that happening today?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to predict in terms of the timing.

Okay. And I think we have to wrap it up. You want to do the last one, quick?

Q Yeah, Jen. Real quick. Well, can I ask you on two things, first of all?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q First of all, following up on what you said earlier, confirming that interviews with Supreme Court candidates could begin as early as next week, does he have in mind how many he wants to interview? Is it just a few? You know, is there a number that he has in mind? And how long do you expect that process -- the interview meeting process to go? Just next week or further?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I can tell you is that the interview process for any president typically happens very late in the process. And in terms of a specific number, I'm just not going to get into that level of detail.

Q And then one more question -- I'm asking for a colleague -- regarding his position on the bankruptcy law for student loan debt. President Biden voted repeatedly as a senator to make it harder for student loan borrowers to erase their debts through bankruptcy, like other secured debts, such as credit cards.

Two years ago, as a presidential campaign [sic], he campaigned on overhauling the bankruptcy law to ease student debt, in addition to his pledge to forgive \$10,000 per student in federal student loans. Why hasn't he acted, to this point, on the bankruptcy law, in addition to the pledge on debt forgiveness?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check on the status of that legislation. I don't know where it is in the process. But what I could reiterate for you is that the President has forgiven \$15 billion in student loans, benefiting more than 675,000 student loan borrowers since he took office.

No one has been required to pay a single dime in federal student loans, and he extended the hiatus of payment until May to give people some extra breathing room. I'll check and see the status of that.

Thanks, everybody.

Q Pfizer pulling the application for the authorization for the vaccines for under five. Is there a White House reaction to that?

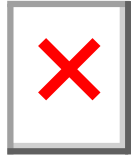
MS. PSAKI: I know they're going to do a briefing -- the FDA is. So, I will leave it to them to speak to their data.

Thanks, everyone.

2:53 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson on APNSA Jake Sullivan's Video Call with Bjoern Seibert, Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Commission
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 11, 2022 6:40 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Video Call with Bjoern Seibert, Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Commission

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan held a secure video call with Bjoern Seibert, Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Commission on February 10. They discussed their concerns about Russia's continued build-up of military forces around Ukraine, as well as preparations to impose massive consequences and severe economic costs on Russia should it choose military escalation. They coordinated the details of a potential transatlantic response, including both financial sanctions and export controls, imposed in coordination by the United States, the European Union, and other partners and Allies. They also agreed to continue the close partnership between the United States and the European Union on a wide range of issues including energy security, COVID-19, health security, and partnership on international infrastructure development through the Build Back Better World and Global Gateway initiatives.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on the President's Call with Russian President Vladimir Putin
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 12, 2022 7:45 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 12, 2022

**Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on the President's Call with
Russian President Vladimir Putin**

Via Teleconference

12:53 P.M. EST

MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone, for joining us today. Today's call will be on background, attributed to a "senior administration official." And contents will be embargoed until the conclusion of the call.

Today's speaker will be [senior administration official], who will have some comments at the top and then take a few questions.

Over to you.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks. And thanks, everybody, for taking the time.

So, the call between the two presidents was professional and substantive. It lasted a bit over an hour. There was no fundamental change in the dynamic that has been unfolding now for several weeks, but we believe that we have put ideas on the table that would be in our and our allies' interest to pursue, that would enhance European security, and that would also address some of Russia's stated concerns, just as we have been clear that we are committed to upholding Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial

integrity, and the rights of states to choose their own security arrangements.

But it remains unclear whether Russia is interested in pursuing its goals diplomatically as opposed to through the use of force.

We remain committed to keeping the prospect of de-escalation through diplomacy alive. But we are also clear-eyed about the prospects of that, given the readily apparent steps Russia is taking on the ground in plain sight, right before our eyes. Stakes -- the stakes of this are too high not to give Russia every chance to avoid an action that we believe would be catastrophic.

So, as always, we continue along two paths: diplomacy, including maintaining close alignment with our partners and allies, as evidenced by the President's repeated bilateral engagements, including with President Zelenskyy, his call yesterday with key allies, and today's call with President Putin, as well as other senior officials' calls with their counterparts in all of these same categories.

Meanwhile, we are intensifying our efforts to deter Russia and to impose costs should it decide to go ahead with military action anyway.

You will have seen the announcement yesterday of an additional 3,000 U.S. forces headed to Poland. Our deliveries of security assistance to Ukraine have continued in recent days, and our discussions with the EU, UK, Canadian, and other partners and Allies to ensure that we are prepared to immediately impose severe financial sanctions and export controls are also reaching a culmination point.

We are continuing to reduce our diplomatic presence in Kyiv, as you've seen, and the President was very direct with President Putin about our concern for the safety and security of Americans still in Ukraine.

Whatever Russia decides, our assessment is that their efforts to improve their strategic position are already failing and that this will only be exacerbated should they decide to take military action.

The transatlantic relationship is more closely aligned than it has been in quite some time. NATO is stronger and more purposeful. Russia is already finding itself increasingly isolated from the wider world and more dependent on China, having together revealed a fundamentally different worldview at odds with the principled, affirmative, international law-abiding worldview and values that we stand for.

And Russia is finding itself on defense in the information space, given our own transparency about its intention.

Over time, if Russia invades, this list will also include a severe economic cost that we've already described and irrevocable reputational damage caused by taking innocent lives for a bloody war choice.

The two presidents agreed that our teams will stay engaged in the days ahead. Russia may decide to proceed with military action anyway. Indeed, that is a distinct possibility.

If it does, the damage to Ukraine, to European security, and, yes, to Russia will be

profound. That is an outcome President Biden believes we should continue to work hard to avert.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thanks. Operator, we're ready for questions now.

Q Thank you so much for doing the call. Could you talk a little bit about, you know, anything that President Biden brought to the table today in terms of proposals, as far as an off-ramp that he thinks can get us to de-escalation? And then, could you also talk a little bit about if you had any signs that an operation was more imminent than thought before? Thank you.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks, Trevor. So, look, our view is that we have brought serious, substantive ideas to the diplomatic table for a period of weeks now. Many of those ideas are in the public domain already. We have offered those directly to the Russians in diplomatic discussions. We have developed them in close consultation with our partners and Allies. And President Biden continued to take that approach in the call with President Putin.

We have also been very clear that our strong preference is not to negotiate in public because we don't believe that that is the best way to find a path to de-escalation, which is our main priority for these diplomatic conversations.

So, I am not going to get into very many of the details of this portion of the conversation, but I would say the President continued down the path that we have been on for quite some time, which is a mode of problem solving and finding solutions that are in our interest, the interest of our partners and Allies, and that can address at least some of the concerns that Russia has raised.

Q Hi, thank you for doing this, [senior administration official]. Two questions. You said that an attack was a "distinct possibility." The tone of the briefing yesterday was that the attack was imminent and the decision had been taken. Can you elaborate on that?

And then, in terms of continuing to provide Ukraine with military equipment, would that continue after a military attack by Russia, and might the nature of that support change? I'm thinking of things like anti-aircraft weapons and so on.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : So, I guess I'd say two things: I would direct you to comments that my colleague, Jake Sullivan, made on this notion of whether President Putin has made a decision. You know, I think the honest answer to that question is we don't have full visibility into President Putin's decision making. You'd have to direct that question to the Kremlin or to President Putin himself.

But, you know, we are not basing our assessment of this on what the Russians say publicly. We are basing this assessment on what we are seeing on the ground with our own eyes, which is a continued Russian build-up on the border with Ukraine and no meaningful evidence of de-escalation or, really, of any interest in de-escalation. So, our sense is that the trends that we've been seeing and talking about for many weeks now are continuing. And, you know, beyond that, I don't think we have any real insights to offer.

As to our plans going forward, I think President Biden and other officials have been clear that should Russia continue down the path to escalation, the United States will continue to increase our support to Ukraine to enable it to defend itself. And, you know, that approach has not changed.

Q Hi. Thanks. So, I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about whether or not the alleged false-flag plans were discussed in the call, and what -- if so, if you can characterize Putin's response at all.

And also, there were reports of a sort of close encounter between Russian and American submarines today, and I'm wondering if they discussed that as well. Thanks.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : So, on your first point, I mean, I think, as a general matter, you can conclude that the issues that we raised concerns about publicly are raised privately between the two presidents. They have conversations that are quite direct, I would say, on both sides. And so, if there's an issue that we have been bringing to your attention through briefings and in other fora, you can conclude that the presidents have widely discussed that as well.

But beyond that, I don't want to get into the specifics of what we raised, and certainly not -- I certainly don't go -- we don't go down the road of characterizing President Putin's response. That's just not something we tend to do with the other sides of these conversations in these readouts.

On this close encounter, I would really direct you to the Pentagon for that. You know, I don't have any information to provide about that on this call.

MODERATOR: All right, thanks, everyone. We have to wrap now. With the conclusion of the call, the embargo is lifted.

A friendly reminder, we're on background, attributed to a "senior administration official." Thanks all.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thank you.

1:03 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, February 14, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 14, 2022 6:52 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 14, 2022

Press Briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:34 P.M. EST

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hey. Good afternoon, all.

Q Hello.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Happy Valentine's Day or Galentine's Day -- whatever you celebrate. Hope everyone had a restful -- a restful time after a big game last night. I can attest, here from the podium, there were some very disappointed Bengals fans here last night. But we definitely wish and congratulate the Rams all the best from the city of -- and the city of LA, for sure.

Okay.

So, this is something that just went out, so just in case you guys all -- you all didn't get it yet: So, President Biden spoke today with Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom. The leaders discussed their recent diplomatic engagements with Ukraine and Russia. They also reviewed ongoing diplomatic and deterrence efforts in response to Russia's continued military buildup on Ukraine's borders and reaffirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

They discussed efforts to reinforce the defensive posture on NATO's eastern flank and underlined the continued, close coordination among Allies and partners, including on readiness to impose severe consequences on Russia should it choose

further military escalation.

So I have a few more things for all of you at the top.

Today marks four years since the Parkland shooting. As the President said this morning in a statement that I'm sure all of you have seen, "We can never bring back those we've lost. But we can come together to fulfill the first responsibility of our government and our democracy: to keep each other safe. For Parkland, for all those we've lost, and for all those left behind, it is time to uphold that solemn obligation."

Since his first day in office, the President has worked to uphold that obligation and to save lives by preventing gun violence. He again called on Congress this morning to act, including to expand background checks to keep criminals from getting guns and to ban the sort of high-capacity magazines that were used to kill two NYPD officers.

And the President called again on Congress to fulfill his budget request for another half billion dollars to fight gun violence.

But if Congress won't act, the President is not going to just wait and sit back. He's already done more than any other president in their first year in history to advance commonsense gun violence prevention measures, and he built on that just earlier this month with new measures he announced in New York City.

Last June, he laid out a comprehensive strategy to address gun violence from every angle, and the White House is working closely with agencies across the administration to deliver on that and save lives. The plan is comprehensive, addressing both the supply and demand side contributors of -- to gun violence; pursuing prevention, intervention, and accountability; using every tool in the toolkit -- regulation, enforcement, budget, the bully pulpit, and legislation; and pulling together the federal agencies for a whole-of-government effort to reduce gun violence.

Specifically, we're addressing the root causes of gun violence by expanding educational and economic opportunities.

We're going after especially dangerous firearms with new proposed regulations on ghost guns and stabilizing braces that turned pistols into rifles.

We're stepping up federal law enforcement efforts against illegal gun trafficking, including through strike forces in major cities, and establishing a zero-tolerance policy for gun dealers who willfully sell guns illegally.

And we're providing cities and states with unprecedented amounts of money, including through the Rescue Plan, to invest in community policing and effective community violence, intervention -- intervention programs, and APTF [ATF].

During an event at the White House today, Vice President Kamala Harris announced, alongside FCC Chairwoman Ros -- Ros -- Rosenworcel and Senior Advisor Mitch Landrieu, that more than 10 million households are enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program, the nation's largest-ever broadband affordability program created through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The Affordability Connectivity Program enables low-income households to apply for discounts towards monthly Internet service and a one-time discount on tech equipment such as laptops or computers.

This is one of the many ways that the Biden-Harris administration is ensuring every American has access to reliable, affordable high-speed Internet.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law delivers and a historic -- an historic \$65 billion to ensure that every American has access to reliable high-speed Internet through a -- through an historic investment in broadband infrastructure development, that inten- -- that Internet service is affordable by lowering costs, increasing competition, and creating price transparency.

With that, please go ahead, Darlene.

Q Thank you. A couple of questions on Ukraine and then one on another topic. What is the reaction here to the Kremlin signaling that it's ready to continue dialogue over Ukraine? And does the White House see that as sincere on the part of the Russians? How do you interpret it?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So -- yeah. Thank you for the question. We are actively working to reach a diplomatic solution to de-escalate the crisis. Over the weekend, as you all know, the President spoke with President Putin, and we remain engaged with the Russian government in full coordination with our Allies and partners. The path for diplomacy remains available if Russia chooses to engage constructively.

However, we are clear-eyed about the prospects of that, given the steps Russia is taking on the ground, in plain sight. This is something that the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, talked about right here on Friday -- right before eyes, what we're seeing with Russia: A new Russian -- we're seeing new Russian forces have been arriving at the Ukrainian border every day.

As we have said before, we are in the window when an invasion could begin at any time. We will not comment on any details of our intelligence information except that -- except to say that it could begin this week, despite a lot of speculation that it would happen after the Olympics -- again, something that Jake Sullivan said right here on Friday.

It remains unclear which path Russia will choose to take. The U.S. is ready for any situation. You know, President Biden has made it very clear on his call with Putin this weekend that if Russia undertakes a further invasion of Ukraine, the United States, together with our Allies and partners, will respond decisively and impose swift and severe costs on Russia.

President Biden reiterated that a further Russian invasion of Ukraine would produce widespread human suffering and diminish Russia's standing.

So we are continuing to coordinate closely with our Allies and partners. President Biden spoke with President Zelenskyy yesterday and Prime Minister Boris Johnson -- as I just read out to you, that call -- this afternoon. And we are in close contact with our Allies, again, and partners, again, across all levels of government.

Our partnership with our European and NATO Allies have never been stronger and purposeful as we work collectively to de-escalate the tensions at the Ukraine-Russia border.

If Russia should choose to invade, the severe economic consequences and irrevocable -- irrevocable reputational damage caused by taking innocent lives for a bloody war will only weaken the country, not strengthen it.

Q And in that close coordination with Allies and partners, is the view that Russia's willingness -- what they say today about wanting to continue the dialogue -- do you -- is there a consensus that is -- that that is sincere? I mean, how do all of you interpret what's coming out of the Kremlin today?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So we've been very clear about this. There is only one country who is currently building up their forces at the Ukraine border, and that's Russia.

And as we have stated, as Jake Sullivan has stated, that we -- in the past 10 days or so, we only continue to see a buildup, not a de-escalation.

So we are open to diplomacy. That door to diplomacy is open, as we have said. And -- and so, that is what we're -- that's what we want to be headed towards.

And, you know, if -- we will -- we will be ready for whichever decision that President Putin decides. But clearly, we would -- we would prefer the path of diplomacy.

I also want to just say one more thing really quickly. This is something that my colleague, Kirby, said -- John Kirby said at

the Department of Defense just now -- that Secretary Austin is going to travel to Belgium, Poland, and Lithuania. So that you all have this. The Secretary is going to meet with Allied defense ministers and NATO leadership to discuss Russia's military buildup in and around Ukraine, reiterate the U.S. commitment to Article 5, and continue the Alliance's progress on deterrence and defense while ensuring the Alliance is prepared to face tomorrow's challenges.

Q And one last question. In two weeks, the President is going to go up to the Capitol to deliver his first State of the Union message. Can you give us a status report on preparations for that? Has he been able to meet with his advisors on it, given everything that's going on, or edit speech drafts, or just you have some sort of idea where that process stands?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, as you know, this is a President who was Vice President for 8 years, and he was senator for 36 years and has spent a lot of time listening to State of the Union speeches. So he understands the importance of delivering such a -- a President delivering such a impactful speech and the -- the purpose of talking about their successes -- his success, in particular, this past year -- and how he's going to build on that success.

I don't have anything more to share. But this is something that's important to him. And he's working towards delivering his speech not just to -- not just to Congress, but also to the American public.

Go ahead.

Q Hey, Karine. I want to follow up on Darlene's question and ask it in a different way, though.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q Russia's foreign minister is advising Putin today that Russia keep pursuing diplomatic negotiations. This is a yes-or-no question: Does this administration view that as a sign of de-escalation?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, what I was saying -- and just to be even clearer -- is that in the past 10 days or so, when you look at what is happening at the border of Ukraine, there -- we are seeing more than 100,000 troops there. And it's just been an -- every day, more and more troops, as I just read out at the top.

So we are certainly open to having conversations and seeing a de-escalation. But right now, this is -- that door is open for diplomacy, and this is up to President Putin. He has to make that decision. It is his decision to make on which direction he wants to take this.

Q So, in terms of the troop buildup there, there's reporting today that a U- -- citing a U.S. official that Russian units near Ukraine moved into attack positions. Is that the understanding of this administration, what you're seeing there?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'm not going to go into any intelligence information. We're not -- clearly, we're not going to share that.

But what we have seen -- and, you know, the National Security Advisor said this himself -- we have seen an increase of forces at the border, not a decrease. And -- and so, what we are saying to President Putin, with our European allies and partners -- we've been working in coordination, in lockstep for these past several weeks, several months -- is that that door to diplomacy is open and having that diplomatic conversation is a path that we would like to take.

Q And finally, lastly, Jake Sullivan came out here and certainly got the attention of the entire world with the urgency of the briefing that he gave on Friday. In terms of the current state right now, is the situation as imminent today, right now, as it was on Friday?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: You know, Jake Sullivan was also on the Sunday shows yesterday. And, you know, again, we are in the window when an invasion could begin at any time.

You know, we re -- again, I m not going to comment on the intelligence information except to say that it could begin this week, despite a lot of speculation that it would only happen after the Olympics.

Q Thanks, Karine. Just to follow up on that, I understand you re saying that you ve only seen a troop buildup, but Russia has claimed today that it is winding down a number of military drills and exercises that have caused concern. Are you in a position to confirm if those claims are accurate or if they re not?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I m not in a position to confirm that, but I do know John Kirby spoke to that just moments ago, so I would refer you to his comments and the Department of Defense.

Q Okay. And specifically about, you know, Ukraine and the Vatican, we have some reporting coming from there saying Ukraine has welcomed Vatican mediation of its conflict with Russia, and they ve invited the Pope to visit the country as soon as possible. Is the President aware of that? Does he support such efforts?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, I have not spoken to the President about that, so I can t -- I can t confirm if he s aware or not.

Q Okay. Will the administration support such efforts?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I -- this is the first time I m hearing about it, so I just need to talk to our team.

Q Okay. And one more on the \$1 billion loan guarantee that the U.S. has agreed to make available to support the Ukrainian economy. Our reporting shows that the U.S. will need about \$200 million to guarantee that loan.

Do you -- does the administration need to make more appropriat- -- appropriations available to, sort of, you know, make sure that loan guarantee program works?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don t have the specifics on that piece, but I can confirm that it is something we are considering as part of the additional macroeconomic support we are exploring to help Ukraine s economy amidst pressure resulting from Russia s military buildup. But I don t have any specifics on the appropriation and what that would take -- the process.

Q Would the U.S. support some statement from the Ukrainians that they re no longer actively pursuing NATO membership or that they d be willing to stall their pursuit of NATO membership as part of ongoing negotiations?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: As you know, NATO membership -- NATO has an open-door policy. That is not something -- that is something that Ukraine will have to decide on its own. That is not something that we are in consultation with or make, you know -- or even decide on. That is something that NATO has to decide on and Ukraine. That s up to them and their leadership on how they want to move forward.

Q Jake yesterday said that the two leaders, Presidents Putin and Biden, tasked their teams with continuing to talk or discuss, kind of, the state of play.

Do you have any idea, kind of, the construct of those discussions or what they d entail, and if any have occurred since the discussion on Saturday?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I do believe Jake Sullivan had a conversation this morning with -- with one of our -- one of our European partners and allies --

Q But I m saying between the Russians and the -- U.S. and Russia, directly, bilaterally.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, I see. I see. Oh. I don t have anything to -- I don t have anything to read out or predict.

And do you mean on the -- on the staff level? Or do you mean like --

Q Yeah. Just under the principal level.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, under the principal -- I don't have anything to read out. As you know, our staff here has been in constant contact with Russia, with Ukraine, and our NATO Allies as well.

Q And then, one last one. There's concern in terms of -- obviously, in the European economic side of things, if Russia continues to escalate, if there's an invasion.

On the domestic side of things, is the White House economic team looking at anything that the President may need to pursue if an invasion comes to pass about what it could do? Obviously, oil markets being one, but I think just general instability in markets.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, I don't have anything specific to read out to you -- for you at this moment. As we talk about energy -- I'm assuming that's one of the things that you're -- you're asking about, Phil -- is, like, we are working with countries and companies around the world to ensure the security of supply and to mitigate against price shocks affecting the American people, Europe, and the global economy.

We are continuing our discussions with major producers around -- around the globe to supply -- so supply meets demand. All tools are on the table.

A disruption in physical energy supplies trans- -- transiting Ukraine would most acutely affect natural gas markets in Europe. And so, we are engaging our European allies to coordinate response planning, including how to deploy their existing energy stockpiles.

We have been working to identify additional volumes of non-Russian natural gas from North Africa and the Middle East to Asia and the U.S.

We -- we thank -- we think -- we thank recent [recent] comments by Japan about supporting Europe's energy security through LNG shipments to the region. We are in discussion with major natural gas producers around the globe to understand their capacity and willingness to temporarily surge natural gas output and to allocate these volumes in European buyers.

We are also engaging with major buyers and suppliers of LNG to ensure flexibility in existing contracts and storage is managed and enables a diver- -- diversion to Europe.

(Inaudible).

Q Great, Karine. How are you? Thank you for doing this.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Sure.

Q There's a reporting quoting Ukraine officials as saying that President Zelenskyy's statement today that an invasion is imminent on February 16 was, in fact, sarcastic or ironic and more of a commentary on this idea that there are countries or entities that know of a date certain. Is that sarcasm or irony the read of the NSC and the White House?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't have a read on that. Here's what I can tell you about -- about that. I heard -- I heard the statement, but I haven't actually heard it in its full context, so the irony of all of it, I have -- I couldn't speak to.

But I'll say this: While I'm not going to speak to intelligence matters, as I've said multiple- -- multiple times already, our intelligence or intelligence-sharing with the Ukrainians -- Ukrainians -- as we said before, we are in the window when an invasion could begin at any time.

It remains unclear which path Russia will choose to take, because we do not know; it is his decision to make. We remain engaged with the Russian government in full coordination with our Allies and partners. The path for diplomacy remains available if Russia chooses to engage, again, constructively.

But we are clear-eyed about the prospects on the ground and are ready to impose severe costs on Russia, in coordination with our Allies and partners, if they attack Ukraine.

Q All right. And two other unrelated matters. Supreme Court: Is it still the expectation that the President will interview nominees this week? And do those that are under consideration know for certain that they're on the shortlist of people being considered?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, you know, I appreciate the interest here. Look, you know, after having a series of conversations and good discussions with lawmakers from both sides of the party, legal experts, scholars last week, the President continued to review materials as he considers deeply, deeply qualified candidates, as we have said, with strong experience, character, integrity, dedication to the Constitution and the rule of law.

I don't have anything else to share on any interviews or who he has interviewed. But, you know, we don't have anything else to share for today or for this week.

Q What's that?

Q Has he interviewed someone, then? The way you just phrased that --

Q You just -- you said "interviewed." Yeah, that's --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, I'm sorry. I meant to be -- he has not interviewed potential nominees, to be clear. Sorry.

Q Thank you.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: But to just answer your last question is -- we are on track, he is on track to select a SCOTUS nominee by the end of this month.

Q Okay. And then just real quick -- Robert Califf is still awaiting confirmation in the Senate to be FDA commissioner. It looks like that may happen tomorrow. Is the White House confident he's got the votes? Have you lined up all the Democratic votes you might need for this?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'll say this: We are confident Dr. Califf will be confirmed with bipartisan support and urge the Senate to confirm him tomorrow, as you just stated, Ed. It is critically important to have confirmed leadership at the FDA in the midst of a pandemic, as we all know.

He had a strong bipartisan showing coming out of committee, including from Ranking Member Burr. It's important to remember he was confirmed 89 to 4 in 2016. Many folks who supported him then are still in the Senate.

We are in -- we are in a daily contact with HHS, who is leading the effort to get him confirmed. HHS and the White House officials are making a lot of calls to the Hill, figuring out which members need what information -- which members need what information.

Secretary Becerra, our OLA team, and Steve Ricchetti are all making calls in support of Califf to a bipartisan group of Senate offices.

Dr. Califf himself has met -- has met or is scheduled to meet with 47 senators, and that number continues to increase. It's also one of the highest number of meetings of any nominees that have been done thus far.

Go ahead.

Q In his conversation with President Putin, did President Biden give him any signal for how he could de-escalate? Would it have to be something visible, like moving forces somewhere? Could it be something in the realm of what's verbal, like what we saw from Lavrov today? Is there anything that the President set out as a cue that could try to tamp things down?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, the call between the two presidents was professional and substantive. So, it lasted a bit over an hour, as you all know, from the readout this past weekend. The two presidents agreed that our teams would stay engaged in the days ahead, but there was no fundamental change in the dynamic.

Q And just to close the loop on the Supreme Court: So, you're not saying that the President has done --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No.

Q -- any interviews --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No, I'm not.

Q -- at this point?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I'm not. Just to be clear.

Q Okay.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I was -- I meant potential interviews.

Q Okay. The President has some travel scheduled this week. Given the volatility of world events, do you anticipate that if things were -- and I know this is hypothetical, but often when there are unpredictable events, there can be changes to the schedule. Are you in a posture where you think that could be a situation where the President would remain at the White House or anything like that if things were to change?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, as you said, it is hard to read, Kelly O., a hypothetical or to give an answer to a hypothetical.

As you know, the President deals with multiple things at once, and that's what this President is prepared to do.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. On the, sort of, ripple effects of a potential invasion, is the administration prepared to block Russian oil imports to the U.S. if Russia invades, given that the imports have reached their highest prices in 11 years (inaudible)?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I mean, I just laid out what we're doing. We're talking to countries and companies around the world, engaging with them on all of the different potential conse- -- potential outcomes if this were to happen.

I don't have any more specifics than that -- than what I just laid out for you.

And so, one of the things that we have said over and over again, and the President has made this very clear to Vladimir Putin, is if Russia chooses to invade, there will be swift and severe economic consequences.

Q Wouldn't it be difficult, though, for the U.S. to continue to import Russian oil after all of the rhetoric that we've put forward about Russia needing to not invade Ukraine and pressuring Germany to, you know, come out strongly on Nord Stream 2 and possible punishments for Russia if they were to take this step? Wouldn't it be tough for the U.S. to continue

Stream 2 and possible punishments for Russia if they were to take this step? wouldn't it be tough for the U.S. to continue, in that event, to import Russian gas?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, again, it's a hypothetical. I'm just telling you what we have been very, very clear, the President has been clear, our national security advisor has been clear -- we all have been clear, either from this podium or direct communication with Russia, whether it's with the President or its leadership, that if they were to invade -- and in coordination, in lockstep with our European Allies and partners, that's how we're moving forward here -- that there would be there would be severe, decisive economic consequences. I cannot speak more to -- more to that.

Q Okay. And then the sanctions package that's being worked out on Capitol Hill -- I understand that the White House is involved in those discussions now. And congressional sources have told me that the White House has insisted on a waiver for North Stream 2, even after an invasion.

Can you confirm if that is true? And if so, why would the White House want a provision like that in a sanctions package coming out of Congress?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, look, when it comes to Nord Stream 2, we've been pretty clear about this. The President has said that -- he said this during his press conference last week with the German Chancellor -- if Russia further invades Ukraine, there will be -- no longer be a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it. And at this moment, Nord Stream 2 is not even operational.

Q But is the White House directing Congress to put a waiver from Nord Stream 2 in a --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: That is the first I'm hearing of that. I cannot speak to that. I'm just telling you where we have been, in a very strong and definitive way, on Nord Stream 2.

Q Okay. And then, on a second topic, this news about the Durham investigation: Does the President have any concerns about a candidate for president using computer experts to infiltrate computer systems of competing candidates, or even the president-elect to -- for the goal of creating a narrative? Is that something that --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: That's something I can't speak to from this podium, so I refer you to the Department of Justice.

Q Is what being described in that report -- monitoring Internet traffic -- is that spying?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Again, I can't speak to that report. I refer you to the Department of Justice.

Q Generally speaking though, would monitoring Internet traffic be --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Jacqui, my answer is not going to change. I refer you to the Department of Justice.

Q Okay.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I can't speak to that from here.

Go ahead.

Q Karine, thanks. What message does it send today to the Ukrainian government to be closing the embassy in Kyiv?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: The embassy in Kyiv?

Q Yeah.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I have something on here. I know the -- I know the State Department made announcement on

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I have something on here. I know the -- I know the State Department made announcement on this earlier.

So, the State Department announced today that they are temporary -- temporarily relocating our embassy operations in Ukraine from our embassy in Kyiv to Lviv due to the dramatic acceleration in the buildup of Russian forces. A core team of embassy staff is remaining in Ukraine to engage with the Ukrainian government, coordinating diplomatic efforts and diplomacy to de-escalate the crisis -- if the crisis continues.

So, I just wanted to also say this as well, because the State Department put out a statement on this. So, the State Department has no higher priority than the safety and security of Americans around the world. And that, of course, includes our colleagues serving at posts overseas.

So, these prudent precautions in no way undermine our support for our commitment to Ukraine. Our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering. We also continue our sincere efforts to reach a diplomatic solution. And we remain engaged with the Russian government following President Biden's call with Putin -- with President Putin and the Secretary's discussion with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

The path for diplomacy remains available if Russia chooses to engage in good faith. We look forward to returning our staff to the embassy as soon as conditions permit.

In the meantime, we have made this very clear; the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, has made this clear; the President himself has made this clear: that these measures, for one reason, the safety of our staff, as I mentioned. We strongly urge any remaining U.S. citizens in Ukraine to leave the country immediately.

That has been our message for the past several days and, honestly, the past several weeks.

Q And does the White House have any comment on this Russian figure skater who's allowed to maybe compete, as a doping investigation continues?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I --

Q Is this the right call?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: That's not a comment that I'm -- I'm not going to comment from here about that. I'd refer you to the committee -- the Olympic Committee.

Q And really quickly: D.C.'s mayor today announced a vacc- -- the vaccination requirement for some businesses will be dropped tomorrow and a mask mandate will be dropped by the end of the month. Does the White House support this? Will the President and the First Lady continue to visit businesses and restaurants as these rules change?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just lay some stuff out for you here, because I know this has been a question that many have had. A number of governors have announced changes based on conditions in their particular states. That -- that's not new. That isn't new.

And so, what I can say from here, as Dr. Fauci has said: As a country, we are making strong progress toward moving to a time when COVID is no longer a crisis. And Dr. Walensky has clearly said CDC is looking at all of their guidance, including mask guidance, in light of declining cases and hospitalizations.

I think that may be getting lost in some of the reporting that we're seeing. The CDC made clear they're looking at their guidance, so just want to make that very clear.

But to put a finer point on this, CDC has to move carefully and deliberately to make sure these good trends are confirmed across the nation. CDC has a responsibility to make guidance for the entire country and everyone. They must consider its

across the nation. CDC has a responsibility to make guidance for the entire country and everyone. They must consider its impact on a variety of constituencies, including people who are disabled, immunocompromised, and most vulnerable.

We are spending significant time and energy on the path forward, working with experts and leaders within and -- within and outside the government. And if this -- if this progress continues, we expect updates in the weeks ahead. This is a huge, huge responsibility that we do not take ~~lightly~~ [lightly], one that we take very seriously, and we want to make sure that we get this right.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. During their conversation on Sunday, the President of Ukraine purportedly invited President Biden to visit Ukraine in the coming days. And the Ukrainian President's office said that a visit by the U.S. President would "be a powerful signal" and could "contribute to [the] de-escalation" of this crisis. What is the White House's response to that invitation?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't have any travel plans to announce or preview at this time. I'll say this: You know, as you all know, President Biden spoke with Zelenskyy -- as you just mentioned -- this weekend. Secretary Blinken spoke with the Foreign Minister this morning. And we are in regular contact with the Ukrainian government throughout the administration, including here at the White House, at the State Department, at the Defense Department. I just laid out travel that the Secretary from Defense is going to be making, at the Treasury Department, and elsewhere.

So, the President has also dispatched a number of senior administration officials to visit Ukraine in recent months, including Secretary Blinken who was just there recently, and -- last month for meetings with Ukraine's leader.

Our North Star has been "nothing about --" -- "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine." You've heard us say this over and over again. And we will continue to coordinate closely with Ukraine as we try to reach a diplomatic solution to the end of this crisis.

Go ahead.

Q Could I bring you back to the gun issue that --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, sure.

Q -- you talked about in the beginning? A bunch of years ago, a large number of people in the Bi- -- in the Obama administration, including the current President, fought fiercely for closing the gun show loophole and described it as "the least that could be done," and were very angry and upset when it didn't pass, pushing -- pushing also, at various times, for even more -- you know, a ban on assault weapons and the like. You didn't mention any of that.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q The President's message today that he put out earlier didn't mention any of that. Is it fair to assume that either they no longer -- this President no longer thinks those things are needed or has simply abandoned any hope of getting them passed?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I wouldn't assume that. I -- one of the things I did say is we are encouraging Congress to act as well. There's a legislation -- legislative component to this, as you just laid out, so that is important as well.

But I do want to read a couple of quotes from -- about the President's exa- -- executing on his historic comprehensive gun violence reduction strategy. So, there is support there for it. I know you're talking about a specific thing, but I want to not just take our word for this.

So, Brady has called the President's plan "historic" and said "President Biden and his administration are truly taking

... saying the Biden administration is taking comprehensive action to address violence in our country.”

Giffords commented the Biden-Harris administration -- commended -- pardon me -- the Biden administration "for announcing a comprehensive strategy to prevent gun violence and protect public safety. . . . Gun violence is a complex problem" -- as you can imagine, and as she stated -- "that requires an array of solutions. President Biden and Vice President Harris understand[s] [that]." This is a quote from -- from Giffords.

Everytown for Gun Safety said “President Biden is taking the comprehensive approach we need to address this crisis.”

And so, is there more work to do? Absolutely. That's why we're encouraging and urging Congress to act as well. But the President is going to do everything that he can from his perch to get this done.

Q But he would be satisfied that if -- if the things that he's pushing that are on that list and that you have talked about and that he talked about, that would be good enough?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: We're not calling it “good enough.” He is doing everything that he can from his perch -- from the White House, from the federal government -- and using every tool at our tool -- on a toolbelt that we've talked about. We -- that's what we tried to do to make sure that we're -- we're addressing a real problem, which is gun violence.

So, what -- the other part of that is urging Congress to act as well, which we have been doing. But he's not going to sit back. You heard me say that. He's not going to sit back and wait; he's going to act. But there --

Q But he's also not going to spend a whole lot of time or energy pushing for a ban on assault weapons or closing the gun show loophole that, just a bunch of years ago, he and others described as “vital.”

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'll say this: We are constantly in conversation with folks in Congress -- with leadership, with congressional members, with senators -- that is an array of issues.

The President is going to continue to fight to make sure that we get these guns off the street and we truly deal with gun violence. He is doing his part from the White House, and he's going to continue to work towards that effort.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. A few questions. First on Afghanistan: The Biden administration appears to have been downplaying some accounts from ground commanders involved in the evacuation of Afghanistan. Over the past week, we heard a State Department spokesperson say that their criticism was “cherry-picked” from a larger report. We've heard President Biden himself reject those accounts. Jen, last week I believe, said that there was no after-action report.

So, two questions I wanted to ask you to clarify the White House position. One, does the White House agree that the evacuation should have become or should have been started earlier, which is what some senior military officials have asserted?

And secondly, did Jen misspeak last week when she said there was no after-action report? There's been some reporting from a colleague of mine, over the weekend, that indicated there was indeed an after-action report that was reviewed.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, to your last question: No, Jen did not misspeak last week. This Abbey Gate report is not the Pentagon's boarder [sic] action -- boarder [sic] ap -- broader after-action review on Afghanistan. That report will examine the final months of America's longest war and cover from February 2020 through the end of the evacuation. So, no, she did not misspeak.

But let me just say something that I think it's really important. I'm just going to quote John Kirby, who was -- who did a Sunday show yesterday. I believe this was Fox News Sunday show. And I'll quote him here. He said: "I would also add...

here in Washington, we have been planning for evacuation as far back as April. And there was no effort by Washington, certainly not by the National Security Council specifically, to slow down that planning, to slow down those pre-positioning of forces that we did in the summer, to slow down the actual execution of the evacuation.”

So, again -- this is John Kirby, spokesperson for the Department of Defense: “So, again, these were documents that assert impressions and perspectives which are very important down at the tactical level, in real-time. We need to conduct a larger, more strategic level after-action review to get the whole sense of this. And we re doing that.”

The Abbey report, again, is one important review of what occurred that day, but it should not be mistaken for a full follow-up on the last months of the war in Afghanistan.

Q Okay. And on a different topic --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, sure.

Q -- to follow up on the earlier questions about the Supreme Court. I know you said that the President has not conducted any interviews with candidates yet, but does the White House -- will the White House disclose which candidates the President does interviews with as he goes through this process?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: What I can promise you right now is that the pro- -- the President is going to make his selection for the Supreme Court justice by the end of this month. That s what we know. That s what he stated. And that s what we will do.

Q And last question. Vice President Harris is headed abroad to the Munich Security Conference this week. Can you talk a little bit about what the White House hopes she will accomplish there? And is she going to be sort of the sole representative of the administration in some of these meetings with counterparts? Are there going to be other administration officials as well? Can you sort of give us a sense of what the expectation is?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don t have any specifics, but I can say that we are very proud to have the Vice President lead the delegation to Munich this week.

I don t have any specific details. I m happy to talk to the team to see exactly what her schedule is going to look like. But we re -- we are -- the President is proud that she s going to be representing the United States.

Go ahead.

Q I have just a couple of quick ones. Following up on this Zelenskyy question, can you confirm whether President Zelenskyy asked President Biden to come to Ukraine this week, and whether the administration considered it at all? I know you don t have travel to announce but --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I -- all I can tell you is what I just said. We don t have travel to confirm right now. That is what the President’s schedule looks like. And the -- it s certainly not confirming to go to visit Ukraine. And that s what now -- our focus right now is to continue to have the conversations on the staff level to continue to make sure that we are -- we keep that door to diplomacy open. There s too much at stake. There are human lives at stake, which is what the President told President Putin. And that is our focus: How do we stop a war? That s our focus.

Q And Pfizer withdrew, late last week, its application for the vaccine for young kids. Is that a disappointment to the White House?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, I have something on that. So, FDA is committed to acting urgently to save lives amidst the pandemic, and they continue to work with Pfizer to review additional data on its vaccine for kids under five.

In recent days, new data -- as you know, Tam -- emerged regarding Pfizer's submission to the FDA for its vaccine for kids under five years old. Based on FDA's assessment of that new data, the agency concluded that additional information regarding a third dose should be considered as part of any authorization.

The initial data has been helpful to the process, but FDA believes more information, including the impact of a third dose, is important to the evaluation. So, that is the process -- that is the process right now, currently, that's working. And that should give parents everywhere confidence in the process -- right? -- because we want to make sure that the process is working.

FDA is in the middle of a thorough, independent regulatory process to review this vaccine. And if a vaccine is authorized, it will have met FDA's rigorous standards. So, that is what the parents -- as a parent myself, and I know you're a parent -- should be very [sic] -- very proud of that the FDA is doing this.

Q And on the D.C. mask mandate, do you expect that mask mandate coming down to affect policy here on campus at the White House?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, as always, we say this: Local communities will make their own decisions as they have throughout the pandemic, and we'll -- what we're going to do is we're going to abide by the CDC guidance. So that is local communities make that decision and that is what they choose to do.

Q So, the White House is not following the local guidelines here for your --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: We're following --

Q -- here for this place that is in the city.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: To be clear, we are going to follow the CDC guidance. That's what we're going to do.

Go ahead, Jen.

Q Back to the VP's trip to Germany, is there discussion in the White House about whether she should go no matter what is happening in Ukraine, or has there been discussions about what might trigger her to cancel?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: You know, I don't have any -- any insight on that. That's another hypothetical that I can't answer. But what I can say is that we are proud that she's going to be leading the U.S. delegation to Munich, and that is on -- on schedule to happen.

Q On the embassy in Kyiv, do you know if all of the classified information has now been stripped from that building?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I -- I do not have that information for you.

Yeah, go ahead.

Q Thank you. I wanted to ask you a quick question on the Quad and Russia. Do you think Quad countries are unanimous on the issue of Russia?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Can you say -- can you say that one more time, Lalit?

Q Do you think the Quad countries -- U.S., Japan, India, and Australia -- they had a meeting in Australia recently. Do you think these countries are unanimous on the -- on the Russian --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: On the Russia -- the Russian issue in particular?

So, as you know, Secretary Blinken was just in the region, where he met with the Quad. It was an opportunity to discuss Russia's ongoing threat to Ukraine. They discussed the threat that Russia's aggression poses not only to Ukraine but to the entire international rules-based order, which has provided a foundation for decades of shared security and prosperity for the region and around the globe.

Throughout his meetings with the Quad partners, Secretary Blinken discussed the challenges Russia poses to the rules-based -- based on international order and our readiness to support our European allies.

Q I'm going to -- I'm asking this question because you know that India's foreign min- -- External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar said that India only follows multilateral sanctions, not country-specific sanctions. And as you're looking towards country-specific sanctions from the U.S., because the U.N. Security Council is unlikely to vote for those sanctions because of the vetoes Russia and China have, are you in conversations with India that they should follow the U.S. sanctions as well?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, you know, we're not going to get into specifics. We've been really clear about our discussions, so I'm not going into details on that but -- beyond what we've read out from the Secretary's meeting in Melbourne last week. But we're working closely with a range of allies and partners, including India.

Q One final question.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Sure.

Q What role President Biden expects India to play in the Quad?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, we will continue to build a strategic partnership in which the United States and India work together to promote stability in South Asia; collaborate in new domains such as health, space, cyberspace -- which is important; deepen our economic and technology cooperation; and contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

We recognize that India is a likeminded partner and leader in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, active in and connected to the Southeast Asia, a driving force of the Quad, and an engine for regional growth and development.

Q Thanks, Karine.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No problem. Oh, thank you.

Thanks, everybody. Don't forget to get those flowers and those candy. (Laughter.)

4:20 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Polish Head of the International Policy Bureau Jakub Kumoch
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 15, 2022 7:06 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Polish Head of the International Policy Bureau Jakub Kumoch

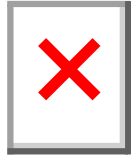
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Dr. Jakub Kumoch, Head of the International Policy Bureau at Poland's Presidential Chancellery. They discussed ongoing diplomatic efforts related to Russia's destabilizing military buildup along Ukraine's border, including Poland's leadership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. They also discussed transatlantic coordination on deterrence and defense efforts, with Mr. Sullivan expressing appreciation for Poland's hosting of additional U.S. forces to reinforce NATO's eastern flank.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with President of European Council Frédéric Bernard
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 15, 2022 7:09 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with President of European Council Frédéric Bernard

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with Frédéric Bernard, Head of Cabinet of the President of European Council on February 14. They discussed their shared concerns about Russia's continued build-up of military forces around Ukraine. They reviewed recent diplomatic engagements to address the crisis, ongoing preparations by the U.S. and EU to impose severe economic consequences if Russia chooses further military escalation, and efforts to provide continued support to Ukraine, including through economic assistance.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] CORRECTED: Statement on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Council Frédéric Bernard
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 15, 2022 7:39 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Council Frédéric Bernard

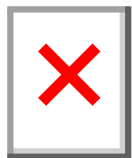
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with Frédéric Bernard, Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Council, on February 14. They discussed their shared concerns about Russia's continued build-up of military forces around Ukraine. They reviewed recent diplomatic engagements to address the crisis, ongoing preparations by the U.S. and EU to impose severe economic consequences if Russia chooses further military escalation, and efforts to provide continued support to Ukraine, including through economic assistance.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 16, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 16, 2022 4:27 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 16, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, February 16, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:09 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. Okay, a couple of items for you at the top.

Today, we learned that retail sales increased by 3.8 percent in January, exceeding expectations. This strong, inflation-adjusted increase reflects the resilience of the economy, even in the face of Omicron.

Compared to this time last year, sales at grocery stores, restaurants, and clothing stores, among others, increased, underscoring the strength of the American economy as we recovered from the pandemic.

This data builds on the historic economic progress we've seen over the last year and an extremely strong jobs report last month despite Omicron, which was well above expectations.

In 2021, the economy created 6.7 million jobs -- the strongest year of job growth on record. The unemployment rate declined more than any year on record. And we achieved a 4 percent unemployment rate years earlier than previously projected thanks to the American Rescue Plan.

Small-business applications and inflation-adjusted household income are both up, and child poverty and hunger are down.

We're obviously going to continue to build on this progress.

Second, today we're marking 60 days of action strengthening America's trucking workforce. This is not just about recruitment but also retaining truckers to ensure we can move more goods around the country and lower costs for the American people.

Over 70 percent of all goods in America are shipped by truck, and America's trucking workforce plays a critical role in the supply chain and the broader economy.

But outdated infrastructure, the pandemic, and a historic volume of goods moving through our economy have strained capacity across the supply chain, including in trucking.

Two months ago, the President launched a multi-agency effort to support and expand access to quality truck driving jobs now and in the year ahead -- and in the years ahead.

While more work remains, we have made remarkable progress in the last 60 days. We have expanded Registered Apprenticeship Programs. We've launched the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot to connect American adults under 21 to good-paying jobs in the trucking industry. We've cut red tape so it's easier for drivers to get commercial driver licenses.

And we've met with veterans service organizations representing nearly 4 million veterans to discuss ways the administration and industry can attract, train, place, and retain veterans in trucking jobs.

And we will announce the results of the Labor Department's 90-day apprenticeship program, of course, over the next -- after the next 30 days.

This week, Secretary Buttigieg will also sign the charter document for the Women of Trucking Advisory Board, which will provide recommendations to address challenges facing women in trucking, such as barriers to entry, on-the-job safety risks, workplace harassment, mentorship, and more.

Finally, a very quick preview for the President's trip to Ohio tomorrow.

It's been just 90 days since -- time flies -- with the President -- since the President signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

And tomorrow, he will travel to Lorain, Ohio, and deliver remarks on how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law delivers for the American people by investing in clean-up and restoration efforts in the Great Lakes region and surrounding waterways.

These investments will allow for a major acceleration of progress that will deliver significant environmental, economic, health, and recreational benefits for communities throughout the region, including helping people in the community access clean water.

So, those of you going to Ohio, now you have a little more detail.

Go ahead, Darlene.

Q Thank you. One, are there any plans being made for the President to meet with Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee as a group, the same way he met with Democrats on the committee last week?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So, he's continuing to engage with Democrats and Republicans about his Supreme Court process. I don't have anything to preview or predict in terms of a meeting with the Senate Judiciary Republicans.

Q Okay. Second question. Is there a date for when the President will send his FY23 budget proposal to the Hill?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a date, either, for you at this point in time. I think Shalonda Young has conveyed it was expected to be after the State of the Union.

Q Okay. And then the last question is: With the Vice President getting ready to go to Germany for the Munich Security Conference, can you talk a little bit about what her marching orders from the President are? And will she be going with any deliverables or any concrete proposals, specifically to help Europe deal with its energy and natural gas needs?

MS. PSAKI: Well, she will be traveling, as many of you have been following this know, to Munich, Germany, to attend the February 18th to 20th Munich Security Conference. She will build on the President's and the national security team's intensive engagement with European allies and partners, and emphasize -- and continue to emphasize with our partners our ironclad commitment to our NATO Allies, underscore our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reaffirm our shared interest in upholding the principles that have underpinned European peace and security.

She'll be participating in the formal conference -- formal program of the conference, as well as engaging with allies and partners and meeting with leaders on the margins.

I know her team is planning for a preview call for all of you, I believe later this evening, to give you more details of those bilateral meetings.

But I would say, in terms of her engagements and what the President expects, he expects and knows, given she is the first in the room and the last in the room, that she will continue to convey to the rest of the world, again, our ironclad commitment to our NATO Allies, our commitment to defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and our commitment to putting in place severe economic consequences should Russia invade.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Can you comment on Russia's investigation into claims of alleged mass graves of civilians supposedly killed by Ukrainian forces in the Russian-controlled regions in eastern Ukraine? Do you believe this is part of the false-flag operations that you've been warning of?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me start by saying, as you heard the President say yesterday and Secretary Blinken earlier today: We're in the window where we believe an attack could come at any time, and that would be preceded by a fabricated pretext that the Russians use as an excuse to launch an invasion.

And we've seen -- and we've talked about this a bit in here -- we've seen these tactics used in the past. So those could include, but not be limited to, the report you just referenced, claims of provocation in Donbas, false state media reports -- which I think you should all -- everybody should keep their eyes open and aware of that potential -- fake videos, false accusations about chemical weapons or accounts of attacks on Russian soldiers that have not actually occurred.

So there could be a range of false flags and pretexts that we would expect would precede an invasion. And, again, we remain in that window.

Q And can you provide any update on the intelligence assessment of who was behind the cyberattacks of Ukraine's Ministry of Defense and certain banks yesterday? Can U.S. officials say that Russia was behind the attacks?

MS. PSAKI: We don't have any new details on an attribution. Cyber attribution takes time, in part because adversaries usually try to hide their tracks and it takes time to gather and analyze relevant information. And these can be -- these types of incidents -- DDoS incidents can be particularly hard -- harder to trace.

But we have also been in close touch with our Ukrainian counterparts to offer support in the investigation and response to these incidents. You may have seen the statement from the Ukraine Ministry of Defense that the United States and other partners immediately reached out with support and that some sites are coming back online.

And I would note, again, as I said yesterday, we've been warning for months, both publicly and privately, in our engagements with the Ukrainians and the Europeans that the potential for Russia to conduct cyber operations in Ukraine is part of their playbook as well.

So we're particularly concerned, but we don't have anything new in terms of specific attribution.

Q Jen?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Are you done, Mary?

Q Yes, go ahead.

Q Okay. (Laughs.) Didn't mean to interrupt.

MS. PSAKI: So polite. Go ahead.

Q Secretary of State Blinken today said that he has seen evidence that Vladimir Putin is actually moving critical military assets toward the border with Ukraine and not away from the border as Putin has claimed. So does the administration believe that Putin is actually escalating this crisis in real time?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, as Secretary Blinken also said, the Russian troops remain massed in a very threatening way at the border. And he was responding, I believe, to a question -- a good question about whether they were delivering on what they had promised yesterday. And the answer was no; there's, you know, what Russia says and there's what Russia does. And we're watching very closely what steps they're taking. But they remain amassed in a threatening way at the border.

Q There has not yet been, to our awareness, an actual invasion. This date had been circled on the calendar as one that this administration, that other governments worldwide were watching very closely. What do you make of the fact that at this point -- it is now darkness in that region -- there hasn't been a military invasion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Kristen, without getting into any intelligence or conversations we would have with Allies or partners, what we had conveyed last week, and you heard Jake Sullivan convey very clearly, is that we were in the window. We remain in the window.

Q And is there still as much hope for diplomacy today? Is there more hope? Where does that thinking stand?

MS. PSAKI: We -- of course, the door continues to be open to diplomacy. Secretary Blinken spoke with Foreign Minister Lavrov yesterday. Jake Sullivan speaks with his Ukrainian counterpart nearly every day, if not every day. We remain -- the President, of course, is going to speak with Chancellor Scholz later this afternoon. So there are -- it is moving forward -- diplomatic conversations on many channels.

Q One quick follow-up to a question you got yesterday about a potential gas tax holiday.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q You said all options were on the table. Can you go a little further? Are there actually discussions going on between the White House and Democrats on Capitol Hill about moving forward with a gas tax holiday?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I also said yesterday no decisions have been made, and that remains the case. So we always have an

open dialogue with members of Congress, and all options remain on the table.

Go ahead.

Q One housekeeping thing first. Speaking of Secretary Blinken, he was at an event earlier today here in town and said he was cutting his time short there in order to have a meeting with the boss -- the President. Was something added to the schedule this afternoon, or is there something forthcoming?

MS. PSAKI: Without knowing the details of the Secretary's schedule, I think the President had the PDB this morning, so it may have been that. I can check if there's anything different than that.

Q Beyond that, Foreign Minister Lavrov told Secretary Blinken yesterday that Russia's written response to the U.S.-NATO proposals would be transmitted, quote, "in the coming days." Has it been received, or is this potentially productive, or seen as a possible delay tactic?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we look forward to receiving it, as Secretary Blinken has conveyed. As of my knowledge before I came out for this briefing, I think we're still waiting for that.

Q Is there any update on the U.S. assessment of the video released by Russia claiming to show some tanks ending military drills near Ukraine? I know there was a lot of concern about whether this was legit. Has there been any determination that it is?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any new assessment of that, Ed. I think what we are watching very closely is not just what they say but what they do. I understand you're referencing a video, but we've also seen, as the Secretary confirmed this morning, continued problematic, troubling buildup of troops at the border and surrounding Ukraine.

Q I'm not going to ask you if the President is meeting today or soon with Supreme Court nominees because --

MS. PSAKI: What if I ans- -- what if I was prepared to answer it today? (Laughter.)

Q Well, are you?

MS. PSAKI: You're missing out.

Q Are you? Have there been any meetings?

MS. PSAKI: I am not going to provide a -- (laughter) -- day-by-day update, Ed. I just had to mess with you there a little bit. (Laughs.)

Q Just for the record, I wasn't going to ask. But I am curious -- I am curious: This is a President who's been a participant in this for decades.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q He knows that in the run-up to a decision there is a public campaign, there's sort of a backroom lobbying effort by people close to nominees. There's been some of that going on in this case. What does he make -- I'm not commenting specifically on anyone's story or letters sent or anything, but what does he make of that attempt to influence an administration as they make a decision? And does he welcome it, or does he see it -- if it gets a little too personal, perhaps, or petty -- as detrimental to the process?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think because of the President's long history and long background you referenced as the former chairman of the Judiciary Committee, as the former Vice President, I believe he's probably overseen or been engaged with

more Supreme Court nominee processes than anyone in history. He is not going to be swayed by public campaigns or public sniping or lobbying efforts. He is going to pick an eminently qualified Black woman to nominate to the Supreme Court, and he has a number of potential choices that he's very excited about.

Q Just real quick on this: The Club for Growth is now running ads in English and in Spanish targeting Latino audiences and suggesting that the President's focus on nominating a Black woman to the Court versus qualified Latino judges -- and they list a few in their ad -- is racist. What do you make of that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the Supreme Court has been around for 230 years; there's never been a Black woman who served on the Supreme Court. The President believes that's a problem with past processes and not a lack of qualified Black women to serve on the Supreme Court.

There are also opportunities -- perhaps in the future, we'll see -- to nominate others; we don't know at this point in time. But the President is proud of the range of credible, qualified candidates he's looking at and looking forward to making an announcement soon.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. A quick follow-up on the cyber stuff. Would the U.S. consider a disruptive attack against Russia, similar to the DDoS one right now being waged against Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Say that one more time. What --

Q I'm sorry. If the U.S. would consider, like, a distributed denial-of-service attack. Like, we just talked about potential --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- cyber responses. Is that one of the potential options? Like --

MS. PSAKI: In terms of what we would do in response?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to outline or detail what options the President would have at his disposal. Again, he can take any step, seen and unseen. He has the right to do that. But we have not even made an attribution at this point in time.

Q Fair enough. Russia's lower house of parliament voted on Tuesday to ask Putin to recognize the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. Blinken said today that that move "would necessitate a swift and firm response from the United States in full coordination with...Allies and partners." What might such a response look like? Sanctions, export controls? What kind of --

MS. PSAKI: There's a range of options we have at our disposal. I'm not going to outline those from here. But I would also just reiterate a couple of points that Secretary Blinken made in his statement, which includes the fact that the Kremlin's support of this amounts to the "Russian government's wholesale rejection of its commitments" -- its own commitments -- "under the Minsk agreement[s]," which is certainly the reason to have such a strong reaction to it from the Secretary of State. And "[e]nactment...further undermine[s] Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," constituting a "gross violation of international law."

So, hence we have -- as you said, he conveyed in his statement that "necessitates a swift and firm response from the United States in full coordination with our Allies and partners." But I don't have anything to preview at this point in time.

Q Quick follow-up on oil. CNN is reporting that NSC Middle East Coordinator, Brett McGurk, and State Department

Energy Envoy Amos Hochstein are in Riyadh today.

MS. PSAKI: Hochstein (inaudible) --

Q Thank you for that.

MS. PSAKI: -- in case you have to restate his name on television.

Q Amos -- are in Riyadh today to press the Saudis to pump more oil. And I wondered if you could confirm that.

MS. PSAKI: I can confirm they re on a trip. There are a range of range of topics to discuss, including Yemen. And as you know, we -- engaging with our partners around the world about ensuring supply meets demand is part of our objective from here as well.

Q Okay. And that s one of the objectives of the meeting as well?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more details on the meeting at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The Secretary of State said today that they have not seen "meaningful pullback" by Russia when it comes to the forces that they've put on Ukraine s border. What would meaningful pullback look like to the United States?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I m not going to define that by troop numbers. I think we will know it when we see it, which is a verifiable reduction of troops at the border of Ukraine.

Q But you re not looking at a certain metric or anything like that?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing that I m going to outline from here.

Q The President updated the number yesterday, changing it from about 130,000 that we believed that Russia had amassed on the border to closer to 150,000. How long does the United States believe Russia can maintain that kind of a force posture?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he also said including in Belarus and encircling Ukraine --

Q Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- as well, to be clear. In terms of their ability to maintain that, I m not going to get into intelligence from here.

Q But there s no judgment on --

MS. PSAKI: Nothing I m going to outline from here.

Q Okay. My last question: On the CIA station that is being relocated closer to the border of Poland, outside of Kyiv, does the U.S. have concerns that that will affect their ability to be able to track Russia s movements from Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: You have a lot of intelligence questions today, which is absolutely fine, but there s nothing I can detail on that from here either.

Q But no concern that the- -- moving the CIA station out of the capital is going to affect that ability?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to speak about our intelligence processes in Ukraine or in the surrounding area from here.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Following up on Kristen's question. Obviously, the invasion didn't happen today. The Pentagon was eyeing today as a possible date that some -- we could see some sort of action, some sort of invasion. Does the White House think that Putin could be bluffing?

MS. PSAKI: About what?

Q About his intention to move forward.

MS. PSAKI: Not invade or to invade?

Q Well, either way.

MS. PSAKI: Well, President Putin has said he doesn't intend to invade. We've also said he's prepared -- he's prepared to do that and has lined up troops at the border to -- to invade. So, I don't think we're -- we are waiting for President Putin's comments to assess what is being prepared around the border.

Q Okay. Do you think that your efforts to put all this intelligence out about his -- you know, what might happen next might have deterred something that we could've seen in the last 24 hours?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's part of our obj- -- has been part of our objective overall, Jacqui -- right? -- is to make it more difficult for the Russians, for President Putin to lay a predicate for war, to -- when our objective is to try to avoid war, prevent war.

Now, it's ultimately up to President Putin to decide what steps he's going to take, but putting out specific details about the types of false-flag operations, their efforts to push misinformation through Russian media -- the types of tactics they've used in the past -- that's all a part of our effort to make it more difficult for them to use these tactics and keep the eyes of the global community open.

Q And then has this whole standoff underscored the importance of NATO Allies spending 2 percent of their GDP towards defense? Is that something that the White House will be pressing in the future from our Allies?

MS. PSAKI: That's something that the Vi- -- President pressed for when he was Vice President.

Q And then can I ask about a second topic: the Durham investigation? Durham says there was an outside company with ties to the Clinton camp monitoring server data info on the Executive Office of the President through the Obama administration, possibly into the Trump administration. Do you know if there's still a system picking up server data on the EOP -- and if not, when it stopped?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I know you asked my colleague a few questions about this the other day, but I would point you -- any questions about this to the Department of Justice.

Q And then, is what was described in the filing there -- monitoring internet traffic -- is that -- generally speaking, would that be considered something along the lines of spying?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I would point you to the Department of Justice.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thanks. Is that U.S. confident at this point that all intelligence and sensitive material has been removed and destroyed from the U.S. embassy in Kyiv?

MS. PSAKI: Look, there s obviously steps every embassy takes when they move or relocate, but I m not going to get into those details from here. I d point you to the State Department if there s more they d like to share.

Q And oil prices are nearing \$100 a barrel. That s a milestone that hasn t been reached since 2014. What steps is the administration taking at this point to deal with high oil prices? Have you been talking to allies about a coordinated global release of oil?

MS. PSAKI: We have been in touch with allies and partners, suppliers out there on the global stage for weeks now in preparation for a range of impacts of -- you know, in anticipation of an invasion or, actually, an impact of an invasion, both for natural gas and oil prices on the market.

We will continue those engagements, of course. As I ve said and I said yesterday: For the President, all options remain on the table. As you know, in the past or recent months, he tapped the Strategic Petroleum Reserve -- 50 million barrels. Those have been released over the course -- or 40 million of them, I think, to date have been released over the course of time.

We also remain, of course, engaged with Congress and countries around the world about how to meet the demands out there.

Q One more. The President urged Congress, this week, to act on gun control on the anniversary of Parkland shooting. It s been five months now since David Chipman s nomination was withdrawn. What s the current timetable for nominating an ATF director?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly would love to have an ATF director in place for the first time in, I think, a decade -- someone confirmed. And unfortunately, I would say David Chipman was eminently qualified for the position and was not able to move forward. And the President would like to nominate someone to replace him, but I don t have anything on the timeline.

Go ahead.

Q In an effort to pry the window open a bit wider into the President s thinking on the Supreme Court --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- what is the thinking here about some of the pushback that s been aired on the Left with respect to Judge Michelle Childs in South Carolina? Does the President reject that criticism that she hews to or has hewn -- hewed? -- too closely to corporate interests?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think -- some of the criticism I ve seen out there is related to her labor record. If you look at South Carolina, the AFL in South Carolina endorsed her and has been supportive of her.

I think the President -- in response -- or just to go back to Ed s question, which I think is similar -- the President is not interested in public griping or in lobbying campaigns or efforts to trash other candidates. He is going to keep his blinders on, look at the qualifications, the cases, the backgrounds, the credentials of these eminently qualified nominees. All of the ones he s considering would make excellent, qualified Supreme Court justices, and that s where his focus remains.

Q On background and qualifications, how important is it to the President that his choice have served as a public defender?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I m not going to get into any more specifics of the qualifications. You have a short window left before

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to get into any more specifics of the qualifications. You have a short window left before you will know, probably, who he has selected. And you will have more, I'm sure, analysis to do at that time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. On the stalled Fed nominations to the Banking Committee. Chairman Brown said today that he's refusing to move the other picks separate from Sarah Bloom Raskin. He also said that he spoke to President Biden and that President Biden is standing by Senate Democrats on this. So, is the White House backing that strategy of holding all the nominees up and essentially waiting for Republicans to show up in the Banking Committee to vote?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. And I was in the Oval Office when the President spoke with Senator Brown, so I can confirm -- not that there was any doubt -- that he conveyed exactly that to the senator, that he agrees that Republicans are AWOL on the fight against inflation on this -- at this pivotal moment in our economy.

Everyone understands we need a full Federal Reserve Board -- the first one in nearly a decade -- to tackle inflation and bring prices down for American families.

So, no, we are not advocating for splitting the nominees. We support Chairman Brown's decision to keep all five on the Fed board, pushing them forward through the committee. And we believe Republicans need to do their jobs and show up to vote for these nominees.

Q You spoke about the urgency with inflation and other issues facing the Fed. But given that Republicans show no signs of bending and that the Senate is poised to go on recess by the end of the week, I mean, how likely or unlikely is it that we're going to see a vote before the end of the month on these nominees?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would point you to Chairman Brown for that. He is very committed, and I'm sure -- and then, I think, as you've seen him publicly, can be quite a bulldog when we want to get something done. So, we support his efforts to get these five nominees forward. There's a couple days left.

And all we're asking is for Republicans to show up and do their job. They can vote against people or -- but not showing up is not -- is not delivering on the commitment you made to the American people when they elected you.

Q Lastly, on that issue, Senator Toomey was at an event where he said he believed the Fed was basically able to perform at full strength, even without the confirmed nominees. Your reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: I think there's no question that having a full Federal Board fighting inflation -- at a time where that is the stated number-one concern of many Republicans, many Democrats, and many in the American public -- would be the ideal scenario here.

Go ahead.

Q You said a couple times just now that the President is not going to be swayed by lobbying efforts. But I'm wondering: If that's the case, what does he make of Congressman Clyburn's pretty aggressive push for one specific judge, Judge Childs? Does that count as lobbying? Is the President listening to that? This is obviously someone he has in high esteem and is close with.

MS. PSAKI: Of course, he does. He has him in high esteem. He is close with him. But, again, the President -- who is someone who has been through a number of these processes before, who has overseen hearings, who has played a role as Vice President in helping select incredible nominees and now Supreme Court justices to serve -- he is going to consult broadly, and then he is going to look at their credentials, review cases, and make a decision about the right person to nominate for the Court.

Q And I think the only other angle left on the interviews that you have not been asked is: Will you tell us when the

Q AND I THINK THE ONLY OTHER ANGLE LEFT ON THE INTERVIEWS THAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ASKED IS: WILL YOU TELL US WHEN THE INTERVIEWS ARE COMPLETE?

MS. PSAKI: Unlikely. (Laughter.) I will tell you -- the President will tell you when there's a nominee.

The good news is March 1st is around the corner. So, you know, we remain on track, and you don't have too much longer to wait.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. Last night, voters in San Francisco voted to recall three school board members. I'm wondering if the White House has any reaction to that result?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We, of course, did see that. We don't have any reaction directly to the decision by the local school board.

But I would just reiterate that the President's objective has been keeping schools open, from the beginning. And now, at this point in time, 99 percent of schools are open, in large part because of the funding in the American Rescue Plan and efforts that he and his Secretary of Education undertook to ensure schools had the resources and the information needed to keep schools open.

We understand where parents are coming from when they want schools to be open as well. And the President recognizes the mental health impact it has on kids for them not to be open. So, we don't have any specific comment on the local school -- the local decision about the local school board leaders, but that remains the President's objective.

Q And on education more broadly, we saw that be an issue in the Virginia gubernatorial race; obviously, this is the issue here in San Francisco. I'm wondering what the White House or the President's message is to parents about -- you addressed school reopening, but, more broadly, some of the issues that we've seen play -- about equity, about curriculum -- play in some of these electoral races.

MS. PSAKI: Well, tell me more about specifically --

Q So, in San Francisco, specifically, there was controversy over the renaming of schools. There -- in Virginia, conversations about critical race theory. I'm wondering whether the White House or the President thinks that some of these school boards -- maybe in San Francisco and other places -- have moved too far to the left, adopted liberal policies beyond, you know, what voters seemingly approve of -- or just more generally, how the President thinks of education and some of these issues around equity and inclusion.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that the President is married to a teacher, so he certainly trusts in the role of teachers and educators across the country and the kind of curriculum that they are providing.

I'm not going to have any specific comment on any local school board or the politics of school boards, as it relates to any political race either, though.

Go ahead.

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Going back to the Senate Banking Committee, would the White House support a rule change to allow the Senate majority to discharge the nomination directly from committee, as they do with legislation?

MS. PSAKI: I believe that -- I would really point you to Chairman Brown's team and office. I think they have spoken to this and conveyed -- I don't think that there is a path forward for that, but I would point you to them for any comment.

Q And yesterday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he was, quote, "troubled" by new charges that are being brought against Russian activist Alexei Navalny. Would the White House consider, in consultation with its allies, potentially, sanctions on individual leaders maybe in Putin's circle to stop this or other efforts that you all could do to help Navalny and the Russian opposition?

MS. PSAKI: There are a range of sanctions under consideration on his inner circle.

Q And then, finally, congressional Democrats, again, are talking about student loan cancellation. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez discussed this earlier this week, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has also talked about the importance of canceling student loan debt. Why is this not an issue that -- with broad public support and support within his own party in Congress -- has the President not worked or pushed harder on to cancel the debt?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has conveyed he'd be happy to sign a bill into law that all of those members could work to get passed.

Q And then, finally, yesterday marks the 30th House Democrat to announce their retirement from Congress. Is the White House at all concerned that this is indicative of a political climate in the broader country, in his own party? And could, simply, the retirements of very senior Democrats on the Hill potentially have implications for the White House's domestic agenda?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, I have to be a little careful. I've learned -- I've learned my lesson the hard way about talking about politics from up here.

There are a range of retirements every cycle for a variety of reasons. And what we're focused on is working with members to deliver for the American people. And we expect that anyone who's going to be out there answering questions to people who may vote for them in the future, that they will hopefully talk about the work they've done with the President to create the greatest 12 months of job creation in our nation's history, the largest drop in unemployment rate on record, the largest reduction in childhood poverty ever, the strongest economic growth this country has seen in nearly 40 years.

So, there's a lot we're going to be focused on. The President himself has conveyed he's looking forward to being out there when it's time for political season. But beyond that, I'm a little limited in what I can convey from here.

Go ahead.

Q I actually do have something.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead.

Q One thing. The -- I think -- circling back to something I think we asked Karine about a couple of days ago, but --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The mayor of the District of Columbia has announced that she's going to significantly reduce the restrictions -- the COVID restrictions. The indoor mask wearing, I think, comes off at the end of the month. The requirement to show proof of vaccination has ended, I think, as of yesterday.

The campus -- the White House campus is in Washington, D.C., obviously, like, affected by the metrics that are around, in terms of case counts and hospital counts and what have you.

You know, does -- does that -- are you guys going to follow some of the recommendations that the mayor has put out? Or are you going to wait for the CDC to make their recommendations before you change any of the activities on this campus?

MS. PSAKI: We'll wait for the CDC. And they've said -- and I know you had a COVID briefing a little bit earlier today -- that they're continuing to review mask guidelines and how different communities in the country should assess them, but we'll wait for the CDC to make any changes here.

Q And on the Supreme Court, I think I've thought of one more way, which is to --

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q -- which is only to say that when the President said the other day that he was considering "about four" nominees, did he mean three? Did "about four" mean three? (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: I think the President -- the President meant "about four," and I don't have anything further to add to that.

Go ahead.

Q Could it be five?

Q I'm sorry, I actually do have another way to --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- to get at that.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q With the President traveling tomorrow, could we -- could you rule out that the announcement would come this week?

And would you flesh out more details on what you expect the announcement to look like? Sometimes we've seen them take place in primetime with events in the East Room. Is that what the President is looking out for his announcement?

MS. PSAKI: We don't have any details on that to preview at this point in time.

Q I had to try.

MS. PSAKI: I appreciate it.

Go ahead.

Q And on the State of California -- a couple of California-themed questions for you. So, the EPA is finalizing a rule that would give California a waiver to -- and the authority to set its own emission standards. Why does the administration think it's important for California to have the ability to set its own emission standards?

MS. PSAKI: This is a great question. I know I have something on this, but I don't have it in front of me. So let me get you -- it to you after the briefing.

Q Absolutely. And to follow up on that though: Even with the waiver, California is expected largely to stick to the Biden administration standards, but the President has indicated in the past that he does look to California on these issues. So, if California were to institute stricter standards -- say on either heavy-duty vehicles, for instance -- would that be something that the administration would seriously consider mirroring?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question, but I don't have anything to predict or preview on that front. Obviously, the President's objective remains lowering emissions in the country and reaching his ambitious climate goals that he set. But in terms of what future steps look like, I don't have anything to predict at this point in time.

Q And one last one on California --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- but not on emissions.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Okay. President Biden has been supportive of Governor Gavin Newsom in many instances. Does he support Governor Newsom's decisions to drop the universal mask mandate in California, even as masks continue to be required in California schools?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a number of states who have made decisions -- not just California -- and announcements. And what we've said and I can repeat is that we will continue to look for and abide by CDC guidance from the federal government. That's what we will follow. But different leaders will make decisions based on what they think is best for their communities.

Go ahead.

Q Great, thank you. One more on SCOTUS. Everyone is going to try.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Go ahead.

Q This is a new tactical maneuver. Senator Grassley, the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, today told reporters on the Hill that he is under the impression that President Biden is doing interviews this week. Can you confirm or deny what Senator Grassley said?

MS. PSAKI: We said "as early as this week." That's all the detail I have for you.

Q Afghanistan: This week marked six months since the withdrawal from Afghanistan. From this podium, Jake Sullivan told us that the commitment to allies there is sacrosanct. The administration committed to doing everything it could to get our allies out, but tens of thousands of allies -- hundreds of thousands if you include families -- including the SIV people in the pipeline, are still there and struggling. What exactly is the administration doing to get them out? Because on the ground and from Congress, my sources say they think you're doing nothing.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that we have successfully helped -- I can get you the specific number, but I believe it's hundreds depart from Afghanistan: partners, allies, people who have stood by our side since we withdrew from Afghanistan at the end of August.

We've worked in partnership with allies and partners in the region, including the Qataris, where we have our diplomatic presence. We are the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance of any country in the world, which we continue to provide through -- through proven third-party aid organizations as well. And flights just resumed, I think a couple of weeks ago, through Qatar Airways, and that will also play a role in helping.

But we remain committed to working with our partners in the region and to helping those who want to leave Afghanistan who have been serving by our side for 20 years to help do that.

Q And could you help me -- I can follow up -- get numbers on women in particular? And --

MS. PSAKI: I would point to the State Department, and they have -- they would have any details on specific numbers.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The British Prime Minister said that Russia is sending signal -- or mixed signals or messages. They say they're open to -- for diplomacy and they keep on building the military back up on the border. Does the White House believe actually that the Russians are using deceitful tactics?

And can you update us on the talks in Vienna -- Iran talks? Do you think that we're closer to getting a deal? You, yourself, said that February is a vital month, that this is crunch time.

MS. PSAKI: So on the first question, you know, as Secretary Blinken said this morning, there is what Russia says and then there's what Russia does. And we certainly believe that they will continue to use false-flag operations, efforts to deceive -- lay a predicate for war, which is why we have been putting out as much information as we can on that front, so that the world is aware and knows what to look for and watch for. And we do that, of course, in partnership with our allies around the world.

As it relates to Iran, they -- I believe they're still in the eighth round of negotiations. You know, of course, as we've said in the past, you know, we would certainly support efforts or the opportunity to have direct engagement with the Iranians. We won't -- we've said that a deal -- our focus remains on a deal that addresses the core concerns of all sides.

And if it's not reached in the coming weeks -- as we've said before, but this remains the case -- Iran's ongoing nuclear advances will make it impossible for us to return to the JCPOA.

So, bottom line is: Under the JCPOA, Iran's program was tightly constrained and monitored by international inspectors. Since the previous administration ceased U.S. participation, Iran has rapidly accelerated and reduced cooperation. And that is, hence, why we are where we are.

But we -- they are continuing to engage -- of my last update on this. But, again, I'd reiterate that the President asked a team to present -- to put together a range of options in the event those need to be considered.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thanks, Jen. So, on Monday, it was the one-year anniversary of the phase one trade deal with China going into effect. Written into that deal is very specific enforcement language. So, when does the administration trigger that language against China because they haven't lived up to that agreement?

MS. PSAKI: Well, so, the phase one trade agreement that the President -- I think you're -- I think that's not exactly accurate, as my understanding of what the status of this is at this point -- or what anything that's triggered or not triggered. The --

Q It's not -- yeah, it's not an automatic trigger, but there is specific language in there as to what the enforcement is.

MS. PSAKI: Well, so, first, you know, when he was running for president, the President made clear that the phase one deal did not address the core problems with China's state-led economy and harmful economic practices.

USTR, since that period of time, has been making a concerted effort to see if China will show serious intent to make good on their purchase commitments. But the fact that they have not met those illustrates the limitations of the framework we inherited. They're still in discussions about them.

So, I don't have, kind of, an update on that. I would leave that to Katherine Tai, our ambassador.

Q Is there a sense of urgency now that China and Russia are moving closer together?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that has been the case for some time now. It also does not change the fact that if Russia were to invade, the size and seriousness of the economic consequences and package -- that's not something that China would have the ability to fill in the gaps on.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Oh -- oh, yes. I got to go. Aurelia, why don't you do the last one?

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. Climate change -- a complete change of topic. According to a report published yesterday, by 2050, the sea level on U.S. coasts would rise by one foot, which means 40 percent of American people who live in coastal areas would see more damaging floods. What is the administration doing about it? And does the President feel he is doing enough to fight climate change?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you've heard the President say, time and time again -- especially when he goes and visits communities that have been impacted by major weather events -- one in three Americans live in a county hit by a weather disaster this past year, which is a pretty startling statistic. And last year, extreme weather cost America \$99 billion.

So, we know -- we know climate change is real. Anyone who doubts it: That's further evidence climate change is real, and it's exacerbating the extreme weather conditions. And certainly, this report is further evidence of that.

What the President has done is, of course, work to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which -- a lot of people focus on roads, rails, and bridges -- important parts -- but it also has an enormous investment in strengthening our nation's resilience to extreme weather and climate change while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, replacing lead pipes so everyone has access to clean water. And we've also been mobilizing an all-of-government approach to deploy and implement critical clean energy projects.

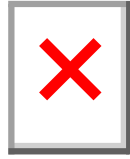
But I would also note that this is one of the reasons the President is going to continue to press for key components of his agenda -- his Build Back Better agenda -- including a historic investment in addressing the climate crisis.

Thanks, everyone. See you tomorrow.

1:51 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 16, 2022 6:03 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 16, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat Akiba Takeo

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Akiba Takeo, Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat, to discuss the ongoing situation in Russia and Ukraine. Sullivan reviewed recent developments on the ground, and noted that Russian forces remain postured to attack Ukraine at any time. The two discussed ongoing diplomatic efforts by the international community and Sullivan reiterated President Biden's statement that the door remains open to diplomacy. Sullivan thanked Secretary General Akiba for Japan's recent decision to divert some Liquefied Natural Gas supplies to Europe, and he underscored the importance of a strong international response to any further Russian aggression against Ukraine. Secretary General Akiba emphasized that Japan is committed to closely coordinating with the United States and the G-7 in response to further Russian aggression against Ukraine.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Deputy National Security Advisor and Deputy NEC Director Daleep Singh, February 22, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 22, 2022 11:14 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 22, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics and Deputy NEC Director Daleep Singh, February 22, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

5:23 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Good evening. Okay, well, back by popular demand, just a few days after his first engagement with us, Daleep is here. He is going to give some brief remarks at the top about the sanctions announcement today.

He has a hard out, so he's only going to be -- be able to take a few questions today, but we're grateful to have you here. So I'll kick it over to you.

MR. SINGH: Russia's long-anticipated invasion of Ukraine has begun and so, too, has our response. Today, the President responded swiftly and in lockstep with Allies and partners. The speed and coordination was historic. In previous sanctions regimes, it took weeks and months to mount a decisive response. This time, we announced our first tranche of sanctions in less than a day and in lockstep with Allies and partners in the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and Australia.

Let me say a few words about the details of the package.

(A cellphone disrupts the briefing.)

First --

MS. PSAKI: Hi. (Laughter.)

MR. SINGH: Hello. There s no easy segue from that. (Laughter.)

Q The sanctions --

MR. SINGH: (Laughs.) Close your ears.

First, after consultations overnight with Germany, Russia s Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline will not become operational. That s an \$11 billion investment in a prized gas pipeline controlled by Russia that will now go to waste, and it sacrifices what would have been a cash cow for Russia s coffers.

But it s not just about the money. This decision will relieve Russia s geostrategic chokehold over Europe through its supply of gas, and it s a major turning point in the world s energy independence from Russia.

Second, we ve demonstrated the potency of our financial sanctions. And make -- make no mistake: This is only the sharp edge of the pain we can inflict.

In lockstep with our Allies, we re fully blocking from the global financial system the fifth-largest Russian financial institution, V.E.B. This is a glorified piggybank for the Kremlin that holds more than \$50 billion in assets.

We re also fully blocking Promsvyazbank. This is a bank that holds \$35 billion in assets that finances the activities of the Russian military.

In plain English, full -- full block means these banks can no longer make any transactions with the U.S. nor with Europe, as Europe matched our actions, and their assets in our respective financial systems will be frozen.

And let me be totally clear: No Russian financial institution is safe if the invasion proceeds. We are ready to press a button to take action on the two largest Russian financial institutions, which collectively hold almost \$750 billion in assets -- or more than half of the total in the Russian banking system.

Third, together with our Allies, we ve also cut off the Russian government, the Russian Central Bank, and Russian sovereign wealth funds from new financing from the U.S. and Europe. The Kremlin can no longer raise money from the U.S. or Europe, and its new debt can no longer trade on U.S. or European financial markets.

Fourth, we have fully sanctioned a group of Russian elites and their family members. These individuals share in the corrupt gains of the Kremlin, and they will now share in the pain. Other Russian elites and their family members are now on notice that additional actions could be taken on them as well.

I also want to take a minute to address a key part of the President s speech on energy markets. We were deliberate to direct the pain of our sanctions towards the Russian economy, not ours. None of our measures are designed to disrupt the flow of energy to global markets. And we are now executing a plan in coordination with major oil producers and major oil consumers to secure the stability of global energy supplies.

Let me just end where I started: This was the beginning of an invasion, and this is the beginning of our response. The actions we took today were only the first tranche.

If Putin escalates further, we will escalate further using financial sanctions and export controls, which we ve yet to unveil but which are fully prepared to implement with Allies and partners across the world.

Lastly, make no mistake: Our response goes well beyond sanctions and export controls. We re continuing to fortify NATO s

eastern flank to reinforce our sacred Article 5 commitment to defend every inch of NATO territory.

Just today, the President announced that additional troops and equipment will be shifted within Europe to the Baltics. We'll continue to provide defensive assistance to Ukraine.

Already, over the past year, we've provided \$650 billion [million] to this effect -- the most of any year. And we'll continue to work with Allies and partners to provide economic assistance to Ukraine with the idea -- idea being: We want to create a successful alternative in Ukraine to Russian-style kleptocracy, which may be Putin's greatest fear of all.

MS. PSAKI: Josh.

MR. SINGH: Thank you.

Q Hi. Thank you. Can you speak a little bit more about the energy component? What tools do you have in the tool chest, given that there's been an effort ongoing now for several months to control the price increases that we're seeing for gasoline in particular? What can you do to help energy prices not spike the way that President Biden appears to worry that will?

MR. SINGH: Yeah. So this is an ongoing effort and a sensitive effort. I can give you a bit -- a bit of detail on what that involves.

Number one, it involves coordinating our actions with major energy producers [consumers]. We all have reserves at our disposal, and those reserves could help support the supply of energy worldwide.

Number two, we're working closely with major energy producers. Many of them have -- several of them have the spare capacity to provide supply to global energy markets and to balance the market in the event of any supply disruption.

Number three, we can work with energy companies to surge their capacity to supply energy to the market, particularly as prices rise.

And number four, we can be very clear that if President Putin weaponizes energy supply, it will be met with massive consequences and it will only accelerate the diversification of Europe and the world away from Russian energy.

Q And can you speak, quickly, to the decision to what seems to be delinking the sanctions? Initially, the President was signaling if there is an invasion or a further invasion that the sanctions would come full stop, one swoop. Now we're seeing, sort of, more of a tit-for-tat approach. You're warning here today that if President Putin goes further, so will the sanctions.

Can you walk us through that process at all? It seems like the U.S. is now breaking its sanction package into chunks, whereas the expectation had been that it would come all at once.

MR. SINGH: Yeah. Well, look, today's package is a severe action -- I walked through the elements of it -- with Nord Stream, the financial sanctions, sovereign debt, and the elites.

Number two, it's just the beginning. This was the beginning of an invasion; this is just the beginning of our response.

But number three -- and this really gets to your question, I think, most fundamentally: No one should think that it's our goal to max out on sanctions. Sanctions are not an end to themselves. They serve a higher purpose. And that purpose is to deter and prevent.

They're meant to prevent and deter a large-scale invasion of Ukraine that could involve the seizure of major cities, including Kyiv. They're meant to prevent large-scale human suffering that could involve tens of thousands of casualties in a conflict. And they're meant to prevent the installation of a puppet government, controlled by Moscow, that subjugates the will of Ukraine and prevents the people of Ukraine from choosing their own destiny and setting their own course. That's

what this is all about.

MS. PSAKI: Cecilia.

Q What is it going to take to target Putin directly?

MR. SINGH: I'm not going to --

Q Why not do that today?

MR. SINGH: I'm not going to telegraph exactly what it would take and under what circumstances that would occur. But no option is off the table, as the President said.

Q But the EU President said today "this is the most dangerous moment in European security in a generation." So if not today, when? What?

MR. SINGH: Look, as I say, we mounted a very significant response today; we can escalate that response further. There are a number of actions we can take using financial sanctions, export controls, fortifying our eastern flank, helping Ukraine defend itself, helping each other deal with the costs and consequences of Russia's invasion, and, most importantly, having a shared confidence among Allies in our way of life, our economic model, our political model.

If Russia wants to sequester itself from Western technology, the Western economy, and from Western financial markets, that is a bad strategic choice for Russia. But we're going to step up in solidarity to advance our values and principles.

MS. PSAKI: Zeke.

Q Thanks. You mentioned that sanctions are meant to deter and prevent, but the fact of the matter is the sanctions you're announcing today and announced last night did not deter or prevent Russia's actions yesterday and over the weekend. What gives you any confidence that the remaining sanctions that haven't been imposed yet can deter or prevent a further Russian invasion and aggression in Ukraine?

MR. SINGH: Well, look, it's -- it's day one. And President Putin has choices to make; we have choices to make. Our job is to manage risks and to impose consequences for a further escalation of this conflict by President Putin.

We can do that through financial sanctions. We can do that through export controls. We can do that through fortifying NATO's eastern flank. We can do that through providing defensive assistance to Ukraine. We can do that by being prepared for any energy market impact that occurs from Russia's choices. Those are the choices that are within our disposal.

And let me just take a step back and talk about sanctions. You know, we have principles that matter in terms of how we design a sanctions package. They need to be powerful enough to demonstrate our resolve and the capacity to impose overwhelming costs. They should be calibrated such that we can maximize coordination with our Allies and partners. They should maintain flexibility so we can escalate or deescalate depending on what Putin does. They should be responsible so that we avoid unwanted spillovers to the U.S. and global economy. And they need to be sustainable. They work over time, not on day one.

MS. PSAKI: Weijia is going to have to be the last one.

Q Mr. Singh, can you tell us why Putin himself was not sanctioned?

Q Okay. Thank you. So just to follow up --

MS. PSAKI: Cecilia.

MS. PSAKI: I think --

Q I mean, I know you're trying to explain --

MS. PSAKI: Weijia is going to ask a question. Simon, you got --

Q -- because when you are doing it by --

MS. PSAKI: Simon, you got a question last week. So we're just trying to diversify it a little bit.

Q Yeah, I just wanted to --

Q Can we have an answer to that one, though?

MS. PSAKI: Simon, can you let Weijia ask a question? Thank you. Go ahead, Weijia.

Q Thank you. I know that you just talked about all the actions that you're taking to counter any oil shortages that might drive up gas prices. But today, the President himself was very blunt about how they could impact Americans. So can you just give us a sense of when Americans might feel a difference when they fill up their gas tanks?

And then, secondly, to follow up on what Zeke was just asking, both you and the President said today that these sanctions will be in response, will be -- if Putin escalates, you will escalate. So that sounds like they are going to be in response now and not meant to deter. So do you still view them as being a deterrence, or are they just a punishment at this point?

MR. SINGH: Yeah. So the first question on energy markets and the impact of our actions and when they'll take effect in markets: Look, again, I -- I don't want to go into specifics, but there are actions that energy consumers can take with their strategic reserves. There are actions that energy producers can take in terms of their spare capacity. There are actions that energy producers can undertake to increase their production of energy in the current circumstance.

And I'm not going to give you a timeline, but the collective power of those actions and all the other tools and authorities that are at our disposal, plus diplomatic maneuvers that are at -- that are at our disposal -- collectively, we think, will be effective in bringing down the price of gas and the price of oil.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, Daleep. Thank you so much for joining us. He will come back, I promise. And I promised he would not be too late for his meeting. So thank you so much for joining us.

Okay. I apologize to those of you who did not get questions from Daleep. We will have him back, and we will make him available in other capacities as well to all of you.

I have one very unrelated no- -- but still very important item for you at the top, and then we'll get back to our discussion.

Today in Arizona, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced the Interior Department's plan to fulfill settlements of Indian water rights claims using historic funding from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The Infrastructure Law provides \$2.5 billion to implement the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund, which will help deliver long-promised water resources to Tribes and a foundation for future economic development for entire communities dependent on common water resources.

Following feedback from the Tribal consul- -- from Tribal consultations, the Department will allocate \$1.7 billion this year alone from the Infrastructure Law to enact -- to enacted settlements that have outstanding federal payments necessary to complete their terms.

With that, Zeke, why don't you kick us off. And we will get around to as many people as possible, and I realize it's already

with that, Zeke, why don't you kick us off. And we will get around to as many people as possible, and I realize it's already late. Go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, Jen. If you could walk through the events of the last 24 hours. Last night, a senior administration official on a background call with reporters briefed -- a briefing on the administration's response and said that Russia has occupied these regions since 2014 and that Russian troops moving into the Donbas would not in and of -- would not -- it would not itself be a new step and didn't use the word "invasion."

This morning, the Deputy National Security Advisor said "invasion," and the President is using "invasion."

What changed in the last 24 hours? What did you see on the ground that changed the U.S. government's assessment of what is actually happening in eastern Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I'm not going -- I know this isn't exactly what you're asking. But just to set the precedent here, I'm not going to be confirming military movements from the podium now or at any point probably. But what I can tell you is what we looked at is the events of the last less than 24 hours, Zeke. Right? And what we have seen is President Putin setting up a rationale to take more territory by force.

What we're basing that on -- including the comments of the Deputy National Security Advisor this morning and then the President's comments later in the afternoon -- is a couple of things: One, Vladimir Putin announced yesterday that he was basically planning to carve out a chunk of Ukraine by recognizing two regions of Ukraine as independent. He brazenly asserted these regions are no longer part of Ukrainian sovereign territory. Last night, he authorized Russian forces to deploy into these regions. Today, he sought authorizations -- authorization from the Duma for the Russian military to use force outside of Russian territory. And today, he asserted that these regions actually extend deeper into Ukraine, claiming larger areas currently under jurisdiction of the Ukrainian government.

So, what we're seeing there -- and as for anybody who read or paid attention to his lengthy speech last night -- is the rationale to go much further. That is what we are also watching very closely.

And this com- -- for this combination of reasons, we see this as the beginning of a further invasion of Ukraine. But we look at and we assess over the course of a short period of time.

Q And -- but right now, could you say whether or not the U.S. government believes that there's been additional deployments of Russian forces -- active forces -- across the border into Ukraine? They've been there for years, but additional forces.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into military assessments of military movements from here.

Q And then on a separate topic, the President -- Daleep talked to this as well -- warned Americans over the last several weeks that they have to -- they should be prepared to bear the cost of standing up for Ukraine's sovereignty. And, you know, there's been a lot of conversation about this. And I was hoping you could maybe speak to -- clarify this a little bit: Why should Americans, you know, feel that they have to -- you know, that is a cost that they should have to bear and that should affect their lives? And how much should they be prepared for this, you know, geopolitical crisis to impact their day-to-day living?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what, hopefully, the American people who are tuning into this or have been tuning into this will see is that the President of the United States and his entire national security apparatus have been rallying the world and standing up against the efforts of Russia to invade and take -- and carve out a chunk of another country for their own. And that is -- the world is standing with the United States against the actions of President Putin.

Now, why does that matter? I realize that's what you're asking me. Why does that matter to the American people? That should matter because that is a fundamental value that we, as a country, stand up for, and we stand up against that type of action. That goes back to World War Two. And we have repeatedly throughout history been leaders in the world in

action. That goes back to World War I, and we have repeatedly throughout history been leaders in the world in rallying support for [against] any efforts to seize territory from another country.

What the -- when the President spoke to the American people last week, it was very important to him to be very direct and clear and straightforward with them about what this could mean as we looked to what the impact of an invasion could mean and also what the impact of sanctions could mean, and the fact that standing up for values is not without cost, including in this case -- including, potentially, in this scenario.

Now, as Daleep just conveyed, what the President has said to his national security team is he wants to leave no stone unturned. He wants them to take every step possible to tap into the resources of global suppliers, to present to him any option that will reduce the impact on the American people. And even as he's looking at sanctions, he is taking that into account.

But this is about standing up for American values and making -- and he wanted to make clear to them what impact that could have.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Given what Secretary Blinken just announced about his meeting with Lavrov on Thursday, is a summit between the President and Putin out of the question now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're never going to completely close the door to diplomacy, and I don't think the Secretary of State did that either.

But just to build on what he just said, diplomacy can't succeed unless Russia changes course. And as he said, it wouldn't be appropriate for him to have a meeting with his counterpart at this point in time -- Foreign Minister Lavrov. And it was always intended that any engagement with President Putin would follow that.

So, at this point, that is certainly not in the plans.

Q And what would -- what would it take to get that conversation back to the table -- to reconsider a meeting between the two leaders?

MS. PSAKI: Well, de-escalation.

Q Which --

MS. PSAKI: That's what it would take.

Q Which -- which -- how do you define that?

MS. PSAKI: "De-escalation" means moving troops. It means de-escalating from what the steps they continue to take on a daily basis appear to be.

Q And then a second topic, quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q How many Supreme Court nominees has the President interviewed by this point?

MS. PSAKI: (Winks at the press.) (Laughter.) That was a wink.

I appreciate your question.

Q Does that mean three?

MS. PSAKI: I understand, Weijia, why you're asking. We are, of course, a very short period of time away from the end of the month of February. The President has not made a decision about who he is going to nominate, but I'm not -- still not going to get into details about the internal process.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: More to tell soon.

Go ahead, Peter.

Q Thank you, Jen. The President said in the spring that Pentagon generals had briefed him that the greatest threat facing America is global warming. Is that still the assessment now that we are facing down a potential cyber war with Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I -- let me first say: There is no -- while we are always prepared for any threat that any outside entity or country poses to the United States as it relates to cyber or anything else, there is no current pending threat on -- as it relates to cyber.

In terms of the threats you're -- you're touching on, that was a briefing from the military, so I'd point you to them.

Q And so, as far as anybody watching who's seen the coverage, it's very -- at times, distressing images of Russian military movements -- the number-one threat facing the country right now remains global warming?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Peter, I think it's important, as we're all educating the public here, to convey and reiterate: The President has no intention of sending U.S. troops into Ukraine to fight in Ukraine. What we are doing is we are abiding by our obligations to our NATO Allies and partners to ensure that they have the support and the resources that they need. And that is our right and our obligation as the United States.

Q Okay. And why do you guys think that sanctions are going to stop Putin if his goal ultimately is to redraw the map so it looks like it did 70 or 80 years ago? What sanction is going to stop him from doing that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, just to kind of reiterate maybe something you touched on there -- for anyone who watched his speech last night, what he made clear in that speech is that he doesn't even necessarily -- or doesn't recognize the independence of Ukraine as a country. And that certainly gives us an indication of where his intentions are at this point in time.

Sanctions can be a powerful tool. They have been in a lot of moments throughout history. And what we view them as -- or how we're viewing them as we're starting high, as Daleep just conveyed here, in terms of the significance and the severity of the sanctions that were announced today -- yes, our intention is to have a deterrent effect. And there are -- while what they have done to date is completely unacceptable, there are certainly far worse that could happen. What we want to do is prevent a large-scale invasion -- death and destruction across Ukraine, devastation to the Ukrainian people.

And that what happens with the sanctions is they work over time. They're not an end. They're not intended to max out at the beginning. They're long-lasting and sustainable, and they're intended to squeeze.

But if you look at what is happening now, what President Putin has stated as his intention is he wants to divide NATO. The opposite of that has happened, Peter. He also wanted to -- a geopolitical project, Nord Stream 2, to go forward; that has not happened. He wants to make sure there is a vibrant economy for the Russian people; they're not on that track.

So, his intentions and his objectives are not playing out.

Q But so, I guess, to follow up on that: The President said before he got here that “Putin knows, if I am President of the United States, his days of tyranny and trying to intimidate the United States and those in Eastern Europe are over.” It’s two and a half years later. He is intimidating the United States and those in Eastern Europe. What happened?

MS. PSAKI: I’d hardly put it that way. I would look at it, actually, from the prism of: The United States and President Biden has rallied the world, rallied Europe to stand up against the efforts and the actions of President Putin.

Q You don’t think people who are totally strapped for cash --

MS. PSAKI: And we -- we’ve laid out very clearly exactly --

Q -- right now are intimidated by \$4 gas, \$5 gas, however high you guys think it’s going to go? Something like that is not intimidating?

MS. PSAKI: You asked me if we were intimidated by President Putin, and I think the evidence of that doesn’t exist.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thank you, Jen. If I can try one more time --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- on sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The President of Ukraine on Saturday urged -- called on the United States and its Allies to impose the toughest sanctions. And as all of these questions suggest, President Putin doesn’t seem to be deterred at this point. Why not choke him -- Russia -- out financially right now as a way to try to stop him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, here’s how we and our national security team looks at sanctions -- it’s a very good question; I think it’s actually a different one than what was asked -- is we look at them through a couple of -- for a couple of purposes.

One, not that they are going to be an end on their own. Just the announcement of sanctions is not -- is not going to have the immediate impact. They’re not intended to work that way.

They’re not -- we’re not -- they’re not intended to max out at the beginning. This is why we’ve always intended to have a range of sanctions, steps that we could plus-up to or escalate to if his behavior and his actions continue to be escalatory.

And also, if we do all the sanctions now, what is the deterrent effect or impact of preventing him to take further action? That is what -- the conversation we’ve been in with the global community, and that is how we’ve been approaching it to date.

Q Senator Lindsey Graham says President Biden is “missing the moment.” Does he run the risk of being too cautious here with this tranche approach?

MS. PSAKI: We -- in what capacity is he missing the moment? What did Senator Graham say?

Q Lindsey Gra- -- I’ll read you the entire --

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead.

Q -- quote. "This is a critical moment in history.... President Biden is NOT seizing the moment. The sanctions outlined are woefully inadequate to deter Putin's" --

MS. PSAKI: Did he say that before or after we announced the sanctions?

Q He's been saying this consistently.

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think it's an important question because what we -- what the President announced was the sanctioning of two enormous financial system -- institutions that is essentially going to make it more difficult for people close to President Putin and in the Russian elite to do business. And this is just the beginning.

Q When do you think they'll start to feel the impact? When will they feel the bite?

MS. PSAKI: Well, they're going to be implemented immediately. So, obviously, it takes some time, but our effort and our focus is on implementing them immediately.

Q And going back to President Biden's statement that he wants to mitigate the impact on Americans: Can you tell Americans how much pain will they feel with this first tranche?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what we're looking at here, Kristen is, of course, the impact on natural gas ~~producers~~ [consumers] primarily is in Europe, and we're working to help them too, but also on the oil markets.

And, obviously, there are many additional steps that President Putin could take, and what we're seeing is that he has every intention of taking. So, I can't give you a projection of that. Some of it depends on what the actions are.

Q But do you think Americans will feel the impact in the coming weeks of these round -- this round of sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Again, it really depends on what the steps are. What -- what was announced today was significant sanctions on Russian elite and on financial institutions there.

The people who will be largely impacted are in Russia on those.

Q If I could just try one more. SWIFT -- not in this initial rollout.

MS. PSAKI: In the ini- -- not in the initial tranche, but remains on the table.

Q Will it be in the next rollout if there needs to be another rollout?

MS. PSAKI: I can't give you a prediction of that. But again, we have a range of options that remain on the table significant -- that would have a significant and devastating impact on the Russian economy.

We've already seen, in the Russian economy, the impact on inflation there and on the markets there of the expectation of these -- of these sanctions, but all of those options remain on the table, and I can't make a prediction of what's next.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, the President today used words like "bizarre" and "twisted" to describe Putin's remarks. Does the administration believe -- on what they saw in his speech yesterday or in the last 24 hours, if you will -- that Putin has shown some kind of change in his state of mind, in his demeanor?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say we'd characterize it that way, Cecilia. I mean, if you -- for those of you who read or watched his speech last night -- which was rife with historical inaccuracy, of course -- he made clear that he does not view Ukraine -- not just the areas he recognized yesterday, but the totality of Ukraine -- as an independent country.

And he did -- and he conveyed that by providing a lot of revisionist history details that are not aligned with what has happened over the last few decades.

Now, we've seen some of that rhetoric, if you look back -- back to 2008, and even before then. But it is indicative of, you know, of his own belief that he has the right as -- of Russia -- and he has the right to take the territory, to claim territory from another country. And we just don't agree with that, obviously.

Q And if sanctions don't work, then what? What else is in the toolbox at the President's disposal at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, sanctions can take a number of formats. Right? Export controls is certainly one of them. There's many more sanctions that we have at our disposal.

SWIFT -- the SWIFT system is obviously significant and not in the first tranche. But there's a range of options that remain on the table for sanctions.

And again, as Daleep conveyed, but I think this is an important component for -- to -- to know is that they're not intended to have an impact on the first -- the harshest impact on the first day. They're attempted -- they're planned or they're designed to have a squeezing impact over the course of time. And we have many more escalatory steps that we could take.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, do you have specific agreements with countries, exporters to ensure Europe has a steady supply of gas? Or is that still a work in progress?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand your question. As Daleep said, it's a very -- at a very sensitive time in the process right now. But what we're doing right now is talking both to major natural gas producers to understand their capacity and willingness to surge natural gas output, which of course is a regional issue that would have an impact in Europe, and also talking, as he said, to a range of producers to -- to help assess -- or help reduce the market impact and the impact on the American public. But I just can't outline any more details on it from here.

Q When you talk about the American -- the impact that you're -- on the American public, you mean, specifically, Americans should expect higher gasoline prices.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, energy prices. Exactly.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: That's -- that's what we want the American public to be aware is a possibility.

Q And are you announcing more oligarchs tomorrow? Is that the plan?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview for you at this point in time. But I can certainly check if there's another tranche coming tomorrow. Absolutely.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Jen, given that the President stressed today that diplomacy is still available but now the Blinken-Lavrov meeting is off, you just said, this future summit between the President and Putin is not in the plans anymore -- can you help paint a picture of what exactly diplomacy looks like in terms of dealing with Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, we still -- the door to diplomacy still remains open. And it just -- as I think our foreign -- our Secretary of State conveyed, it isn't the appropriate time, as Russia is taking escalatory steps and preparing to invade, for him to meet with the foreign minister.

And it had always been the intention that any engagement with President Putin would be discussed there and potentially (inaudible) there. But there were never any specific plans or timeline, really, in the works for that. So, it was really going to be discussed at that meeting.

What diplomacy looks like: One, we're going to continue to engage with our European partners, of course, and we will continue to remain open to -- to having diplomatic conversations once -- if and when they de-escalate.

Q Diplomatic conversations -- so, certainly between President Biden and President Putin in the future?

MS. PSAKI: Well, of course, that remains an option. And as we've said, I think, over the course of the last few days, he's always going to be open to having leader-to-leader conversations, but this isn't the time to do it when -- and we said this at the time as well -- when they are -- when President Putin is overseeing the invasion of a sovereign country.

Q And just quickly, what is the U.S. assessment right now of Russian invasion into Kyiv? Is that considered an immediate danger right now?

MS. PSAKI: It con- -- it is considered -- I'm not going to give you a timeline, but it's considered a real possibility, yes.

Go ahead.

Q For weeks, Jake Sullivan and other top officials have said that the administration and the White House has learned the lessons of 2014, and you will enact -- in sanctions, you will enact "start high and stay high," rather than gradually escalate.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q As you talk about the chunks and different trenches, it seems you are doing the opposite. Why is that the approach that you're taking --

MS. PSAKI: Not true, actually. We actually didn't sanction these type of financial institutions back in 2014.

Q Right. But just more of the broad --

MS. PSAKI: And it took several weeks to sanction these types of institutions.

Q But more in terms of the theory of the case -- that instead of doing it in pieces, where you start and then continue to add on, the lessons that Jake and others have signaled was that you "start high and stay high," instead of doing it more piecemeal.

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's exactly what we're doing. So, the announcement that was made today about these financial institutions is more significant than what was done in 2014. And we would only build further from here. So, that is starting high and staying high.

Go ahead.

Q What Russian actions would trigger the fullest extent of U.S. sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to detail what exact reaction will be to each action. Obviously, we have a range of options at our disposal. They're -- all remain on the table, and our preference is, of course, de-escalation, not instituting more sanctions.

Q Is the administration confident that sanctions and export controls can or will be enough to turn to deter Putin?

And can you go into any more detail about what those export controls might look like?

MS. PSAKI: I can't go into specific -- more specifics. Just a range of options are on the table. And obviously, export control actions would have a significant additional impact on the economy there.

In terms of -- tell me your first part of your question again?

Q Oh, yeah. Just is the administration confident that sanctions and export controls can deter Putin? Are they enough?

MS. PSAKI: Well, part of what sanctions are is -- they're intended to be a deterrent, but they're also intended to have a squeezing, significant impact on the economy that is felt over a sustainable period of time that makes it more difficult to continue those behaviors and those actions.

They're not -- they're not intended or designed to be an end when they're initially announced. So that -- those are the range of options we have at our disposal, and there will continue to be a growing impact.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. The President said last week that he was hoping to, maybe, work with Congress on some sort of proposal to address energy prices. Is that still on the table or is this focus now on sort of diplomacy with producers and consumers?

MS. PSAKI: All is on the table.

Q And what might that look like?

MS. PSAKI: Discussions with Congress?

Q Yeah. Would it be in the form of legislation to lower prices? I mean, what kind of policies is --

MS. PSAKI: That is an option, but I don't have anything to detail for you at this point in time.

Q And then, on another subject, the U.S. and several countries are close to reaching a nuclear deal with Iran. What's the likelihood of an agreement, you know, this week, in your view? And would the U.S. agree to a deal that does not include the release of U.S. and British prisoners held by Iran?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me -- let me start with your second question because this is a really important one. But the discussions on unjustly detained and innocent Americans remains separate from the JCPOA talks. Special Envoy Malley has reiterated, "...it's very hard for us to imagine getting back into the nuclear deal" -- or agreeing to kind of a new iteration of the deal, to the point of your question -- "while four innocent Americans" -- and others -- "are being held hostage by Iran."

It's really a matter of urgency to bring the detainees home, and we want it to be resolved immediately. But it is happening from a -- through a separate channel -- those conversations.

In terms of the status of the JCPOA talks, we have made substantial progress -- or substantial progress has been made over the last week or so, and is continuing to be made. Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. And so, until then, I'm not going to give you a rosy assessment. But it is, of course, good that substantial progress has been made. If Iran shows seriousness, we believe we can and should reach an understanding on mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA.

Q And just real quick, is the President concerned at all about the convoy of truckers that is making its way to Washington? And has he taken any sort of steps to protect the city?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, we've actually been monitoring this closely. The Department of Homeland Security and the administration are tracking reports of a potential convoy that may be planning to travel to several U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C.

We have been working, including from Dr. Liz Sherwood-Randall here, as well as our Homeland Security Department with - - closely with our federal, state, and local partners to continuously assess the threat environment and keep our communities safe.

And our efforts include enhanced intelligence sharing, a Critical Incident Response Plan for the U.S. Capitol, a regional security assessment, and a simulation experiment that developed data-driven recommendations to bolster regional security.

So, we are closely monitoring, closely watching, and working with state and local authorities.

Go ahead.

Q Great. First, I just want to thank everybody -- I know it's late -- who is -- we're limiting our questions so that more people can --

MS. PSAKI: Yes, sure.

Q So, I appreciate that.

MS. PSAKI: And if anybody needs to go for a hit or anything, nobody will take it personally. I know some people have.

Go ahead.

Q So, one question, of course, on Ukraine, first of all: Daleep said just now that today's sanction package is, quote, "just the beginning of it." Does that mean if nothing changes, you expect more sanctions? Or what does that mean "just the beginning of it"?

MS. PSAKI: It means we have a range of additional options that we have the ability to take. And if President Putin continues to escalate, so will we.

Q And then on -- looking to the State of the Union, when was the last time President Biden spoke to a member of Congress about any item in the Build Back Better agenda?

MS. PSAKI: He has a range of conversations all the time, but I'm not going to detail the timeline of those for you.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. When can we expect a more detailed explanation from the White House about how it would plan to bring down energy prices?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, as Daleep just conveyed, a lot of what's happening right now is sensitive. It includes conversations with foreign counterparts and other major large global suppliers. It also includes conversations we're continuing to have with Congress and others about what steps may be at our disposal. And the President is continuing to consider options. So I expect we'll have more to tell you when -- if any decisions are made.

Q And given what we have heard publicly from the Russians in the last several days, what level of concern does the White House have that the conflict could spill over out of Ukraine and into some of the other nations that the U.S. has vowed to protect militarily and are part of NATO?

MS. PSAKI: Well, without making any prediction of that, what I can tell you is that one of the steps we've taken, including an announcement that the Department of Defense made today about a plussing-up of an additional 800 personnel to the Baltic region from Italy, is that we take our commitments to our NATO Allies and partners seriously, and we are going to continue to take steps to plus up their support and ensure that they know that they have the backing of the United States. But I'm not going to make any other predictions of that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks a lot. The NSC's Brett McGurk--

(A noise interrupts the briefing.)

MS. PSAKI: That was a little scary.

Go ahead.

Q The NSC's Brett McGurk and the State Department's Amos Hochstein -- I hope I didn't butcher it too much.

MS. PSAKI: Hochstein. But it's okay. Yes.

Q Hochstein. Thank you. I just wanted to ask: What concrete assurances were they able to secure on managing potential market pressures from Saudi Arabia?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand the question. We did confirm that they went on a trip. And they discussed a range of issues, including Yemen, but also including steps to take to -- steps we can all take to coordinate and reduce the impact on the global market on oil -- of oil. But I can't detail anything further from here.

Q If one of the objectives is not to disrupt global energy flows, and energy prices are high and rising, how can Russia's bottom line really be hurt if you don't disrupt global (inaudible) flows?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think Russia's bottom line can be hurt in a lot of ways, including the range of sanctions we've already announced today and additional sets of sanctions that we have at our disposal should they choose, whether it's sanctioning additional individuals or taking more significant steps that would real- -- would impact their financial market.

So, there's no question we have a range of tools that could continue to have crippling impacts on the Russian economy.

Q But so much of their revenue comes from oil and energy.

MS. PSAKI: I understand what you're saying. But we also have a range of tools that could impact a range of their financial market -- have huge financial market impacts.

And the President is also looking at and we're all assessing what steps we can take that will have a crippling impact on them while reducing the impact on the American public.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I'm just trying to get a better idea of what the administration deems to be an "escalation" on the part of Russia. And, two -- and what would prompt an additional tranche of sanctions? Would it only be the expansion of Russian forces to non-occupied republics or areas of Ukraine, or would it be the continued deployment of forces to the two separatist regions that were detailed yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think as we've seen -- as you have seen, hopefully -- as Russia has taken any escalatory steps, we have taken escalatory steps on our end in the form of sanctions. And so, I'm not going to outline for you, "If this, then then."

But I think if -- for those of you, again, who watched the speech last night, the President -- President Putin direct -- attacked Ukraine's right to exist. He explicitly threatened war unless his extreme demands were met. He gave an entire speech selling a war to the Russian people.

Our expectation -- and we hope we are wrong -- is that he will continue to take escalatory actions and further invade the country, and we will take additional steps in response.

Q Is the administration preparing any sort of measures for Ukrainians already in the United States, such as TPS or any other sort of immigration protections, for those who might not want to go back (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, I don't -- obviously those decisions or assessments are made by the Department of Homeland Security. I can't make a prediction of that at this point in time.

Obviously, what we are doing on the ground is trying to provide a range of economic, humanitarian, and security assistance to the Ukrainian government.

I understand you're asking about people who are here. And obviously we are preparing for the potential for major humanitarian outflows that could go into Europe and have a range of needs, and so that is also something we are closely tracking.

We are also pre- -- poised to increase our support to the people of Ukraine should additional humanitarian needs arise. Our response would be based on assessment of the needs, our partners' emergency appeals, in coordination with our European allies and partners.

But we are assessing the humanitarian assi- -- situation on the ground very closely, and we're going to continue engage with Allies and partners about any humanitarian needs that escalate and refugee outflows if they are to continue to occur.

Q Given we're getting close to the deadline, just -- are SCOTUS interviews done at this point? I know it's all in process and it's --

MS. PSAKI: I know.

Q But, you know, are they done at this point?

MS. PSAKI: The long national process will soon be over, Zolan. That's the good news.

I'm not going to detail the status. But I can tell you that the President has not made a decision yet, but we remain on track for him to make a decision and make an announcement before the end of the month.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I know you said you didn't like military questions too much. But

Q Tanks, Jen. I know you said you didn't like military questions too much. But --

MS. PSAKI: No, I love military questions. I'm just not going to outline military movements from here.

Q Yeah. Okay. Okay. Okay, fine. Because, you know, one -- one kind of salient aspect to this whole thing has been actually openness of the U.S. in giving military details about what the Russians are up to, so I'm wondering if you can go a little further with that.

It seems important -- that people don't really understand, like, these -- you know, the so-called peacekeepers, like, how many are there? Are they in Donbas now? Is it a handful of people? Is it a few guys with, like, you know, jeeps, or is it tons of tanks, missiles? I don't think Americans really have a good idea of what it is -- what this invasion actually consists of right now.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. And I appreciate --

Q So if you can say anything on that.

And another question would be: There's obviously no U.S. trainers in Ukraine anymore. Will this training -- military training relationship continue in a third country?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. On the second, I would point to the Department of Defense, who's best equipped to answer that question.

On the first: It's a really important one. You know, I think it's important for the American public, who may be just tuning in, to know that there has been a military -- Russian military presence in Ukraine since back to 2014, which they never admitted, they never acknowledged. In some ways, they've only recently acknowledged.

Back in 2014 and in the years after, we called them "the little green men" because they were not in Russian military uniform. Now we know that they are all over eastern Ukraine. And they are -- while not in uniform, they are behaving just like Russian military would be behaving.

So that is something -- I can't give you a number or specifics from here because I can't get into intelligence.

But it is important for the American people to know that -- that regardless of whether they're in uniform or not, they've been there since 2014. They are representing the Russian government. They are separatists who are -- we probably should stop calling them "peacekeepers" because they are certainly not that -- who are, you know, helping to lay the predicate for war. And that is what the purpose of a lot of them is there for.

Q Okay, but did anything change in the last 24 hours? I think that's -- that's really the question.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. I'm not going to -- I'm not going to be able to give you any additional assessment of that at this point in time from here. But I understand your question, and we'll continue to work to give you more.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two quick questions on Nord Stream 2. The first is: The deputy director just said that stopping Nord Stream 2 relieved Europe of a "geostrategic chokehold" that Russia would have had on them. So, if Nord Stream 2 going online was such a threat, why, in May, did the President waive sanctions on the company and the chief executive behind it?

And my second question is: Is there a concern that Nord Stream 2 -- if Russia were to make concessions or retreat in some way, that that might open up the door to Nord Stream 2 going back online? Or is it your understanding that it is dead no matter what Russia does?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that, you know, the President has never been a supporter of Nord Stream 2. We've always criticized it as a -- as a project that we didn't support. We took a range of steps and sanctions -- including sanctions, to make that very clear.

What -- the announcement made by the German Chancellor today was not by accident; it was at the conclusion of a range of diplomatic engagements and efforts by the President and members of our national security team, in unity from the Europeans, about the fact that this could not move forward. We've never felt -- the President didn't feel that issuing pre-emptive sanctions on that was the right step to take.

But look where we are: Nord Stream 2 is not moving forward. And, by the way, it hasn't been operational anyway. So, you know, that's a fact; it's not moving forward at this point in time.

In terms of the future, we've never felt it was a good project. We've been clear about that. And that assessment I don't expect would change in the future.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Does the White House any -- have any reaction to former President Trump calling Putin's move yesterday "genius" and "smart"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as a matter of policy, we try not to take advice from anyone who praises President Putin and his military strategy, which I believe is what happened there; expresses an openness to lifting sanctions about the seizing of territory in Crimea; or, at any point in time, told leaders of the G7 that Crimea is a part of Russia, regardless if they are a former president.

So, there's a bit of a different tactic, a bit of a different approach. And that's probably why President Biden, and not his predecessor, was able to rally the world and the global community in taking steps against -- against Russia's aggression.

Q Is there any fear that statements like that could turn support for Ukraine into a more partisan issue among the U.S. public?

MS. PSAKI: By the former president?

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I -- you know, I think that is up to members of the Republican Party to make the decision, to make the determination.

It has -- there is a long history, decades of history -- which President Biden was a part of when he was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee -- of standing up to the efforts of any country to seize the territory of another country, standing up for efforts by the United States to rally global support against -- against inappropriate and illegal actions by another country.

There's a long history of that -- not in a partisan way, in a bipartisan way -- and certainly that choice is up to Republicans to make -- to determine.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I've got two questions quickly. The administration rolled out a list of sanctions against Russian oligarchs and elites. My question is: Are any of them being sanctioned for the first time, or are these, sort of, repeat bad offenders?

MS. PSAKI: That's a good question. I'm sure we can get you a breakdown of that. I believe some of them are new, and certainly the banks are new. But let us get you a more specific breakdown of that.

Q And then my second question is: The last time Jake Sullivan was here, he said that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would lead to U.S. sanctions, warning that that would necessarily make Moscow more beholden to Beijing. Obviously, both of those foreign powers aren't exactly the most friendly to us. So, is the administration taking any steps or issuing any warnings to keep those geopolitical foes from, you know, aligning together and marching in lockstep?

MS. PSAKI: Well, long before the events of the last few months, we saw China and Russia moving closer together in some capacity. But, right now, as we're looking at the actions of President Putin and the -- as we're preparing for him to further invade Ukraine, to unfortunately put forward death and destruction on the country and the people of Ukraine, it's really a question for China on whether they look at that and think that's acceptable behavior.

So, I think you saw that our Secretary of State had a conversation with his counterpart in the last 24, 48 hours. And we will certainly remain and continue to engage, but I think it's about looking at where the global community is in this moment and determining where you want to stand.

La- -- okay, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask about rapid COVID tests.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Do you have an update at this point on how many you've shipped and how many you have under contract?

MS. PSAKI: I believe we do, but I'm going to have to get that to you after the briefing. We have -- let me get that to you after the briefing because I think we have some updated numbers on that.

I think we're going to have to wrap up shortly here.

Q Can I ask you one more?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, in the back.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. I -- I'm sorry. I had to step out --

MS. PSAKI: It's okay.

Q -- for a live shot for a moment. But -- so if somebody asked this question, I'm sorry. But I would like to clarify what Daleep said at the beginning.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q He said that Nord Stream 2 will go to waste now. So, do you have assurance from Germany that it's -- the decision to cancel the project is final, or it's still reversible?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would really -- I don't have anything to build on beyond what -- the strong statements and the strong comments of the Chancellor this morning and the President's own statements about how it would not move forward.

Okay. Thanks, everyone. We'll see you tomorrow.

O Thank you.

Q Thank you, Jen.

(Remote camera clicks repeatedly.) (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: There s a ghost photographer in the walls. (Laughs.) Where is Doug Mills? Is he back there? (Laughter.)

6:13 P.M. EST

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 24, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics and Deputy NEC Director Daleep Singh, February 24, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

5:35 P.M. EST

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay, back by popular demand. If he decides he's not going to be an economic expert anymore, he might have a future in our business or in our -- in the press office.

So back -- Daleep is back. He's going to give some brief comments at the top, take a few questions. Then we'll do some briefing after then.

And I'll just say at the top: For anyone who needs to leave for TV, feel free to go. It's all fine.

I will turn it over to Daleep now.

MR. SINGH: Thank you, Jen. Good to see all of you again, but this a briefing I never wanted to give.

I'd like to start by saying: The prayers of the entire world are with the people of Ukraine today as they suffer an unjustified, unprovoked, and premeditated attack by the Russian military forces.

President Biden has said from the start of this crisis: If Putin chooses to invade, the cost to Russia will be immediate and profound -- to its financial system, to its economy, to its technology base, and to its strategic position in the world.

As the world has now witnessed, Putin has made his choice. He rejected diplomacy and chose war. And today, the President has announced our response.

Because of Putin's choices, his flagrant violation of international law, and his utter disregard for the principles that underpin peace and security across the world, we will now ensure his decision is remembered as a strategic failure.

Today, we imposed an unprecedented package of financial sanctions and export restrictions in lockstep with our Allies and partners that will isolate Russia from the global financial system, shut down its access to cutting-edge technology, and undercut Putin's strategic ambitions to diversify and modernize his economy.

Let me walk you through a few specifics, then I'll be happy to take questions.

On financial sanctions: I stood at this podium on Tuesday and said we would impose the most severe sanctions ever levied on Russia if Putin proceeded with the invasion. Today, we're following through. We will impose sanctions on Russia's two largest financial institutions -- Sberbank and VTB -- which together hold more than half of the Russian banking system's assets -- over \$750 billion in total.

For VTB, we will freeze all of its assets touching the U.S. financial system and prohibit U.S. persons from doing any business with the bank. For Sberbank, we will sever its access to the U.S. financial system. We'll also freeze the assets of and prohibit any business dealings with three additional Russian banks with combined assets of over \$70 billion.

We'll also restrict U.S. investors from providing debt or equity financing for 13 of the most critical Russian state-owned enterprises, which combined have estimated assets nearing \$1.5 trillion.

And finally, we'll also impose sanctions on the executives at these state-owned institutions, as well as additional Russian elites who are complicit in Putin's kleptocracy and their family members.

Those who've shared in the Kremlin's corrupt gains and stored their wealth in yachts and luxury condos and fancy cars will now share in the pain of these measures.

In terms of the financial impact, as I said, these are the most impactful and significant sanctions the U.S. has ever taken. But financial sanctions are just one part of our response.

We're also unveiling today an expansive and unprecedented set of export restrictions developed in historically close coordination with the European Union, Australia, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan.

These new measures include sweeping restrictions on Russian military end users to impair Putin's military capabilities and will also deny exports across Russia to sensitive, cutting-edge technology, primarily targeting Russia's defense, aerospace, and maritime sectors.

In total, the United States and our partners will effectively be cutting off more than half of all high-tech imports going into Russia. This includes curbing Russia's access to advanced semiconductors and other foundational technologies that Russia needs to diversify and modernize its economy.

Working in tandem, these financial sanctions and the export controls will undercut Putin's aspirations to project power on the world stage. And those impacts intensified dramatically just today.

The Russian stock market plunged over 30 percent at one point before being halted by local regulators. Russia's currency, the Ruble, weakened to its weakest value on record against the Dollar before the Central Bank intervened. And the price the market is charging the Russian government to borrow is now above 15 percent.

These impacts over time will translate into higher inflation, higher interest rates, lower purchasing power, lower investment, lower productive capacity, lower growth, and lower living standards in Russia.

To be clear: This is not the outcome we wanted. It's both a tragedy for the people of Ukraine and a very raw deal for the Russian people. But Putin's war of choice has required that we do what we said and to ensure this will be a strategic failure.

Finally, let me just say a few words about the impact of Russia's choices on the U.S. We've intentionally scoped our sanctions to deliver severe impact on the Russian economy while minimizing the cost to the U.S., as well as our Allies and partners.

To be clear: Our sanctions are not designed to cause any disruption to the current flow of energy from Russia to the world. We've carved out energy payments on a time-bound basis to allow for an orderly transition of these flows away from sanctioned institutions, and we've provided other licenses to provide for an orderly winddown of business.

Let me just stop there and take your questions.

Q Real quick, I guess that --

MS. PSAKI: (Inaudible.)

Q I just had a real quick question. You said it would take some time before it affects the economy and inflation. What's the timetable? How long do you think it will take until you have demonstrable results?

MR. SINGH: Well, look, these are -- these are costs that build over time. And as I mentioned, I think, last Friday, any leader, whether you're an autocrat or a small-"d" democrat, has to pay attention to the living standards of your country. And already, we're seeing the effects of these measures in the signaling that we provided over the last three months.

Before these sanctions were implemented, inflation in Russia was 8.7 percent, the government's borrowing costs had spiked above 10 percent, the Ruble had lost almost 15 percent of its value. And today, those costs escalated dramatically.

Now, it's going to be up to President Putin to decide, ultimately, how much cost he's willing to bear. What we control is to make sure this will be a strategic failure -- not just because of the sanctions but also because of the export controls; because of Europe's accelerated diversification away from Russia, in terms of its energy supply; due to our fortification of NATO's eastern flank; and due to the renewed energy and unity and determination by the West to stand up for our values and advance our principles.

Q But to confirm: You're in it for the long haul, right? That's -- I mean, your -- until you see the results that you want?

MR. SINGH: We understand that these costs will accumulate over time.

MS. PSAKI: Memoli.

Q Thank you. You've just laid out all of the actions that the U.S. and our Allies have taken at this point. As you understand, the questions, though, at this point, are about the actions you have not yet chosen to take at this point, specifically the SWIFT system and sanctioning President Putin specifically himself.

What are the triggers at this point? Are there actions that President Putin might still take that you're expecting that would trigger those sanctions? Or what are the potential complications, especially about sanctioning Putin personally?

MR. SINGH: So, I'm -- I understand there are a lot of questions about SWIFT and about sanctioning President Putin and lots of other measures that could be mentioned. But let me -- let me say this: I think today was a demonstration that we mean what we say. We delivered on what we said we would do, in terms of imposing costs. So when we say all options are

on the table and that we're prepared to continue to ratchet costs higher, it would be a mistake to doubt that resolve.

But let me -- let me also step back and say that when we consider which sanctions to apply, we're not cowboys and cowgirls pressing a button to impose costs; we follow a set of principles. We want the sanctions to be impactful enough to demonstrate our resolve and to show that we have the capacity to deliver overwhelming costs to Russia. That's one.

Number two, we want them to be responsible, to avoid even the perception of targeting the average Russian civilian and, of course, unwanted spillovers back to the U.S. or the global economy.

Number three, we want to stay coordinated. And so, we calibrate our sanctions to maximize the chance that we move in lockstep with our Allies and partners.

Number four, they should be flexible so that we can escalate or de-escalate depending on facts on the ground.

And lastly, as I mentioned before, they have to be sustainable. These sanctions work over the long term. That's what will guide our design.

MS. PSAKI: MJ.

Q In light of the sanctions that were announced against individuals and entities in Belarus, can you tell us whether there are sanctions against any other countries that are being seriously considered at the moment? And what is the line that a nation would need to cross in this conflict for them to receive -- be on the receiving end of sanctions from the U.S.?

MR. SINGH: Well, the Belarus measures were about delivering costs to a country that aided and abetted what we saw yesterday and overnight. But I have nothing else for you in terms of other countries being targeted.

MS. PSAKI: JJ.

Oh, did you have a question?

Q Oh, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Yeah, definitely. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: I didn't (inaudible) -- I was confusing the arms here. (Laughter.) (Inaudible.)

Q Thank you. Thank you, Daleep.

MS. PSAKI: We'll come back to you.

Q I wanted to ask you about the -- some of the carve-outs. There are general licenses for more than a dozen areas -- agriculture, energy -- and you just said that the importance is to limit the impact on Americans. But I was hoping that you could say -- is there a percentage that you could share of the number of exemptions that make up the overall transactions? So, the general licenses, how many -- how many transactions -- what percentage of the transactions are under those licenses?

MR. SINGH: I would refer you to Treasury and OFAC for the -- for the details on what exactly is being exempted and the percentage of business that would be included.

Q I mean, could you say -- is it a third? Is it a half? I mean, is it a small percentage? Is it a high percentage?

MR. SINGH: I would go back to the principles of our design. The measures themselves and the exemptions are balanced

MR. SINGH: I would go back to the principles of our design. The measures themselves and the exemptions are balanced so that we can deliver overwhelming costs while not having unintended consequences. And so, that's the -- that's the principle.

But as to the specifics, I'd refer you to Treasury.

Q But wouldn't the -- wouldn't the oil be a large percentage, I mean, considering how important it is to -- to Russia's bottom line?

MR. SINGH: Well, look, where we have an asymmetric advantage is in foreign capital and cutting-edge technology. So that's where we're -- that's where we're delivering the most concentrated impact.

When it comes to energy: This is the one area -- this is the one area where Russia has systemic importance in the global economy. We know it's the second-largest natural gas producer in the world. It's also the second-largest crude oil producer in the world.

That's not to say that we have a dependence on Russia; Russia depends on those revenues just as much as the world needs its energy. But we're not going to -- we're not going to do anything which causes an unintended disruption to the flow of energy, as the global economic recovery is still underway.

MS. PSAKI: (Inaudible.)

Q Thanks. Two quick questions, Daleep. One, if Putin takes Kyiv, does that trigger additional sanctions -- specifically that scenario?

MR. SINGH: I'm not going to speculate on particular hypotheticals.

Q Okay. And you mentioned the timeline -- you've been asked about the timeline. The President said, in one of the answers to his questions today, said, "Let's have a conversation in [a] month" to see if these sanctions are working. But my question is: What happens in the meantime? Russia is taking over parts of Ukraine -- major parts of Ukraine as we speak. So the world just sits back and watches that happen until these sanctions take effect?

MR. SINGH: Look, we can't dictate Putin's actions. What we can do is what's within our control and to make sure this is going to be a strategic failure for Russia.

And so, over the course of the next month, what you can expect is that we'll see an intensifying negative feedback loop in Russian markets -- and I've described the elements of that. You'll see record capital outflight -- capital -- record capital outflows. You'll see a weaker currency. You'll see higher inflation. You'll see lower purchasing power. You'll see lower investment.

And that negative feedback loop -- the velocity of it -- is going to be determined by Putin's own actions. And so, that's what you should expect on the financial sanctions front.

On export controls, what you can see is that, over time, this is going to atrophy Russia's capacity to diversify outside of just oil and gas, and to modernize the strategic sectors that Putin himself has said he wants to develop: aerospace, defense, IT, lasers, sensors.

These sectors all depend on foundational technologies designed and produced by the West. You will begin to see a chilling effect take hold in Russia as those inputs are denied.

MS. PSAKI: Weijia.

Q Thank you. For weeks now, administration officials have repeatedly said -- yourself included -- that these sanctions

Q Thank you. For weeks now, administration officials have repeatedly said -- yourself included -- that these sanctions are meant to deter and prevent Putin from moving forward, from acting. Can you help us understand why the President said today that no one expected the sanctions to prevent anything from happening?

And then secondly, a quick one on Putin sanctions: Without talking about when you might trigger them, can you help us understand what harm they would do to him personally if you were to sanction Putin?

MR. SINGH: Look, on your first question, we don't usually engage in hypotheticals up here at this podium, but let's play this out. Had we -- had we unleashed our entire package of financial sanctions preemptively, I think a couple things might have happened.

Number one, President Putin might have said, "Look, these people are not serious about diplomacy. They're not engaging in a good-faith effort to promote peace. Instead, they're escalating." And that could provide a justification for him to escalate and invade.

Secondly, he could look at it as a sunk cost. In other words, President Putin could think, "I've already paid the price. Why don't I actually take what I paid for, which is Ukraine's freedom?"

So that's -- that's what we wanted to avoid.

Look, ultimately -- ultimately, the goal of our sanctions is to make this a strategic failure for Russia. And let's define a little bit of what that means.

Strategic success in the 21st century is not about a physical land grab of territory. That's what Putin has done.

In this century, power -- strategic power is increasingly measured and exercised by economic strength, by technological sophistication, and your story -- who you are, what your values are, can you attract ideas and talent and goodwill. On each of those measures, this would be a failure for Russia.

Q But -- but --

Q Mr. Singh, I keep asking --

Q No, I --

Q -- you these same questions.

Q I'm sorry, I didn't --

MS. PSAKI: Simon, she's not done yet.

Q Excuse me.

MS. PSAKI: Let Weijia finish. Go ahead.

MR. SINGH: On President Putin.

Q But did you -- but is it fair to say no one expected the sanctions to prevent anything? You certainly expected that, right?

MR. SINGH: Look, we -- we signaled as clearly as we could what was coming if Russia proceeded with an invasion. You know, as I mentioned before, economic costs of this severity generally matter to any leader because of the effect it has on -- on his people's living standards

on his people's living standards.

In this case, Putin made the wrong choice.

MS. PSAKI: JJ.

Q Mr. Singh, (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: JJ.

Q I keep asking you the same question.

MS. PSAKI: Let's get -- JJ is asking a question, Simon.

Go ahead, JJ.

Q One more on SWIFT, please.

Q How do we assure that these sanctions don't really affect ordinary -- ordinary people in Russia?

Q The UK has been pressuring Allies to still reject Russia from the SWIFT system. Can you say if the U.S. is still intensely working to pressure Allies to do the same? How intensely are you guys pursuing that?

MR. SINGH: I can't comment on what the UK's position is. I'm not -- I'm not going to speak to that. But what I'll say is the sanctions measures we imposed today, I think, without question, were the most consequential ever levied on Russia and arguably the most consequential ever levied in history, if you look at the aggregate financial impact on Russia.

So, that's why we took the measures that we did. And we did so because we could move in lockstep with our Allies and partners. And because we think the spillover effects will be manageable.

Q What I'm still -- I'm trying to figure out -- if this is still a realistic live round, is the U.S. really still making an intense effort for this? Or is it essentially --

MR. SINGH: "This" being SWIFT?

Q SWIFT, right.

MR. SINGH: Well, look, again, I'm just going to repeat: All options are on the table, and we're -- we're prepared to ratchet costs higher at a time and place of our choosing. And, you know, President Putin should take that seriously after what he saw today.

MS. PSAKI: Michael.

Q Mr. Singh, how do you ensure that these sanctions don't really affect ordinary people in Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Simon -- Simon -- Michael -- let Michael ask his question.

Go ahead, Michael.

Q I keep asking the same question, Jen.

Q Just two questions. First, if you were to sanction Vladimir Putin, do you know where his money is?

MR. SINGH: Not going to comment on that.

Q And, secondly, if -- what is the message to Russia at this point on what it would take to roll back -- relieve some of the sanctions that you've put in place today?

MR. SINGH: Look, the road to diplomacy is always open. Diplomacy is never dead. But in the current circumstance, in the immediate aftermath of an invasion, that -- that option is not available. Right now, we're imposing severe consequences on Russia for its decisions.

If there were to be a shift in Russia's strategic choices that upheld core principles of respecting your neighbors' borders, respecting your neighbors' sovereignty, allowing countries to have the freedom to set their own course and their own destiny, that would be a different situation, but that's not where we are.

MS. PSAKI: Tyler.

Q You suggested that there are things that still remain on the table, but as you walked through the hypothetical scenarios of trying to keep diplomacy open, you said that they have now crossed the line.

But if you're saying there is still more on the table, do you expect things to get worse in the coming days, that Russia will continue to move forward? Is that the intelligence? I know you guys have been quite transparent about the intelligence you have. Are you keeping things back because you think the situation is going to get worse?

MR. SINGH: Well, I think we've -- we've been transparent in -- to a remarkable degree. And one aspect of that transparency is by saying we can't get into President Putin's head. And so, your question requires me to speculate on -- on how he's thinking about next steps. And I simply can't do that.

Q But just in terms of U.S. intelligence and the way that you are planning out the different sanctions you have and keeping things on the table, is that a sense that it will get worse, because you want to hold things back?

MR. SINGH: Look, our job is to be prepared and manage risks -- all manner of risks. And that's what we've been doing over the past three months as this crisis intensified. We'll continue doing that.

MS. PSAKI: Last one, from Steve. Go ahead.

Q Just to follow up -- follow up from Franco, the -- targeting the Russian energy industry is totally off the table. Is that what you're saying, Daleep?

MR. SINGH: What I'm saying is that our measures were not designed to disrupt in any way the current flow of energy from Russia to the world.

Now, we have also said we are going to cut off Russia's access to cutting-edge technology. That technology can be used across many sectors. And so, as it relates to Russia's long-term productive capacity, we are seeking to degrade that capacity, but nothing -- nothing in the short term, as it relates to energy.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you so much, Daleep.

MR. SINGH: Thank you. Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you for joining us. Appreciate it.

Okay, I know it's late, but we will get to as many people as possible.

I just wanted to note a couple of things at the top for all of you.

One, USAID put out an announcement that they've deployed a DART, or Disaster Assistance Response Team, to respond to humanitarian needs in Ukraine. This DART team, which is currently based in Poland, is working closely with European Allies and partners who will be on the frontlines of their response. The team will lead the U.S. government's humanitarian response to help address critical needs caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The DART comprises 17 disaster experts from USAID who are assessing the situation, identifying priority needs to scale up assistance inside Ukraine, and working with partners to provide rapidly needed assistance to communities affected by the conflict.

MS. PSAKI: I know a number of you have also asked me and we've tried to provide as much detail as possible about how the President has spent his time over the last period since last evening. I think we put out a few details, but just to reiterate for all of you:

He closely monitored the events on the ground from both the Oval Office and then back in the Residence over the course of last evening.

We put out a few details last night, including the fact that he spoke repeatedly with his National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan. He also spoke with his U.S. U.N. Ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, before she gave that powerful speech at the U.N. last night. He received a briefing from Secretary Austin, Chairman Milley, Secretary Blinken, and his National Security Advisor around 11:00 p.m., approximately, last evening, as well. And as you know, he also spoke with President Zelenskyy. He continued to monitor closely into the wee hours last night.

This morning, as you all know, he engaged -- or he met for just about an hour with his national security team, which included both a full table in the room and full members from the Cabinet, from the national security team on the screen.

During that meeting, as is standard, he received an update from, of course, Defense, intel, his diplomatic team about the status on the ground. And he has, of course, remained closely engaged with them through the course of the day.

As you know, he also had a G7 meeting that lasted a couple of hours this morning. And he also spent an hour this afternoon on the phone with the leaders -- leaders in Congress -- Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress, briefing them on the situation on a secure call, briefing them on the situation on the ground, answering questions they had as well.

So that has been his day to date. And he is continuing, of course, to focus on other priorities as President.

But why don't we go to you, Zeke?

Q Thanks, Jen. Just picking up on that, has the President made any additional foreign leader calls today? Has he spoken to President Zelenskyy since their call late last evening?

MS. PSAKI: There has not been another call to President Zelenskyy. I expect, as you have seen over the past several days, he will continue to have calls with leaders. We will keep you abreast as those happen.

Q And with the U.S. government saying that it believes that the Russian objective right now is to, quote, "decapitate" the Ukrainian government, does -- does the U.S. believe that President Zelenskyy, at this moment, is safe?

MS. PSAKI: We're not going to get into security -- security questions, but we are in touch with President Zelenskyy, and we are working to provide him a range of support.

Q And President Zelenskyy, in addition to calling for the West to impose -- to cut Russia off from SWIFT, also proposed or called for -- demanded, I think, is the word he used in a tweet that the U.S. and its Allies impose a no-fly zone over

Ukraine.

I know the President has said that he won't put U.S. boots on the ground in Ukraine to fight Russia. Is -- is Ukrainian airspace -- is Ukrainian airspace in play? Is that something that has -- the subject of any discussions?

MS. PSAKI: We've certainly seen -- I've seen -- we've certainly seen his -- his tweet -- or his request via tweet. But I don't have an update on that request.

Q But is that -- that's not off the table? A no-fly zone is not off the table?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I don't have any update on it at this point in time or status of the discussions.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. Just a follow-up on troops, fast, and a few cyber questions.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Do you expect NATO to call up a major response force? And how many U.S. troops could be called to help in that effort?

MS. PSAKI: That's really up to NATO. As you know, we have a number of troops -- thousands of troops that are on call. But that is a decision to be made by the NATO Alliance.

Q The President said if Putin pursues cyberattacks against our companies, our critical infrastructure, we are prepared to respond.

So just clarifying: Does that, first, mean that there has not been any evidence of any cyberattack from Russia against any American companies at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Not that we have identified or attributed at this point in time.

Q And can you explain --

MS. PSAKI: I mean, aside from past ones that you are (inaudible) tracking.

Q Yeah, I guess I mean in the last --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- 24 hours.

MS. PSAKI: I understand.

Q Can you explain more of the White House's thinking on, kind of, this debate in Washington about whether a cyberattack against a NATO Ally would trigger an Article 5 response -- a response from the Alliance?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that, again, is up to the NATO Alliance to determine, but, obviously, a cyberattack does constitute an attack, so that would certainly be a point of discussion among the NATO members.

Q Okay, one more really fast. On the US- -- USAID disaster response that you just mentioned, a 17-person team -- is that enough? I mean, we're talking about -- we've heard you guys talk about the potential of hundreds of thousands of refugees --

MS. PSAKI: You're absolutely right. And I think that's an important point. But what I -- what we're trying to do here is provide any incremental update on the status of what our work is.

And I'll just note, and you may be fully aware of this -- but in terms of humanitarian assistance, we have been the biggest provider of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine; we've provided over \$52 million in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine in the past year.

Over the past few weeks, we've committed additional funding and supplies to humanitarian organizations. There's been a specific need and therefore a focus on support services, food, clean water, hygiene, shelter, trauma, primary healthcare. Our prepare -- and we are prepared to certainly provide a significant amount more.

So, this is just one step -- obviously, less than 24 hours after the events of last night, and we will continue to plus up from here.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, there are a number of protests within Russia itself. Are you monitoring this? What's your message to them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there certainly are. And I know, with everything going on, this may not have caught everybody's attention.

But let me just note that, you know, today we're seeing Russian people in the streets, open letters from leading Russian journalists, cul- -- and cultural figures denouncing President Putin's war of choice, and reports of Russian mothers concerned about the reckless deployment of their sons to this fratricidal war.

I think it's important to remember back in 2014 when they didn't even acknowledge that they were sending Russian soldiers, they didn't even acknowledge when there were body bags coming back from Ukraine into Russia. And there is an outcry in the streets by Russian people, by -- by more Russian people than I think many would expect. So, despite Putin's crackdown at home, dissenting views remain, and I think that's important to note.

To publicly protest against President Putin and his war is a deeply courageous act. Their actions show the world that, despite the Kremlin's propaganda, there are Russian people who profoundly disagree with what he is doing in Ukraine.

Q And then, one more. Speaker Pelosi is talking about sending \$600 million in lethal aid to Ukraine. Is this something you support?

MS. PSAKI: We are in conversations with Congress. And I mentioned the President spoke with leaders just earlier this afternoon. I don't have an exact number, but those are ongoing conversations about what needs the Ukrainians have on the ground in a variety of categories: security, humanitarian, other economic assistance.

Q Thank you. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Does the U.S. have any analysis to indicate that there is dissent or division within Putin's government? Or is it your understanding that Putin's government is united in this war?

MS. PSAKI: It's an interesting question, MJ. And without getting into intelligence, which obviously we look at -- I mentioned, obviously, Russians protesting in the streets. That's not exactly what you asked about. But if you watched the meeting the Pres- -- President Putin had with members of his national security team the other day, it was quite striking the back-and-forth he had with his intel chief in that meeting. And the analysis of that is -- certainly can be done in an

open-source manner, given it was quite public. But I will leave outside analysis to give further assessment of that.

Q And as you know, we are seeing Ukrainians start to flee the country.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is the U.S. prepared to accept Ukrainian refugees?

MS. PSAKI: We are, but we -- we certainly expect that most, if not the majority, will want to go to Europe, in neighboring countries.

So, we are also working with European countries on what the needs are, where there is capacity -- Poland, for example, where we are seeing a -- an increasing flow of refugees over the last 24 hours -- or through its flow of individuals, I should say -- out of Ukraine, what their needs are. And we've been talking and engaging with Europeans about that for some time now.

Q So part of what you're doing is to prepare for the United States to accept refugees?

MS. PSAKI: The President is certainly prepared for that. But I would just note that because there are a number of European countries neighboring Ukraine who have expressed an openness to it, we would anticipate many of them would want -- would want to go to European countries.

Q And just one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- quick question. The President, of course, has repeatedly said that American troops will not enter Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is there any scenario that has been discussed where that decision might be reconsidered?

MS. PSAKI: The President has no intention of sending U.S. troops to fight in Ukraine. That has not changed.

Go ahead.

Q This was asked to the President earlier, but I don't think we got a full answer. Yesterday, Vladimir Putin said that -- he warned if others got involved, they'll suffer "consequences that you have never encountered in your history." Does the U.S. understand that as a threat of using nuclear weapons?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we can't, obviously, get into the mind of President Putin as much as he said that, nor do we know all the specific details about his strategic posture, but we don't see any increased threat in that regard at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Just to follow up on some of the cyber questions.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I know that you and others have talked about how the government is on alert for the potential of a cyberattack. But can you share -- like are there any specific steps that are being taken that you can share that the U.S. is doing to protect the infrastructure, power grid, U.S. banks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say: One, we've been -- there's been efforts that have been ongoing for some time since the beginning of the administration to harden the private sector and work with the private sector in partnership to harden their cybersecurity protections.

We've actually seen a great deal of progress made in the financial sector. It's one of the stronger sectors in terms of protections, from a cyber front, that we see out there.

So, it's been ongoing for several months. Obviously, when there are moments like this where we continue to watch and look for what the potential is, we will -- we continue to re- -- to engage closely with a range of industries about what they need to do about the potential threats. And that's something that happens, obviously, privately and through a range of agencies.

I can see if there's anything more specific that we can read out to all of you.

Q Thanks. And just real -- just, real quick, one follow-up. President Biden said they are -- that the U.S. is prepared if an attack comes (inaudible). Would -- pardon me -- he said "prepared to respond." Would that response be a --

MS. PSAKI: A cyberattack you're talking about?

Q A cyberattack, yes.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Would that be an equivalent cyberattack against Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that the President reserves the option to respond in any manner of his choosing: overt or covert -- "seen or unseen," as we like to say in more available English. But I'm not going to get into specifics of what that looks like. He has a range of options.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. On oil prices and the SPR.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Does the administration have an oil price in mind that would trigger another release from the SPR?

MS. PSAKI: I think -- not that we're going to get into detail or -- from here, JJ. I understand, certainly, the question.

What you heard the President talk about today, and I can just reiterate a little bit, is that what has been ongoing -- both from the President, who has been very engaged in this, having conversations with leaders in the Middle East and other parts of the world, as well as many members of his national security team -- taking whatever steps we can to mitigate the impact on the global oil markets. And, obviously, that means increasing supply. Obviously, a coordinated release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would be part of that.

But in terms of what that looks like or the specifics, I'm just not in a position to get into more details at this point.

Q Thanks. If the worst happens and Russia either reduces the flow of natural gas or cuts off energy altogether to Europe, does the administration have a good idea for how long households in Europe could last under that kind of circumstance?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an assessment of that from here. I can certainly check with our economic team.

One thing I will say -- that one of the steps we've been taking -- obviously, natural gas shortages and supply is a -- it is an enormous regional issue, one that would hugely impact Europe more than here, of course. One of the steps we've been focused on and been taking is engaging with partners who have -- who may have excess LNG supply, like countries in Europe -- Japan, for example, where they had -- where we would -- were planning to give them some, and now they're going to divert it to Europe. So, we've been working to help mitigate any impact of a further invasion and a shortage in Europe.

Go ahead.

Q Some of the activity that we've seen today in Ukraine -- some of the clashes have been in and around Chernobyl. Does the United States have an assessment of the risk of a radioactive release?

MS. PSAKI: So, I do have one actual update on that as well. There's also been -- there was also a report out -- so let me speak to this first, just so I don't forget -- about hostages around there as well, so let me speak to that first.

We are outraged by credible reports that Russian soldiers are currently holding the staff of the Chernobyl facilities hostage. This unlawful and dangerous hostage-taking, which could upend the routine civil service efforts required to maintain and protect the nuclear waste facilities, is obviously incredibly alarming and greatly concerning [sic] -- concerning. We condemn it, and we request their release.

In terms of a further assessment, I don't have anything more on that from here.

Q And you gave a readout of how the President spent the past 24 hours or so. First, I wanted to ask about his call with President Zelenskyy. Did he indicate if he was still in Kyiv? Did he identify his location at this point?

MS. PSAKI: We are aware of where he is located. And we are in touch with him.

I would say on that call, what -- what they discussed is President Zelenskyy's request for the President to be -- to condemn the actions of President Putin and the Russians and to engage with other global leaders about it. And that's exactly what he's done.

Q We've seen a number of statements today from former presidents -- President Obama, President Bush -- and also saw former President Trump on television talking about this. Has the President -- you mentioned, during the Afghanistan drawdown, he had been in contact with his predecessors. Has he been in touch with any of his predecessors during this?

MS. PSAKI: He has not been today.

Q And then, in terms of another domestic priority that was potentially included in his meetings today, given the situation -- his time and focus and attention on Supreme Court -- excuse me, on Ukraine -- will this affect the timing of his Supreme Court announcement?

MS. PSAKI: We -- we are still on track to make an announcement before the end of the month. We have to do a lot of things around here at the same time.

Go ahead.

Q Just to follow up on the cyberattacks and Article 5 question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q I know you said that it's up to NATO to decide, but from a U.S. perspective, would any cyberattack against a NATO Ally trigger Article 5 or would there be a measure for what counts?

MS. PSAKI: Again, this is the conversation we would have with our NATO Allies and partners. I don't have more ad- -- anything in addition to add to it.

Q Okay. And just to follow up on the Supreme Court: I know you said you're on track, but has he made a final decision, given they are basically two days left before the end of the month?

MS. PSAKI: Not a -- not a final final. No offer has been -- no job offer has been made.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. Just a couple. Are there any concerns or indications at this point that Russia had prepared for the sanctions that you're putting in place and developed, preemptively, ways to block that impact?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's an interesting question. And it's -- and some of it is hard because it's hard to get into the minds of President Putin and the oligarchs around him.

One of the steps we tried to take is to -- you know, as we were -- as we were contemplating the individuals we were going to sanction, we -- we sanctioned family members as well, because what we've seen -- the tactics they've used in the past is they've moved money around and resources around to family members. And we've tried to address that on the front end.

In terms of the banking and the financial sector, I mean, it accounts for such a large percentage of how they do business, that that is -- it would be a difficult thing for them to plan and plot against.

And if you look to just even the anticipation of the potential sanctions, as Daleep was mentioning, you know, the Ruble is the worst-performing currency in the world right now. Their inflation is -- has skyrocketed. So, we're even seeing in their markets the anticipated impact even before today, and that's even before the actual squeeze on the financial sector in the country.

So, it feels to me it would be a little hard to plan around and plot around, given the significance of what was done today and the fact that when we -- sanctioning 10 -- 10 of Russia's financial institutions and these export control measures, which essentially cuts President Putin off from semiconductors and access to a range of technology he wants for the future, those are difficult things to plan ahead for.

Q Yeah. And then, I guess, secondly, does the administration have any assessment for how China is reacting to this at this point -- whether they are willing to provide support to Russia and how much? And has there been any kind of contact there to kind of attempt to move them off of any support?

MS. PSAKI: Well, in terms of what impact they can have, I mean, China only accounts for about 15 percent of -- China and Russia -- I'm not sure; you can double check me on this -- about 15 percent of the global economy. If you look at G7 partners, in the U.S. and Europe, it's about 50 percent. Right? So they cannot cover what the impact of the sanctions that have been announced in coordination with Europe would -- how they would impact Russia.

You know, I think from our perspective, as it relates to China, while I can't get into the heads of what their thinking is, you know, this is a really -- a moment for China, for any country to think about what side of history they want to stand on here. And, you know, that is certainly the -- the case that we would make publicly and privately.

I think you saw that Secretary Blinken spoke with his counterpart just a couple of days ago. You know, the President is certainly open to speaking with his counterpart. But I don't have any prediction of that at this point in time or a timeline.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Over the past couple of weeks as you've been sending the alarm on this, you've put the sanctions package together, done -- conducted diplomacy with the Russians and the rest of the world. How did the Ukrainian government use that time since they've been initially warned that this was a likelihood? Did they use that time wisely to prepare?

MS. PSAKI: Tell me more about what you mean, exactly.

Q Well, you're seeing reports from the streets in Russia of -- sorry, in Ukraine of people being surprised. You had, obviously, local and national leadership in Ukraine telling people to stay calm, to remain -- to go to work even a day before the invasion began. So, were they properly prepared? And was there more that they could have done in the leadup?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think it's not particularly constructive for us to give an assessment of that. What -- what I can tell you is that our focus has been on providing up-to-date -- what has turned out to be quite accurate and transparent information about what the -- President Putin has -- was preparing to do, which is invade Ukraine.

And we have been very clear with American citizens who were there. We have been clear with our European partners for months now, including Ukrainian leadership. So that has been what our focus has been. And, you know, we will remain a strong support -- supporter and partner of President Zelenskyy and Ukraine moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Following up on the sanction question.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q We have heard for weeks that these sanctions were, at least in part, a part of a strategy that was based on deterrence -
-

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- as well as prevention. Today, with the President's comment that "no one expected the sanctions to prevent anything from happening," moving forward, do you expect this slate of sanctions to prevent any further advancement or aggression from Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that later in the -- later in the back-and-forth or the press avail, he also said, when asked, "If sanctions cannot stop President Putin, what penalty can?" And he said, "I didn't say sanctions couldn't stop him." Which leads me to believe that's not exactly what he meant. He also went on to say "The threat of the sanctions and imposing the sanctions and seeing the effect of the sanctions are two different things."

And the way we look at this, broadly speaking -- and Daleep touched on this a little bit -- is that we do see them as having a deterrent impact, right? It doesn't mean they're 100 percent foolproof.

But if you -- if there's a 95 percent chance of Russia invading without the threat of sanctions, and there's a 60 -- I'm making up these percentages just to make a point -- but -- and a 65 percent chance that they will with them, you're obviously going to go with the threat of sanctions because you want to reduce the threat of an invasion. So, there is a deterrent. And we've seen the deterrent impact work at times. Right?

I'd also note, though, that we are very clear-eyed about the fact that President Putin not just a few days ago -- I mean, he gave the speech a few days ago where he questioned the legitimacy of Ukraine as a sovereign country. He's also talked about how the breakup of the Soviet Union was the worst thing that's happened -- that's a paraphrase -- in recent -- you know, in decades of history. So, we are clear-eyed about his ambition.

But what the other part of it that we are quite focused on is the consequences. And the way we see it is -- you know, as
-- we touched on a little bit -- inflation is skyrocketing, the Ruble is the worst performing currency in the world. It was his

we've touched on a little bit -- inflation is skyrocketing, the ruble is the worst-performing currency in the world. It was his decision to go to war. It's our choice to make him pay a price -- same with the global community -- and we believe these consequences are also going to have an impact.

Q And that -- just at the risk of repeating your question as well: I mean, the President did also say, you know, let's check in in a month.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And there has been some questions about time here. It seems like this is a strategy to use these sanctions to put pressure on Russia to eventually discourage them to pull out -- or to force them to pull out this -- this advance. So, what is the timetable here, you think, for when the Russian government will start actually feeling the impact of these sanctions and possibly pull out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, in many senses, they're already feeling the impact. I mean, look at where the Ruble is. Look at where inflation is. Look at where the markets are in Russia.

In terms of how Putin will feel the impact, we just sanctioned a range of oligarchs around him. We sanctioned 10 financial institutions. These are all -- these are all significant, enormous steps that are going to have an impact on him.

But in terms of the moment by moment, I can't give you an assessment of that.

Q Last one. Just off topic.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Just -- there's been a lot of questions about refugees in the region.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q For Ukrainians that are in the country, is the U.S., especially after yesterday, considering TPS or any sort of protections?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. As you know, that's a decision that would be made through an interagency process led by the Department of Homeland Security. And I don't have any prediction of that. I mean, I don't have any kind of prediction of that at this point in time. Obviously, these -- these events are just unfolding as we speak.

Q So that process hasn't started? That conversation hasn't --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give you any specifics on an internal process. But I would just say, again, it's an interagency process. And, right now, we're, of course, in the middle of an invasion and a -- and a -- you know, a war in Ukraine.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Earlier you had you have to do a lot of things at the same time. One of those things, of course, is the State of the Union next week.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Can you tell us how the President this week has been preparing for that, how much time he spent on the speech, and how he's juggling that with this very busy schedule that you laid out earlier tonight?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, absolutely. So, in addition to obviously being very closely engaged and leading the effort on the U.S.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, absolutely. So, in addition to obviously being very closely engaged and leading the effort on the U.S. response to the Russia -- to Russia -- the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, the President has been working with speechwriters, working with pol- -- members of his policy team to finalize details of his State of the Union, doing -- starting to do some readthroughs -- not too many, yet. I expect those will increase in the days ahead. I expect we won't have too much of a preview for you. Maybe tomorrow, but maybe -- more likely this weekend.

He's also been engaging with his COVID team, talking about where we are in the state of the pandemic, what's next in the pandemic.

He has been working closely with his economic team on -- and receiving updates on the supply chain, the implementation of the Infrastructure Bill.

So, even as we have all been understandably focused on the conflict in Ukraine, the President has been very hard at work on a range of issues that are vital to the American people.

Q And you touched on my follow-up. ABC is reporting that the White House is revamping the COVID strategy now that hospitalizations are on the decline. Should we expect the President to roll that out in the speech next Tuesday?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any preview for you on timeline or format. But the President has been working and engaged with his COVID team for some time now, and we're making strong -- strong progress on moving toward a time when COVID is no longer a crisis.

The COVID team has been spending a lot of time and energy, including with the President, working with experts inside and outside government, local public health officials, and governors. And this work is broader than one piece of guidance.

How we look at it is we're preparing to stay ahead of the virus, protecting our most vulnerable, keeping our country open. And that is -- and that is going to look at everything from -- the CDC is obviously reviewing mask guidance, but also how we're going to ensure that vaccines, boosters, tests, treatments, and other -- and other important components of our medicine cabinet are available to the American people.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q Hi.

Q I had a couple of questions.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, sure. And then I'll go to you next.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. I had a couple of questions. First a follow-up about some of the humanitarian needs you've been talking about.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You've talked about how much money and supplies are going to be going, but how are you going to ensure that those supplies get to the Ukraine? Is there going to be some sort of airdrop? And would the President consider putting U.S. boots on the ground for humanitarian needs to make sure they get to the people that need it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we do have, fortunately or unfortunately, a fair amount of experience on providing humanitarian assistance in conflict zones and we typically work -- and USAID specifically has a great deal of experience with that --

assistance in conflict zones, and we typically work -- and OSINT, specifically, has a great deal of experience with that working with trusted third-party entities; obviously, the government, which remains in power. So, there's a range of ways that we would provide assistance.

In terms of other mechanisms, I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q And then another question for you, and this has been happening while you've been up at the podium, so --

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q I'm not trying to ambush you --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- but I wanted to give you a chance to respond. Senator Ted Cruz is speaking at CPAC, and you came up.

MS. PSAKI: Oh?

Q He called you, quote, unquote, "Peppermint Patty," and has encouraged people to boo you. So, I wanted to --

MS. PSAKI: Don't tell him I like Peppermint Patty. (Laughter.) I -- so I'm not going to take it too offensively.

Q You just did. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Senator Cruz, I like Peppermint Patty. I'm a little tougher than that, but there you go.

Go ahead.

Q Hi. Yeah, so back to the President's comments earlier today. So, he did say to give it a month to see if these sanctions work.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q However, you know, under Russia's current assault, Ukraine clearly might not have a month or even weeks. So, is it fair to say that he is conceding Ukraine to Putin?

MS. PSAKI: There's nothing about the President's strategy or approach or leadership in the world -- building a coalition of the majority of countries, you know, in the Western world, to stand against the actions of President Putin -- that suggests that he is conceding anything.

You saw him lay out a set of historic sanctions today that will maximize pain on Russia. Yes, as we've -- as we've conveyed, they're meant to have a squeeze over the course of time, but we're already seeing an impact on the financial markets, on the currency, on inflation in Russia. And there is a -- there are -- unfortunately, the Russian people are going to feel the pain of that.

So, I would say the President is going to continue, as he has for weeks now, to work in close lockstep with European partners to continue to press -- to press from the global community for de-escalation as it relates to the events in Ukraine.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. If President Zelenskyy is in danger of being killed or captured and put on some sort of a show trial, would President Biden send U.S. troops in on a rescue mission to get him out?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we are in touch with President Zelenskyy, who is an important partner. We support him. He is the leader of Ukraine, of gov- -- the President of Ukraine, but I m not going to get into security steps.

Q Okay. There s this talk about a possible forecast for financial pain, particularly at the gas pump --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- for Americans. The President said today, "The notion that this is going to last for a long time is highly unlikely." Would he try to ensure that by lifting some of the restrictions that he s put in place on the energy industry or rethinking some projects like the Keystone Pipeline?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, the Keystone Pipeline is not flowing, so I m not sure how that would solve anything.

There s also plenty of oil leases that are not being tapped into by oil companies, so you should talk to them about that and why.

But what the President is talking about is -- we certainly understand -- and he said this today, right? -- it may have been in response to your question. I don t remember. But if there s an invasion of another country by a big country, there s going to be impacts on the markets. Right? And we certainly anticipated that, and we anticipate that as it relates to the global oil market as well.

So that s why the President, for weeks now, has been engaging with a range of big global suppliers -- some in the Middle East, others -- to see what we can do to ensure there is supply out there in the market to reduce the impact on the American people.

Q And the U.S. is one of the Russian oil industry s best customers -- hundreds of thousands of barrels per day. Would the President ever consider ordering U.S. companies to stop importing Russian oil?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have any prediction of that at this point, Peter. We announced some significant sanctions today. Our objective is to ensure there is the greatest pain -- economic pain on Russia and not on the Russian people, but on President Putin, and to minimize the impact on the American people, including companies here in the United States.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Thanks, everyone. See you tomorrow.

Q Jen, the President said that he thinks that Putin is go and try to expand back the Soviet Union. So, is this -- do you all think this is act one in a multiple-country invasion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I m not going to make a prediction of that, but we certainly think he has grander ambitions than Ukraine.

Q And to clarify that same point: Does he believe that President Putin is going to absorb Ukraine into Russia when he says that President Putin wants to "reestablish the...Soviet Union"? Is that what he s saying?

MS. PSAKI: I think he believes that -- as we all do -- that President Putin has more -- has grander ambitions in Ukraine. Hence, the military campaign is continuing.

(Cross-talk by reporters.)

MS. PSAKI: We ll do this more tomorrow.

6:23 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 28, 2022 7:11 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 28, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone today with Dr. Ibrahim Kalin, Spokesperson and Chief Advisor to the President of Turkey. They discussed their shared commitment to supporting Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression and the importance of a coordinated international response to the crisis.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NEC Director Brian Deese and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on New Digital Assets Executive Order
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 9, 2022 6:00 AM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2022

Statement by NEC Director Brian Deese and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on New Digital Assets Executive Order

Today President Biden signed an Executive Order (E.O.) to establish the first-ever comprehensive federal digital assets strategy for the United States. The E.O. will help position the U.S. to keep playing a leading role in the innovation and governance of the digital assets ecosystem at home and abroad, in a way that protects consumers, is consistent with our democratic values and advances U.S. global competitiveness.

This E.O. marks an intensification of our efforts to promote responsible innovation in the digital assets space – innovation that works for all Americans, protects our national security interests, and contributes to our economic competitiveness and growth. Fundamentally, an American approach to digital assets is one that encourages innovation but mitigates the risks to consumers, investors, and businesses, broader financial stability, and the environment. We are clear-eyed that “financial innovation” of the past has too often not benefited working families, while exacerbating inequality and increasing systemic financial risk. This history underscores the need to build robust consumer and economic protections into digital asset development.

The approach outlined in the E.O. will reinforce U.S. leadership in the global financial system and safeguard the long-term efficacy of critical national security tools like sanctions and anti-money laundering frameworks. To these ends, the Order identifies the Administration’s policy priorities, both for cryptocurrencies and any future U.S. central bank digital currency, to help guide the evolution of the digital asset ecosystem in a way that is consistent with our values.

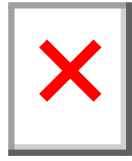
Governments alone cannot solve these problems, and definitely not a government that operates in siloes. This E.O. is the product of months of work with stakeholders across government, industry, advocacy, academia, and international allies and partners – to identify actions we can take to foster responsible innovation in the digital asset ecosystem. Its implementation will leverage the knowledge and distinct expertise of a broad range of stakeholders across the White House and Executive departments and agencies, and regulatory agencies. We remain committed to working with allies, partners, and the broader digital asset community to shape the future of digital asset systems in a manner that is safe, inclusive, and consistent with our democratic values. As this ecosystem evolves, so too will our approach.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Meeting with Africa Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 10, 2022 7:03 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2022

**Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Meeting with Africa Union Commission Chairperson
Moussa Faki Mahamat**

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Africa Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat to reinforce President Biden's commitment to Africa. Chairperson Faki and Mr. Sullivan discussed working together and through multilateral institutions like the African Union and the United Nations to face today's global challenges. Mr. Sullivan reiterated the United States' commitment to working with Africa to achieve our goals around the world – combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, advancing global health security, building a strong and inclusive global economy, combating the climate crisis, and revitalizing democracy and defending human rights. Mr. Sullivan also welcomed the strong statement from the Chairperson and African Union chair President of Senegal Macky Sall calling on the Russian Federation to respect international law and the national sovereignty of Ukraine. Mr. Sullivan also raised areas where the United States and the African Union have an interest in working together to restore democracy in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, support fragile transitions in Sudan and Chad, and work toward peaceful and stable futures for Ethiopia and Somalia. Both agreed to maintain close coordination as President Biden plans to convene leaders from across the African continent for a U.S. – Africa Leaders Summit and host the Global COVID-19 Summit this year.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Meeting with U.K. Foreign Secretary Elizabeth Truss
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 11, 2022 2:03 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2022

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Meeting with U.K. Foreign Secretary Elizabeth Truss

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Foreign Secretary Elizabeth Truss of the United Kingdom. They discussed Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war in Ukraine. They also reviewed the ongoing coordination with Allies and partners to impose severe costs on Moscow for its aggression and to provide security, economic, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. In addition, they talked about a range of shared priorities in Asia and the Middle East. They welcomed the launch earlier this week of a new U.S.-U.K. dialogue on the Indo-Pacific.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on Senior Administration Travel to Rome
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 13, 2022 10:00 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on Senior Administration Travel to Rome

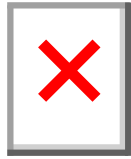
On Monday, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and officials from the National Security Council and State Department will be in Rome. Sullivan will meet with Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi as part of our ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The two sides will discuss ongoing efforts to manage the competition between our two countries and discuss the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on regional and global security. Sullivan will also meet with Luigi Mattiolo, Diplomatic Advisor to the Italian Prime Minister to continue coordinating a strong, united international response to President Putin's war of choice.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Iran Missile Attack on Kurdistan Region of Iraq
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 13, 2022 9:29 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Iran Missile Attack on Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The United States condemns in the strongest terms Iran's missile attack on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This attack targeted a civilian residence in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region's capital city, without any justification. The United States stands with Prime Minister Kadhimi and the leaders of the Kurdistan Region, President Nechirvan Barzani, and Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, in condemning this assault on the sovereignty of Iraq and its Kurdistan region. We will support the Government of Iraq in holding Iran accountable, and we will support our partners throughout the Middle East in confronting similar threats from Iran. The United States of America stands behind the full sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Iraq.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Politburo Member Yang Jiechi
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 14, 2022 2:32 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2022

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meeting with Politburo Member Yang Jiechi

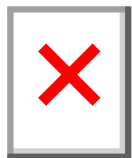
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi in Rome, Italy. Their meeting followed up on the November 15, 2022 virtual meeting between President Biden and President Xi. Mr. Sullivan raised a range of issues in U.S.-China relations, with substantial discussion of Russia's war against Ukraine. They also underscored the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between the United States and China.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on China
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 14, 2022 5:46 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2022

Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on China

Via Teleconference

2:59 P.M. EDT

MODERATOR: Great. Thank you. Thanks, everyone, for joining us today. So, this call is on background. It is attributable to a "senior administration official." And the contents of this call are embargoed until the end of the call.

For your reporting -- sorry, for your awareness -- oh, my God -- for your awareness, not for your reporting, the speaker on this call is [senior administration official].

So, again, as a reminder, this call is on background to a "senior administration official."

With that, I'll turn it over to you for some top remarks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks so much. And thanks to everybody for hopping on. I'm sorry for keeping you all waiting just a little bit there.

So think you all have seen the readout that went out from the White House just a little bit ago, so won't rehearse what was in there. You've got that.

But, you know, we just wrapped a meeting in Rome, of course between the National Security Advisor and his PRC counterpart.

The two covered a range of issues of interest to the United States and the international community. It was an intense seven-hour session reflecting the gravity of the moment, as well as our commitment to maintaining open lines of communication.

While this meeting had been planned for some time, it was a timely and important conversation in this crisis moment. The two officials covered the whole range of issues in the U.S.-China relationship. They had an extensive conversation on Russia/Ukraine, with the National Security Advisor laying out where we are, how we got here, and what the risks are that we see lying ahead.

The two sides discussed DPRK because that is also an escalating situation that demands our attention. We agreed that officials with responsibility for this issue from the two sides will deepen their conversations in the near future.

Additionally, they discussed crisis management and ways to manage strategic risk, following up on the discussion in November between President Biden and President Xi on the importance of doing so, toward the goal of managing the competition between our two countries to ensure that it does not veer into conflict.

The National Security Advisor also reiterated our One China policy based on the Taiwan Relations Act, Three Communiqués, and Six Assurances. And he underscored concerns about Beijing's courses and provocative actions across the Taiwan Strait.

This meeting, of course, comes not only amid Russia's intensifying invasion in Ukraine, but also the intense work in recent months with our allies and partners in Europe and Asia.

The National Security Advisor described to Yang the unity of the United States and its allies and partners, the unprecedented coordination with our European and NATO Allies in particular, as well as the intense and unprecedented engagement by Asia Pacific allies in bringing the cost on Russia for its actions.

The President, as you know, has been coordinating closely with our Indo-Pacific partners to support the solidarity. And, of course, just less than two weeks ago, President Biden convened a secure video meeting of the Quad leaders of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States to discuss the war against Ukraine and the implications for the Indo-Pacific.

So that is what we've got on the meeting, and we'd be happy to take a couple of questions.

MODERATOR: Thanks. Could we re-up the directions again to ask a question please?

Q Thank you. Can you tell us: What is the current financial situation between China and Russia? And was this call -- this meeting so urgent, particularly because of the threat that Russia -- the possibility Russia might default as soon as Wednesday? And is Russia seeking a bailout from China? And is that your prime concern more than weapons right now -- to stop China from bailing out Russia?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Well, thanks so much, Andrea, for the question. So let me just clarify with a bit of context that, you know, this meeting had been planned for some time. In fact, discussions about planning this meeting started soon after the virtual meeting between the two leaders, which, of course, that meeting was in November. I believe the planning conversations for this meeting today took place -- started in December.

So this was the date that had been agreed upon by the U.S. and China quite some time ago. But, of course, the context in which the conversation is taking place has shifted since the original conversations about this meeting.

So I wouldn't want to somehow convey that there was an urgency necessarily, or that this meeting was timed based on some particular events vis-à-vis Russia/Ukraine. Rather, again, this was a long-planned, long-discussed meeting where, in fact, the timing of it landed, we think, was a really timely and important moment in this crisis.

So that's kind of on the timing piece of it.

You know, on the question about, you know, the financial situation and what our concerns are and whatnot: I mean, number one, I'd have to sort of refer you to Russia and China, respectively, about what the situation actually is. But, you know, what would just say, in general, is that we do have deep concerns about China's alignment with Russia at this time, and the National Security Advisor was direct about those concerns and the potential implications and consequences of certain actions.

MODERATOR: Can we do our next question, please?

Q Hi, thanks so much for doing this. I just want to follow on Andrea's question. Does the U.S. have information that China has expressed an openness to providing Russia with the requested military and financial assistance that we've all reported on? And has any assistance been provided from China to Russia since the invasion of Ukraine started?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks, Kaitlan. I do not have any comments for you on that.

Q Can you say why you don't have any comment?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : --

OPERATOR: All right, our next ques- --

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : (audible.)

OPERATOR: Sorry.

MODERATOR: et's let [senior administration official] finish that thought.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Well, 'm not going to comment on the specific reports. You know, what will say, in general, in terms of concerns vis-à-vis what China may be considering, or what kind of support it could provide: You know, the National Security Advisor was clear, think, over the weekend.

But we're not communicating via the press with the PRC. We are communicating directly and privately with China about our concerns, about the kinds of support that other countries might be providing to Russia.

MODERATOR: Great. Next question, please.

Q Hello, thank you. You said it was an intense seven-hour meeting. Why was it so intense? Why was it so long? What did you ask China to do? Was it a successful meeting?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : That was a lot of -- a lot packed in there, so 'll try and hit all of those, Steve.

You know, why was it intense? would say, number one, you know, this was pretty -- this is a -- there's a lot of gravity in this moment. And think the conversation reflected the intensity of that. And think it was also a very candid conversation, which -- you know, think is also important.

Why was it so long? Well, you know, it had been planned as, you know, a relatively lengthy set of meetings -- set of exchanges. We had several sessions throughout the day, including, you know, a one-on-one between the two officials, as they have done previously. And, you know, think -- mean, there's practical reasons there, which is, you know, the National Security Advisor and Director Yang flew great lengths to meet. So, important to take that opportunity to cover the wide range of issues, you know, not only in U.S.-China relations, but of, you know, international interest and import. So, think that is the reason for the length.

You know, on the question of, you know, of a specific ask: You know, would just say

that this meeting was not about negotiating any specific issues or outcomes, but about a candid, direct exchange of views and articulation of those. And I would suppose it depends on how you define success.

But again, we believe that it is important to keep open lines of communication between the United States and China, especially on areas where we disagree. And it's incredibly important to be able to have, you know, candid and direct conversations about those things. And so, I'm certain that that was what occurred today.

Q Hey, [senior administration official], thanks for doing this. I'm going to try to get you to say something on those reports on the assistance that Russia had requested from China. And I'll try a different way.

When you guys say, you know, that there -- that you're looking for substantial and material support that could be provided, what do you define it as? Is there a red line that China could cross, but if they don't, then there's no consequences for them?

And then secondly, you know, this is a pretty high-stakes moment, as you've said -- you know, also in the context of all of these reports. And I don't know if your candid conversations necessarily always lead to the Chinese understanding exactly what you want from them. So, does it warrant a call between the leaders to follow up and really drive home the points you made today?

And then thirdly -- sorry, because my line is still open -- what did you take into this meeting from allies? And how concerned are they on these reports, on the intel that you shared with them?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks, Jenny. I love the -- the, like, triple, quadruple questions we've got going here. I'm not too jet-lagged yet to lose track.

So, on the first question -- look, I'm just going to reiterate that we do have deep concerns about China's alignment with Russia at this time. And the National Security Advisor was direct about those concerns and the potential implications and consequences of certain actions.

But again, we're not communicating via the press with China. We're communicating directly and privately.

I don't have anything for you on the question about a call between the leaders, other than, again, we believe it's important to maintain open lines of communication.

And I said I was going to remember your last question, and now I can't read my handwriting here. So, what was the third one?

Q think it was concer- -- are our allies and partners concerned about --

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Oh, our allies. Right. Yes. Of course, of course, of course.

ook, again, not going to be able to confirm any reports or comment on any new reports that have been in the press. However, as noted, we have been, you know, working closely, consulting closely with allies and partners over -- you know -- well, over the course of the entire administration, but certainly very intensively in recent months.

You know -- and would refer you to other capitals to characterize their own views, other than to say that know that, you know, the -- much of the world is, you know, watching the decisions that various governments are taking in this incredibly important moment.

MODERATOR: Thanks. think we have time for just one more question, so could we queue that up, please?

Q Again this Hyeongjoo, VOA. Thank you for this opportunity. My question is about discussion on DPRK. So, could you be a little bit more specific on what Jake Sullivan's message to his counterpart, especially, as you may know, the situation in Korean Peninsula is escalating by North Korea's continuous provocation?

And also, we have a news report, citing South Korean officials, that North Korea intercontinental ballistic missiles launch might be imminent. So what did you ask China to do in dealing with the North Korea? Especially, did you discuss the Chinese continuous objection at the U.N. Security Council to respond the North Korean missile test?

And also, how would you respond if North Korea launched the intercontinental ballistic missile? How would you respond?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks for that question. So, obviously -- oh, there's a bit of an echo. Okay, it's better now.

You know, obviously -- you know, we have serious concerns about the recent escalatory actions that we have seen from the DPRK. You know, the National Security Advisor was clear with Director Yang not only about those concerns, but also, you know, about the steps that we believe are necessary in this moment and the work that we hope to be able to engage with China on.

We do think there is a history of the United States and China being able to work together on this issue, in addition to, obviously, the United States continuing our close work with our allies in Seoul and Tokyo.

And, you know, that's where the two sides -- the National Security Advisor and

Director Yang -- discussed ensuring that there are follow-up conversations in the near future, building on recent discussions between, you know, our Special Representative Sung Kim and his Chinese Special Representative in Xiaoming in order to further discuss specific ways that the United States and China may be able to press the DPRK on a different path.

MODERATOR: Great. Thanks, everyone. That was our last question. As a reminder, this call was on background, attributable to a "senior administration official." The embargo on the contents of this call have now lifted.

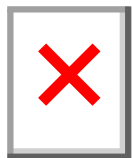
If you have any more questions, please feel free to reach out to me and we'll make sure to get back to you. Thanks, everyone.

3:18 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 14, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 14, 2022 10:06 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 14, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:25 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone.

Q Hello. Good to see you.

MS. PSAKI: Good to see you. Okay, I have nothing at the top for you.

Josh, what is on your mind?

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions. First, after the Rome meeting, since the war began, has China provided any military or economic aid to Russia or expressed any specific intentions to do so?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not in a position to confirm or detail any intelligence from here at this point in time.

Q Okay. Moving on to the Russia-Ukraine talks: What does the U.S. see that would be a sign for optimism that some kind of ceasefire could be reached? And which carrots and which sticks do you think Putin is most responding to, if that's the case --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- most likely to respond to?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, as you've heard us say in the past, we certainly will continue to support the Ukrainian participation in these talks and conversations as long as they choose to continue to participate in them, of course. And we are trying to boost them by providing a range of not just economic and humanitarian assistance, but military assistance that we believe strengthens -- strengthens -- strengthens -- excuse me -- their positions in these talks.

Our view continues to be that, despite words that are said in these talks or coming out of these talks, diplomacy requires engaging in good faith to de-escalate. And what we're really looking for is evidence of that. And we're not seeing any evidence, at this point, that President Putin is doing anything to stop the onslaught or de-escalate. But that is really what we would be looking for.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. To follow up on the Rome meeting, what are the consequences for China if they do aid Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to get into specific consequences. I think what we have conveyed and what was conveyed by our National Security Advisor in this meeting is that should they provide military or other assistance that, of course, violates sanctions or supports the war effort, that there will be significant consequences.

But in terms of what the specifics look like, we would coordinate with our partners and allies to make that determination.

Q Okay. But Jake Sullivan certainly communicated that there would be consequences?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, as we have also said publicly a number of times.

Q Okay. And then, is there anything you can share about the President's potential meeting -- potential trip to Europe in the next couple of weeks? Who he might be meeting with and really what the point would be of going to Europe?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, we are, of course, closely engaged with our NATO partners and European allies, as you heard us say a number of times, about the next steps in diplomacy, whether that's providing additional humanitarian or security assistance or the mechanics for future conversations.

But there's not been any final decision about a trip, so I don't have anything to preview about what that would look like if he were to take a trip.

Q Okay. Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President said back in February that the U.S. would respond forcefully if Americans were targeted in Ukraine. Brent Renaud was killed over the weekend. One of my colleagues was injured today. We're still waiting to hear if he's okay. So what is that response going to look like?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say: Your colleague, Benjamin Hall -- I know there's not final reports yet or we would wait for your news organization to confirm those -- but our thoughts, the President's thoughts, our administration's thoughts are with him, his family, and all of you at Fox News as well.

In terms of specific actions, I think you have seen the President lead the world in taking -- putting in place consequence -- consequences, putting in place repercussions and steps in response to the actions of Russia -- the brutal actions that have certainly impacted Ukrainian people and now have certainly impacted some Americans.

But in terms of next steps or what the next consequence would be, I don't have anything to preview for you at this point in time.

Q But we've seen the President been, so far, unwilling to draw a red line on the kinds of atrocities that we're going to watch from the sidelines. We've seen maternity wards being bombed, illegal weapons being used, pediatric hospitals being targeted.

President Obama drew the red line for Syria at chemical weapons. So is there any thought process about what we're willing to watch happen before there's --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Jacqui, I think it's important to reiterate as often as we can that what we're seeing is horrific, what we're seeing is barbaric. And the steps that the President has taken and led the world in taking have essentially led the Russian financial system to be on the brink of collapse. We have provided more military assistance to the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian government than any other country in the world and more historic assistance than any other year to Ukraine in history. And we're doing that so that we can support them in this difficult moment.

So I would say that, at this moment in time, we have been hardly on the sidelines. We have been leading this effort around the world to respond to every step and every escalatory step that President Putin and the Russians are taking.

Q But isn't there a concern that if we don't draw the line at something like chemical weapons, that it'll make it easier for malign actors to use them in the future, because they'll just go unpunished?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Jacqui, I think that you heard the President say on Friday that there would be severe consequences and the world would respond if they were to use chemical weapons.

And what we have been doing over the course of the last several weeks, if not months, is providing as much information to the global community, to the media, and to others about what to expect.

And when you have President Putin suggesting -- and Russian -- Russian officials suggesting that the United States and Ukrainians are the ones who are working on a chemical weapons program, it's clear that this is a pattern that we've seen in the past of them trying to set up a predicate for their own actions.

Q But what does -- what does that end up looking like if the world responds? Because so far, we've heard the President talk a lot about what the U.S. is not going to do, in terms of, you know, not wanting to trigger war with a nuclear power. But do we believe that Putin is, you know, a rational kind of person who, you know, would pay attention to something like that? I mean, he didn't need provocation to, you know, invade Ukraine. Why wouldn't we think that he would just create a pretext that is fabricated for something like that?

MS. PSAKI: We do. That's why we've talked about it.

And I think, Jacqui, what's important here is -- and then I'm just going to move on to get to more people -- is that for any President, you have to weigh how you can lead the world, how you can make very clear that actions are horrific, that they are not acceptable, they're not aligned with global norms, while also thinking about our own national security interests. And starting World War Three is certainly not in our national security interests. Putting U.S. troops on the ground in Ukraine to fight a war with Russia is not in our national security interests.

Go ahead.

Q I do have one -- one quick --

MS. PSAKI: I just have to move on because I -- otherwise I'm not going to get to other people.

Go ahead.

Q It's a follow-up to what you had said though about misinformation and Twitter.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Because, last year, the President worked with Twitter specifically to address misinformation on vaccines, called it a "wartime effort." Has there been any conversations with Twitter to address misinformation as it pertains to chemical attacks and that kind of thing, given that the -- you know, Russia has banned this platform within the country and they're using it to, obviously, target eyes outside of the country, including within the U.S., to spread propaganda and misinformation?

MS. PSAKI: We were the ones who told you all about that.

I agree. I don't have anything to read out for you in terms of private conversations with Twitter or any other social platform. But I'm happy to check and see if there's more.

Go ahead.

Q Back on the Rome talks. Have you seen any -- or did you -- your colleagues see in this meeting any sign that China got the message, that they are going to heed your warnings?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what we're going to be watching closely, of course, is actions. So beyond that, I think, as my colleagues just -- just read out for you in a call that we delayed the briefing slightly to make sure you could all participate in: It was an intense seven-hour session reflecting the gravity of the moment. And it was an opportunity to be very clear about what you've heard our National Security Advisor convey publicly but more directly about what the consequences would be.

Q And, you know, your colleagues have said that your deep concerns were conveyed about what would happen if China were to align more closely with Russia. Just, big picture: If China does not heed the U.S.'s warnings, if they do move forward with this, how concerned are you that this is inching closer to the world war that the President has been warning of?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what we're looking at here -- one is: If China were to decide to be an economic provider, or to take additional steps, there to Russia, they only make up 15 percent or 20 -- 15 to 20 percent of the world's economy. The G7 countries make up more than 50 percent. So there are a range of tools at our disposal in coordination with our European partners should we need to use them.

But, again, we are -- don't have anything to update you on in terms of an assessment. This is obviously an area we're watching closely.

While this meeting has been planned for some time as a follow-up from the November call that President Xi had with President Xi, it was a timely -- an important moment to have this conversation, especially given the reports we've seen and -- and the invasion, of course, of Ukraine.

Go ahead. Oh, one more? Go ahead..

Q Just one quick follow-up, actually, to Jacqui's questions --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- about chemical weapons. You know, the President, as you noted, said on Friday that Russia would pay a severe price. What would that price look like? Are we talking in the realm of more sanctions? Can you give us sort of any big

picture about what that would entail?

MS. PSAKI: That would be a conversation that we would have with our partners around the world.

But there's no question if Russia were to decide to use chemical weapons, there would be a severe reaction from the global community.

Go ahead.

Q So when you talk about, kind of, the possibilities for China if they don't go along with what you've asked, would you say, like you've said with Russia, that "everything is on the table," including ending trade negotiations, sanctions? Is that all on the table?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to be in a position to detail it further from here. We'll see. We'll keep having this conversation over the coming days.

Q But you won't do nothing if China decides to provide military support?

MS. PSAKI: We've been clear there would be consequences.

Q And that you would -- you all would initiate?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Okay. And then, what's kind of your end -- thinking about what an endgame looks like, as far as these conversations with China, do you want them to shift their strategic priorities and not have a relationship with Russia that it does now? Or are you looking for something more modest?

MS. PSAKI: It's less about changing their mind and more about making clear with them what the consequences would be should they take additional actions to support this invasion.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q On the additional \$200 million in security assistance --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- the President signed off on this past weekend, an official said that part of it would go to anti-armor and anti-aircraft systems. I know the Pentagon says it's still kind of in process right now. Are these -- are we talking about weapon systems that have already been delivered, or is there consideration of new types of weapon systems in this tranche of funding?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question, Phil. My understanding -- and just to give you all more detail: This weekend, as I think you all saw it, we announced -- and I think this is why you're asking -- the President authorized an additional \$200 million of security assistance, which utilizes the maximum amount of funding available to provide Ukrainians with the type of weapons they are using so effectively.

It's really a continuity, as I understand it -- let me double check this for you -- of the type of weapons that they have been using very effectively on the ground to push back on Russia, both in the air and on the ground.

So that includes, as you -- as you noted, anti-armor, anti-tank, and air defense capabilities and ammunition of other types, and other types of assistance to address the armored, airborne, and other threats that they are facing.

But my understanding, Phil, is it's a continuation of the types of security assistance that we have been providing. And, of course, the President is looking forward to -- there's a significant amount of funding, as I think you all have noted, in the omnibus for Ukraine, which would enable us to provide even additional assistance to add to that package.

Q Okay. And then just a quick follow-up to one of Josh's questions. The Deputy Secretary of State this weekend said, quote, she'd seen some signs of "willingness to have real, serious negotiations." I think that differed a little bit from what we've heard from officials about the Russian posture up to this point.

Can you elaborate on what the signs may have been -- may have been seen in terms of giving the Deputy Secretary of State that view of things?

MS. PSAKI: Well, she also said that they would have to back any words with actions, essentially, which I think is an important context. Right?

They did have talks today. There have been reports that they will have additional talks. We've been very appreciative of the efforts of our allies -- France, Germany, Israel, and Turkey, and others -- to be participants in these talks at times or engage in these talks at times.

But, again, diplomacy requires both sides engaging in good faith and to deescalate. And what we're really looking for is specific delivery of actions.

I think it's important to remember that there have been five or six attempts to implement a humanitarian corridor. Those have not been effective. Those have not worked. You've seen, through video footage and others' reports, that those -- that has not been abided by. So that is where we are keeping our eye and focus.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Q Do you get a sense that as this conflict with Russia and Ukraine is happening, that other actors that are adversaries to the United States -- China, Iran, North Korea -- are also testing the West, with China's work with Russia, as you're dealing with that, perhaps with Taiwan; Iran with its rockets; North Korea also showing its provocative nature?

Is there a test of the West coming from some of the adversaries of the United States?

MS. PSAKI: We have not assessed those to be related, as you have said. I mean, if you look at the Iran -- the missile strike that we saw over the weekend, no U.S. facilities were hit, no personnel were harmed. We were not the targets of that.

We've obviously seen tests and information we put out publicly as it relates to North Korea. We've seen dozens of tests over the course of past administrations as well. So I would say we are not assessing it through those -- that prism.

Q Has the administration reached out to American companies that have property, infrastructure in Russia -- to expect that to be nationalized by Russia and to lose those assets in Russia?

MS. PSAKI: We have been, of course, engaged with U.S. companies -- not encouraging them; obviously, we've -- publicly applauding them. But they're going to make their own decisions as private sector companies.

We've also conveyed, as we did publicly, I think on Friday, that there would be -- we would certainly look to consequences should that happen.

Go ahead.

Q The former White House COVID Advisor, Andy Slavitt, has a Twitter thread today in which he talks about the

potential for an increase in COVID cases this spring. He says, "Based on European case increases, the U.S. could see a new rise in COVID cases..." Are you confident the administration has the real-time data it needs to provide the best information possible to the public?

MS. PSAKI: To pr- -- to assess data?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, we are. I would note that -- I did not see his tread -- his thread, but let me note -- and I m not sure if it was related to the BA.2 variant. Was it related to the BA.2 variant?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. What we do know about the BA.2 variant, which I think is important context for people, is that it s circulated in the United States for some time. We ve been watching it closely, of course. We currently have about 35,000 cases in this country. We expect some fluctuation, especially at this relatively low level, and, certainly, that to increase.

I would also note that while BA.2 is more transmissi- -- is a more transmissible version of Omicron, the tools we have -- including mRNA vaccines, therapeutics, and tests -- are all effective tools against the virus. And we know because it s been in the country.

And so, as we re watching, and I think a lot of the reporting has been about, of course, the UK but also China. And China has a zero-tolerance policy, as you all know, but they also did not conduct their vaccination and booster campaigns with mRNA vaccine. So that is important context, too, as you re seeing the impact.

What I would note, just to go back to your earlier part of your question, is that we are still pressing -- the place where it is concerning is the fact that we need additional COVID funding. And we have talked about this -- we talked about this a little bit in the past, but -- last week -- all running together.

But -- but without COVID response resources and additional money, there could be immediate impacts on testing capacity; the uninsured fund, which offers coverage of testing and treatments for tens of millions of Americans who lack health insurance; and on our supply of monoclonal antibodies. And that means that some programs, if we don t get funding, could abruptly end or need to be pared back. And that could impact how we are able to respond to any variant, of course.

Q I do just want to ask you one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- quick question.

Q We noticed the President, when he came on stage today at the Marriott, had a mask on. Is that something he has been advised to do, or is that something he just feels more comfortable doing?

MS. PSAKI: Often he does that when it s required by a specific event, as he did when he went to Texas last week. I can certainly check on that. He was tested yesterday and tested negative.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, on Ukraine, the President has made clear that he sort of has a red line with Russia, in terms of not wanting to do anything that would get into a direct confrontation or lead to World War Three, as he puts it.

I m curious -- I know you re not sharing specifics, but in broad strokes, does he have a similar red line now with China

assisting Russia? And are -- is the -- does he not want to get into a direct confrontation with China? And are there certain things he's not willing to do because of that?

MS. PSAKI: Let me see if I can answer your question, but tell me if I'm not.

We don't like red lines around here, so I'm not going to use that phrasing. But you are obviously correct that what he is -- he's been very clear and consistent about his -- that he does not have the intention of sending U.S. troops to Ukraine. That has not changed.

I would look at -- while we are certainly watching closely the actions of China, whether -- whether that is support of any kind -- in support of any kind for Russia, and certainly there would be consequences to that -- I do think we look at it through a slightly different prism. I mean, Russia is invading Ukraine actively. So, I'm not -- but I'm not sure if I'm answering your question or not.

Q Well, sort of. Just to follow up, I mean -- right, no ground troops in Ukraine, but also, there have been other things, such as not enforcing a no-fly zone or not providing the fighter jets --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that the President has been reluctant to do. So, again, you said you're not sharing specifics. You said Jake Sullivan said "significant consequences" for the Chinese. But I'm wondering if there are certain things that you will not consider because it could lead to a direct confrontation with China that you're reluctant to get into, the same way you are with Russia.

MS. PSAKI: I just think we look at it slightly differently. I mean, what I'm talking -- what we -- why the President has been so clear about not sending U.S. troops is obviously because that would be a military conflict. We're not fighting, obviously, in a -- there's no military conflict at this moment with China, nor do we -- nor are we predicting that. So I think we just -- it's slightly different.

Q And one just on a --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- different topic. How high is the administration expecting gas prices to go? And how much -- is there a limit -- not a red line but a limit at what you think -- (laughter) -- the U.S. public can bear?

MS. PSAKI: Just flows off the tongue. (Laughs.) It's okay.

So it's a good question. We don't have -- I don't have a prediction from here, in terms of what it could look like. There are outside predictors, of course. And, obviously, what we're trying to do is mitigate the impact. You know, and you've seen, of course, you know, the price of oil go down a little bit. And the President will continue to look at a range of steps that he can take, whether it is engaging through his team, or through even himself personally, with big global producers, or it is looking at a range of domestic options.

But we've seen it go up. I mean, we look at a lot of the same data you look at -- AAA and other data -- that shows us how much it has gone up since the period of time when Russian troops lined up on the border.

But in terms of how far -- you know, we still believe it will continue to go up, but we're trying to take steps we can take to mitigate that and reduce it.

Go ahead, Mara.

Q Thank you. I understand you don't want to lay out what the severe consequences would be if Russia used chemical

Q I thank you. I understand you don't want to lay out what the severe consequences would be if Russia used chemical weapons, but I guess what I'm confused about is we know there's not going to be any U.S. troops, no jets, no no-fly zone. Other than the things you've already done, which you have already described as severe, could you give us some examples of what more you can do since you've ruled out all these things?

Just -- when you talk about severe consequences, what does that mean, given that we know what it doesn't mean?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I --

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I understand your question. I'm just not going to outline that from here. Those are conversations that will happen -- continue to happen with our national security team and with our partners and allies around the world.

Q But what you're asking us to believe is that there are severe consequences that you haven't used yet but that are not on the "no" list?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Q Okay. But you won't tell us what kinds of things those might be?

MS. PSAKI: We're going to have those conversations privately through our national security team and with our partners around the world.

Q Okay. But -- but do you -- I guess what I'm wondering -- what about the argument that there just aren't any more severe consequences for you to use because most of the severe ones you've ruled out?

MS. PSAKI: That's inaccurate.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Just on the Fed nominations --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Nice try, Mara.

Q -- does the White House have any assurances from any Republican senators that they would support Sarah Bloom Raskin's nomination? And did Senator Manchin give the President or anyone in the administration a heads up about his opposition to her -- to her nomination? I'm trying to figure out if that was a surprise.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I understand your question. We were aware of his position in advance of his -- of Senator Manchin's announcement. We are -- she is one of the most qualified individuals to ever be nominated to this position. And so where we are now is -- our focus is on continuing to work with Chairman -- Chairman Brown to garner bipartisan support. But I don't have anything to read out for you on that front at this point.

Q How did Senator Manchin make you aware that -- of his opposition? Was there a call to someone in the White House? Did the President know? What did that look like today?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to detail more specifics.

Q Okay. And just one last question, if you don't mind.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q How is the administration preparing to respond to the potential supplies chain shock -- excuse me -- posed by China's decision to lock down the tech production hub in Shenzhen?

MS. PSAKI: So we are, of course, monitoring this incredibly closely, and our team is quite focused on it. What I will say is that, because of the steps we've taken and a number of steps we've taken to better -- better prepare and strengthen the supply chain, you know, we -- we feel that that has helped us -- will help us sustain.

But in terms of -- right now, we're basically in the stage where we're monitoring with the State Department. What we're looking at is, of course, as you know, the impact on some of these ports around where -- the impacted areas of China.

And we know here that, of course, our Port Action Plan and the work of our Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force, that we have a strong inventory that we can rely on. It's about 90 percent of goods at groceries and drugstores are in stock currently. And we've also reduced the number of import containers sitting at the docks for over nine days by over 60 percent.

But in terms of specific impacts of ports in China, we're monitoring it, and we don't have a new assessment at this -- in addition -- up-to-date assessment, I should say, at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Is it the U.S. assessment, just to be clear, that Russia is deliberately targeting civilians in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is part of our assessment and review as we're looking at how we're -- whether we will designate as a war crime. And we look at this through a legal process internally. Obviously, the targeting of civilians -- and we have seen a range of very concerning video reports -- other would be categorized in that -- through that as -- in that phrasing, but we have a process that we're still working through here.

Q And then, last week at a briefing, you told us that us, as reporters, should, quote, "not focus a lot" of our conversations "about the future of the United States importing oil at this point...from Venezuela." Were you ruling out that the U.S. would import oil from Venezuela (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I was saying it's not an active conversation at this time.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, thanks. Does the White House have any reaction to Ginni Thomas acknowledging that she attended the January 6th rally?

MS. PSAKI: I do not.

Q And just kind of on that: Does her attendance there raise any kind of concerns about the independence of the Supreme Court, potential conflicts of interest, anything like that?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have any more comment on it at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, Jen. For the second time in two weeks, a group of hundreds of Haitian migrants has landed by boat in the Florida

Q -- Yeah, for the second time in two weeks, a group of hundreds of Haitian migrants has landed by boat in the Florida Keys. Given the surge we saw last year in Del Rio of Haitian migration, what is the administration's reaction to these landings? Are there any plans to send any assistance either to Haiti or Florida?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure we can get you an update on the humanitarian assistance we provide directly to Haiti. We are the largest, if not one of the largest, providers of humanitarian assistance in the world. In terms of the individuals arriving, I think in Florida, as you said --

Q Yeah, the Florida Keys.

MS. PSAKI: -- I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security. We are still applying Title 42, and so that applies no matter which country you're coming from.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, yeah. The President of Colombia said last week that he had offered President Biden the possibility of supplying more Colombian oil to the U.S. as an alternative to Venezuelan oil. Is that an option that the White House is considering?

MS. PSAKI: We are continuing to talk to a range of producers on the importance of maintaining global supply. This is not, as you know, about just the supply in the U.S. but about ensuring there is supply for the global market. And we do appreciate our partnership with Colombia. And President Biden did discuss a range of issues like economic recovery, energy security during their conversation. But beyond that, I don't have an update on what that might look like.

Q Would you say that it is under active consideration as --

MS. PSAKI: Again, they had a -- they had a wide-ranging conversation, a very constructive conversation. This is really about supply in the global markets. But I don't have an update at this point in time.

Q Yeah. And as a follow-up, Chevron is preparing to take operating control of its joint ventures in Venezuela -- Reuters just reported that -- in case the U.S. would grant them a special license to operate. Is that something that's on the table?

MS. PSAKI: I think I just answered it a few minutes ago.

Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q Oh, yeah. Thanks, Jen. You said earlier in the press briefing that nothing has been decided about President Biden traveling to Europe." Can you confirm that such a trip is under consideration?

MS. PSAKI: We discuss a range of ways and mechanics for engaging with our friends and partners around the world, but I don't have any more specifics for you at this point in time.

Q Okay. And this morning, Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi announced that Zelenskyy -- President Zelenskyy of Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- will be delivering an address to the full House and Senate on Wednesday morning. What's the White House reaction to this address? Are there any concerns that the White House has about the Ukrainian President speaking directly with Congress as opposed to the White House on its various positions and requests?

MS. PSAKI: We speak frequently with President Zelenskyy. The President spoke with him -- had a lengthy conversation with him directly on Friday, and we're in touch with Ukrainian government officials nearly every day -- not every day.

We certainly support leaders in Congress inviting him to address a joint session. And I would again reiterate that there's strong, bipartisan support for Ukraine, for the leadership, and the bravery of President Zelenskyy. And we'll all look forward to watching his speech on Wednesday.

Q And then, finally, on Sarah Bloom Raskin and Senator Manchin's announcement that he doesn't support her confirmation: Does the White House still see a path to getting her confirmed in the evenly divided Senate?

MS. PSAKI: We are going to continue our work with Chairman Brown to garner bipartisan support. But again, she is one of the most qualified individuals ever to be nominated to this position. So that's where our focus is.

Q So you are pushing her forward still and --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- and believe that you can get her --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- confirmed? Okay.

MS. PSAKI: That is where our focus is. We wouldn't be pushing for bipartisan support if she wasn't still our nominee.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions on WNBA star Brittney Griner. Last week you had said you couldn't comment on the case. Is there any update you can give now on the efforts the administration may be taking to secure her release?

MS. PSAKI: We do not have a Privacy Act waiver.

Q Okay. And does the White House have any reason to believe that Griner is being used as a political pawn by the Russian government? Or does the administration see this strictly as part of the Russian criminal justice system?

MS. PSAKI: We just can't speak any more to the reports of this case.

Go ahead.

Q Hey, Jen. Thank you very much, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: I'll come back to you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. On the possible trip to Europe: Is President Biden considering visiting, maybe, perhaps the Ukrainian border and visit refugees -- Ukrainian refugees -- like other foreign leaders are doing? Is this something you'd like to do?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have anything more on the reports. Again, we have a range of conversations with our NATO partners and European allies about the next steps in diplomacy, but I don't have anything to confirm for you in terms of the report.

Q And just one more.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Not just China but some of the biggest countries in the world, like India or Brazil, some countries in Latin America like Mexico, they're not part of this economic war -- warfare against Russia. Is this something that undermines the efforts from this White House and European countries?

MS. PSAKI: I would say it doesn't undermine our efforts. We've been working to build a global coalition far beyond the G7 and our NATO partners, and had a great deal of success in that. And every country has to decide where they want to stand, where they want to be as we look and the history books are written.

Go ahead.

Q And you believe the --

MS. PSAKI: I think we've got to move on. We've got to get around.

Q Just very quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Do you just believe this economic pressure will stop Vladimir Putin from his invasion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think as we've seen, the impact of the President's leadership on the global stage and the economic consequences that have been put into place have led Russia and the Russian economy to be on the brink of collapse. And there's no question that, over time, that will have an impact.

Go ahead.

Q Oh, actually -- thank you. Furthering that point, you did mention at the top of this briefing that there has been no action on the part of Putin to stop the onslaught; you haven't seen any action.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q And that is after, again, all of these severe economic sanctions have been levied. And so, you know, I'm wondering why the administration thinks that this threat of further severe action that is vague, that is unnamed will deter him from using chemical weapons.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the reason that we spoke out last week about chemical weapons is because we felt that it was important for the global community to understand that they had the capacity, the capabilities, and that they have used them in the past. And at the same time, they were accusing, inaccurately -- they were spreading false information about the U.S. and the Ukrainians' intentions. That was the origin of why we were so outspoken last week.

So, this is more about us making clear to the world what we've seen as patterns in the past and what their capabilities and capacities are.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. President Biden has repeatedly said, "No U.S. troops inside Ukraine."

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q Are there any U.S. troops still training Ukrainians outside Ukraine? And if not, could that be a thing, as we move forward, if this turns into (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: You mean in neighboring countries?

Q Yeah, like bases outside Ukraine. And if it becomes a long-term conflict, as obviously many predict, would that be a thing the United States does?

MS. PSAKI: Let -- let me check with the Department of Defense. We obviously had trainers on the ground for a period of time. We hadn't -- then we pulled them back. We obviously have a significant military presence in a range of countries in the region, but I can see if there's anything that we are looking ahead to.

Q That wouldn't be considered an escalatory type of thing? You know, a bit like the MiGs, which got complicated because no one knew kind of how to get them to the Ukrainians. Like, if you had Ukrainian soldiers going into Poland --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- being trained by U.S. troops to go back and fight Russians.

MS. PSAKI: I mean, I think, really, our focus right now is on providing them and continuing to expedite the military assistance to them. And the good news is that we still -- through our coordination with them and our NATO Allies, we're able to get them that assistance on the ground. They're actively fighting now, so that's where our focus really is at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, on the Federal Reserve: Would the administration then support the four nominees, who seem to have the votes to be confirmed, to go forward and deal with the Raskin nominee after?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's enough support to move all five nominees through the committee. So we think the Republicans should show up so that they can vote them through the committee.

Q And on -- one last thing. The fact that China is in the conversation about helping Russia, should U.S. companies then look at maybe decoupling from China with their investments there and be cautious? What's the message that you have? Can you trust the Chinese?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think it's about trust, but we have not made an ask or a request at this point of that.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you. At the Democratic retreat in Philadelphia last week, some of my colleagues were hearing a lot from Democratic lawmakers who want the President to do more by executive action, whether it's on immigration or whether it is on some of the other priorities of the administration. Did he have any conversations with the members there about possible further executive actions? And is there anything else -- I think you're hearing from the members in those meetings with the Black Caucus and other members of Congress in the last week or two -- that may be coming forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say all of these members can speak for themselves on what they're interested in and what they're requesting from the President and from this administration.

We have a range of executive authorities -- the President does, I should say, has a range of executive authorities. I think there have been some reports about some that are under consideration, including one on policing, which we have talked about a bit in the past.

So, sure, we still continue to consider what steps we can take through executive actions, even as we work with Congress to see what we can move through there as well.

Q And I take it that there s no update beyond the legal review continuing on the student loan question.

MS. PSAKI: I don t have an update at this point in time. No.

Go ahead in the back. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Me?

MS. PSAKI: Okay. And then I ll go to your friend next to you.

Q Thank you very much. On North Korea, it is reported that the North Koreans' ICBM launch is imminent. Do you have anything on the North Korea s imminent launch (inaudible) ICBM?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have anything on that report. I ve not seen that report. What I can tell you is that, you know, as you know, last week, we proactively decided to reveal information publicly about recent tests and share it with allies and partners as well as Congress.

We have seen North Korea escalate its testing in different periods over the last four presidents. And this time, North Korea hid these tests, unlike the fanfare over past tests.

But I don t have anything to predict in terms of the future.

I said I d go to -- go ahead.

Q Japan and some of the other treaty countries are increasingly alarmed after Afghanistan and this recent situation. Could you let the Japanese government know that the Security Treaty will be honored?

And then second, for those of us that were embedded during the war, the whole situation with Afghanistan is quite personal. There s a large number of our people that helped us that are still left. Could you just update us on -- almost six months -- whether they ll be able to come back?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say on the second part, that that is one of the reasons that we ve worked so closely with our Qatari -- with the Qataris to maintain a diplomatic presence there so that we continue to engage with neighboring countries to bring people home and help some of our partners and allies who stood by our side, fought by our side over the course of the 20-year war. That s ongoing.

In terms of the numbers, I would point you to the State Department who would have the most up-to-date numbers.

I m not sure I understand your first question.

Q Well, just a reassurance to Japan and a lot of the countries that have treaties with us that are worried -- you know, if a situation like this develops, if those treaties are going to be honored.

MS. PSAKI: Which situation? How would it relate to Japan?

Q Well, Afghanistan is a long partner of ours. And so, you know, the whole situation that s happening now -- Taiwan -- there s a great concern that if you have a treaty and it comes to a difficult situation, whether it s really going to be honored.

MS. PSAKI: We ve never stepped back from the commitments we ve made under the Taiwan Relations Act. And the President stands by those.

Go ahead, James.

Q Thank you very much, Jen. Two questions on Russia/Ukraine. Prior to February 24, the President, our NATO Allies, and the EU were embarked on a deterrence project. That's exactly the word that you and other senior U.S. officials used at the time.

Quite clearly, the invasion was launched on the 24th of February. And so we can say, as a factual matter, that that deterrence project failed. Is it the view of the White House that Mr. Putin could not be deterred by any set of steps? Or are you willing to concede that perhaps some other set of steps by the President and our allies might have deterred the invasion?

MS. PSAKI: You know, James, I would say that when we put in place the threat of sanctions and the threat of consequences, we never thought that that would be failproof or that would be 100 percent effective. We did that because we wanted to lay out the clear consequences should President Putin proceed in invading Ukraine, even as we predicted, quite consistently, that that was very much his intention.

And what we have done since that point in time is implement those sanctions and implement those consequences, far beyond what I think most people's expectations were in the world about what those would look like.

I don't think it's -- I don't think I can look in a rearview mirror, or any of us can, and predict what would have been different. What we did is we took steps to rally the world to stand up to the aggressions of President Putin. And we have implemented them and followed up on what we committed to since that point in time.

Q One key decision made by the President early on was to remove strategic ambiguity from this equation. Never really was Mr. Putin forced to wonder what consequences he would face. He was told at the outset he would never face military intervention by the United States and NATO, that the full range of the punishments he would face would amount to diplomatic and economic sanctions.

I think a lot of people wonder why a greater effort wasn't made to leave Mr. Putin in doubt about the consequences he might face.

MS. PSAKI: Because the President is the President of the United States of America, and he felt it was important to be clear with the American people about what his intentions were and what they were not.

And his intentions were not to send men and women, their sons and daughters to fight a war in Ukraine against Russia.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. On Iran.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, I'll do bo- -- go ahead. Ladies first. Okay, go ahead.

Q Thank you. On Iran: The Iran talks appeared to have stalled amid some last-minute demands by Russia. Are the Iran talks dead? And if not, what now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, the negotiators are back home in their capitals. We'll see what happens in the days ahead with diplomacy around the deal.

We continue to believe that, you know, obviously, a diplomatic path forward is the best path forward. But this is a natural part of the process. It is also standard for the most difficult parts of the conversation -- negotiations to be happening at the end.

Q And then, just on Ukraine: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa says he's been asked to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. Would the White House support that, endorse that, in any way assist with that, especially since the African model kind of tends towards, like, restorative justice, truth, and reconciliation instead of, you know, traditional justice?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check with our national security team on his role.

What I can tell you is that there have been a half a dozen global leaders who have been meeting with both the Russians and the Ukrainians and engaging, of course, directly through diplomatic channels and trying to come to a diplomatic conclusion here.

We have been engaged directly with them on the front end and back end of those conversations, and encourage them to also make sure they are engaging with the Ukrainians and not just the Russians.

But I will check if there's any specific --

Q (Inaudible) South Africans about this offer (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check specifically. But again, there's a range of countries that are already playing this role. So --
Go ahead. In the -- go ahead.

Q With the COVID -- thank you, by the way.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q With COVID funds falling off the omnibus --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- and it may take a bit -- you know, if Congress kind of (inaudible) get done -- has the White House ask changed at all? Have they come back to, you know, lawmakers and said, "Hey, while it's going to take a while, you know, we need more," or it's in a different place? I'm just curious how that --

MS. PSAKI: You mean in terms of asking for less money or something like that? Or --

Q Or more?

MS. PSAKI: Or more money. Yeah.

Q You know, my question is: What is the timing -- and does the timing change the needs of the White House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the time -- I mean, we're asking for money to meet exactly the needs that are going to start to come up soon in the coming -- in the coming weeks even, and in supporting a number of the programs that have been pivotal to people across this country, especially people who are uninsured, people who are relying on access to free treatments, testing, vaccines.

Obviously, these are programs that it's not only in the United -- in the U.S. government's interest to continue, but it's in the interest of the American people, especially people who don't have the resources to cover and pay for a lot of these different treatments.

We had originally -- we had requested \$22.5 billion, I think you're aware, for immediate and urgent COVID response needs

because that is the funding we felt we needed. That does not mean it would cover the needs in -- forever. That would just be the needs we have at this moment in time.

So these conversations are still ongoing with leaders in Congress. We are -- but we want to be very clear about the fact that some of these programs could abruptly end and be pared back without additional funding.

Q A real quick follow-up. Just -- you mentioned the uninsured, about the HRSA program that reimburses from uninsured funds. You guys previously said that would end this month. Is that timeline still there? I mean, is that --

MS. PSAKI: You mean if we don't have funding?

Q Yeah. Is it still the end of the month they shut that down?

MS. PSAKI: A lot of these programs could end quite abruptly. So, it could. But I will check and see if that specific one would.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, real quick on Title 42 -- two related questions.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q One of them: Democratic senators and congresspeople and activists are criticizing the President. During the campaign, he said that this Trump-era policy was inhumane, yet he's keeping it, even though the country is opening again. But then, a few days back, the CDC decided to let unaccompanied minors in. So the fear is that this is going to make a lot of parents just send their children by themselves and lead to another humanitarian tragedy at the border.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first -- I mean, as you've noted, the CDC makes determinations about Title 42. I think, as it relates to the recent decision, I'd have to talk to the Department of Homeland Security specifically about that and how they're applying it or implementing it.

As you know, our intention is certainly not to put more children at da- -- in danger or put them -- incentivize parents sending kids on a journey that's treacherous and dangerous across the border.

But the President -- you know, he is implementing this because we are still in the middle of a public health crisis. That continues to be the case, as ~~designed~~ [designated] by the CDC.

Q But he still plans to reopen the border and make more humane policy, like he promised?

MS. PSAKI: That is -- that is what he proposed on his first day in office. And we are very supportive of the efforts in the Senate to do exactly that.

And just because it's not done yet, it doesn't mean that we aren't going to stay at the fight to get exactly that accomplished and done.

Q Jen, is there any reason why you have not condemned racism against Africans in Ukraine? I understand that Ukrainians are the victims here; they are being bombed by Russia, and they are being killed. But a lot of Africans, they are facing racism. I know you are providing a lot of financial assistance to Poland and to Ukraine, but Africans there are being banned from even entering Poland. Why have you not officially -- the White House -- issued a statement condemning racism against Africans in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: We have, and I believe the State Department has. But we have spoken out against that and expressed

concern about any reports of discrimination or -- at the border.

Q And then finally, if I may: I'm trying to understand where you're trying -- your endgame in Ukraine. You're not going there. You're not sending troops there. There will be no-fly -- no no-fly zone over Ukraine. And are you -- will it be a fair assessment to say that you are pushing these guys to commit suicide, knowing that Russia has a superpower and, eventually, it will capture the main cities, Kyiv and Kharkiv, and other these cities around there? What's the endgame?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the endgame is really a question for President Putin. We have -- we have completely crushed his economy. We have provided military assistance, humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainians, enabling them to fight back for far longer than the Russian leadership anticipated.

And, again, he has to -- he has to determine what the path forward looks for -- like for him.

Thanks, everyone.

Q Jen, can you confirm or deny the rumors that there are Russian hit squads in Kyiv going after journalists?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details on that for you.

Q But you've heard of it?

MS. PSAKI: I can see if there's more.

4:10 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meetings with Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy and Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister...
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 15, 2022 3:09 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2022

Readout of National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Meetings with Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy and Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister Luigi Mattiolo

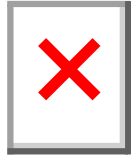
On March 15, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met in Rome with Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy to discuss international cooperation in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This followed Mr. Sullivan's meeting with Luigi Mattiolo, Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister. The two senior officials discussed continued measures, including in coordination with the G7 and EU, to impose costs on Russia for its war on Ukraine and to provide humanitarian assistance to those fleeing the conflict. They also talked about U.S. support for European efforts to establish alternative energy sources. In addition, the two sides discussed Transatlantic approaches to the People's Republic of China, as well as further enhancement of the US-Italian relations.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 16, 2022 10:10 AM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2022

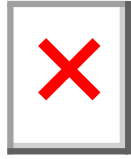
Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's Call with Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke today with General Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, to reiterate the United States' firm and clear opposition to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Sullivan clearly laid out the United States' commitment to continue imposing costs on Russia, to support the defense of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to reinforce NATO's eastern flank, in continued full coordination with our Allies and partners. Mr. Sullivan told General Patrushev that if Russia is serious about diplomacy then Moscow should stop attacking Ukrainian cities and towns. Mr. Sullivan also warned General Patrushev about the consequences and implications of any possible Russian decision to use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's call with National Security Advisor Thanos Dokos of Greece
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 16, 2022 4:56 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2022

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Emily Horne on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's call with National Security Advisor Thanos Dokos of Greece

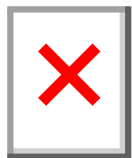
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Dr. Thanos Dokos, National Security Advisor of Greece. Mr. Sullivan underscored the strength of our bilateral cooperation and welcomed ongoing efforts to expand and deepen our diplomatic, economic, and defense partnerships. Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Dokos discussed Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, including the ethnic Greek community based in Mariupol. They reiterated their commitment to international efforts to hold Moscow to account for its actions and to ensure Ukraine has the ability to defend itself.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 16, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 16, 2022 10:03 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 16, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:09 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. A couple of items for all of you at the top. Today marks one year since eight people -- six of them women of Asian descent -- were tragically killed by a gunman who attacked three Asian-run businesses.

In the aftermath of that horrific attack, the President and Vice President traveled to Atlanta to meet with leaders of the Asian American community and hear about pain -- the pain and fear that too many Asian Americans have felt since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, Erika Mori -- Moritsugu, Deputy Assistant to the President and AAPI Senior Liaison, is in Atlanta representing the White House as the community mourns the victims of this awful tragedy.

Ambassador Katherine Tai, our U.S. Trade Representative and Co-Chair of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, also spoke at a vigil in Michigan to stand against Asian Ameri- -- anti-Asian hate past and present.

On this somber day, our administration remains fully committed to reducing the gun violence that terrorizes -- terrorizes our communities and to advancing safety, inclusion, and belonging for all Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

I wanted to make a note on gas prices. Right now, oil prices are \$94 per barrel. When oil was at this level one month ago, the average cost of a gallon of gasoline was \$3.49. And yet now, the average cost of gas is \$4.32.

When it comes to oil and gas prices, many accept that gas prices rise quickly but fall slowly -- the so-called “rockets-and-feathers” phenomenon.

But President Biden rejects that. Americans deserve relief, and fast, as oil prices fall.

Retail gasoline prices are updated at least daily, and if gas retailers’ costs are going down, they need to immediately pass those savings onto consumers.

So, I will reiterate what the President said to oil and gas companies last week: The invasion of Ukraine and the volatility of the oil market is no excuse for excessive price increases, profit padding, or any effort to exploit American consumers. No one should capitalize on Putin’s aggression by taking advantage of American families.

And this chart, which you see here, shows both the price of crude oil, and you see where it is as it relates to the price of gasoline. And as you’ve seen it gone down -- go down, the price of gasoline obviously has not gone down. So that is the explanation of that particular chart.

I also just wanted to note, before we get to questions, that in some good news, we saw history made yesterday with the strong bipartisan confirmation of Shalanda Young, the first Black woman to serve as Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

For the past year, she has served as a key advisor to the President, a member of the economic team. She has led the development of the President’s budget and helped effectively implement his agenda and vision across the entire federal government.

She’s not just making history, she’s exceptionally qualified and has vast budget experience from her years leading staff on the House Appropriations Committee. So, we’re thrilled to have her as our confirmed director.

Finally -- I know you all just heard the President give remarks on this, but for clarity’s sake and to make sure everybody fully understands the totality of assistance, what the President announced today was an additional \$800 million in security assistance to Ukraine, bringing the total U.S. security assistance committed to Ukraine to \$1 billion in just the past week and more than \$2 billion since the start of the Biden administration and, more specifically, since last March.

There is additional security assistance in the omnibus the President signed into law yesterday, but we’re also working with the Ukrainians and others on delivery mechanisms of that. So, what he outlined today is the additional \$800 billion from that.

And this assistance, as you heard him say, it will take the form of direct transfers of equipment from the Department of Defense to the Ukrainian military to help them defend their country against Russians’ unprovoked and unjustified invasion. It also includes U.S.-produced short-range air defense systems the Ukrainians have been using to great effect -- systems they are trained on.

We have also identified and are helping the Ukrainians acquire additional longer-range systems, on which their forces, again, are already trained, as well as additional munitions for these systems. And we will continue to work with Allies and partners to transfer equipment to Ukraine.

At least 30 countries to date have provided security assistance to Ukraine since the invasion began. And in 2022, the Department of State authorized third-party transfers of defensive equipment from more than 14 countries, a number that continues to grow as Allies and partners increase support to Ukraine.

Chris, why don't you kick us off?

Q All right. First off, I just wanted to note this is your 200th briefing.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, wow. Time flies when you're having fun.

Q And we will celebrate with a lot of questions.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, 200 -- let's do it.

Q To start us off, the White House has said the Russian actions in Ukraine are under close scrutiny for potential war crimes, but today President Biden directly labeled Putin a, quote, "war criminal." Has something changed in the administration's assessment? What brought this new remark from the President today?

MS. PSAKI: I think the President was -- the President's remarks speak for themselves. He was speaking from his heart and speaking from what he's seen on television, which is barbaric actions by a brutal dictator, through his invasion of a foreign country.

There is a legal process that continues to -- is underway, continues to be underway at the State Department. That's a process that they would have any updates on.

Q So, another question on the military assistance. Is the White House, is the administration facilitating the transfer of S-300 anti-air missiles? How is the U.S. facilitating that? How many might be provided to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me just provide to you -- as I've educated myself a little bit on weapon systems over the past few days, I thought this might be helpful to you. So, S-300s are anti-aircraft systems. We are providing Stingers, who are also anti-aircraft systems. There are a range of anti-aircraft systems that different countries have around the world.

So, as I noted, I know that President Zelenskyy called out specifically S-300s. And while I'm not going to get into specifics for security reasons, we are continuing to work with our Allies and key partners to surge new assistance, including Soviet- or Russian-origin anti-aircraft systems, which is exactly what that is.

But what we're talking about here is how to provide them a range of anti-aircraft systems that will help them do exactly what they've been doing, which is to shoot down planes. And part of what the President announced today was additional Stingers that serve exactly that purpose.

Q Sure. But given that the S-300 has a much longer range than the Stingers, is that part of the administration's plan to find a way to facilitate that specific transfer of weapons?

MS. PSAKI: Without getting into specific systems, there are a range of anti-aircraft systems that do have longer range. We are continuing to consult with our Allies and key partners to surge that assistance, but I'm not going to get into more specifics.

Q And the last question is: The Federal Reserve raised rates today to help fight -- tame inflation. Is the administration confident that the Fed can beat inflation through rate hikes and not risk a recession?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would note that Chairman Powell spoke to exactly that question today. So, I would point you to his specific comments answering that question, where he did express confidence in the ability to take the steps he announced and avoid that.

I would note that while they -- we respect the independence of the Federal Reserve, as you of course -- as we have said many times -- the President has also said in the past that he recognizes not only their independence, but that it is

appropriate and necessary for the Federal Reserve to recalibrate [sic] -- recalibrate their -- that -- their support to maintain stable prices. And obviously, they made an announcement today.

As it relates to -- we, obviously, closely watch here from the administration and closely monitor all risks. And we continue to believe that the United States economy is positioned well to deal with the challenges ahead, even as we continue to monitor.

And, obviously, there are events that impact the economy, including an invasion of a foreign country. And we're seeing that impact as well play out in the economic data.

Go ahead.

Q Back on this question of labeling Putin a "war criminal." I mean, this war has now been going on for three weeks. So far, the President has declined to use this label. As you note, there is an ongoing, sort of, formal process before you can use this term. So, something must have changed for the President to feel like he can take this additional step today. What? What else is he seeing?

MS. PSAKI: The President was answering a direct question that was asked and responding to what he has seen on television.

We have all seen barbaric acts, horrific acts by a foreign dictator in a country that is threatening and taking the lives of civilians, impacting hospitals, women who are pregnant, journalists, others. And I think he was answering a direct question.

Q All right. The administration is making it very clear -- and publicly -- how much assistance the U.S. is providing to Ukraine. Whether we are fighting in this war or not, the U.S. is obviously heavily involved. Putin certainly knows all of this. He knows where this equipment is coming from. Is there any concern that you run the risk that he may view this as the kind of direct U.S. involvement, the direct confrontation that you are trying to avoid?

MS. PSAKI: Well, all the equipment that we're providing, whether it's Stingers or Javelins or counter artillery -- counter mortar radar, counter UAV -- UAV tracking radars, anti-armor systems, unmanned aerial systems -- this is all defensive equipment and materials. It is more than we have ever provided to Ukraine in the past. It is a significant amount of assistance that we have expedited the delivery on. And we will continue to do exactly that.

But as our Department of Defense -- and they can certainly speak to themselves -- for themselves -- they do risk assessments, they assess what the impact will be of the types of assistance they're providing. We're obviously watching how the types of assistance we have provided have helped the Ukrainians courageously and bravely fight back, and we're giving them more of that assistance. We've also given them additional types of assistance we had not yet provided to them.

But again, these are all defensive weapons systems.

You have noted from the podium that Putin has shown no signs of changing course. You've also noted that there are significant consequences that Putin could still face.

Even with this additional aid that you're providing today, it seems there are still other options on the table. So why hold back? Why not use every tool at your disposal now to spare additional lives?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think if you look at the range of tools that we've used to date, we have -- we have implemented more economic sanctions than we have on any other economy in the world. You could compare it, potentially, to Iran or maybe North Korea, but Russia is a much more significant economy, a larger economy.

And so I wouldn't say that we are holding back in that sense. We do have additional steps we can take, as we've talked

about a bit in here before. Obviously, the SWIFT banking system and the implementation of those sanctions happens institution by institution. There are additional individuals that can be sanctioned. We can have new targets. We can deepen the severity of sanctions on existing targets. We can further eject Russia from international economic or -- the international economic order. We can further dire -- deny Russia the capacity to mon -- modernize and diversify its economy, like we have with the export controls and the cutting off of access to a lot of technology. And we can further expose and hold to account the kleptocracy.

These are additional actions we have, additional options we have. And we can take them. And that is a decision that we would make through a discussion internally.

Q But what are you waiting for?

MS. PSAKI: We are -- we have additional escalatory steps that we can take. But I would just note that we have not held back. We have done more economic sanctions and had more -- put in place more financial consequences than we have in any circumstance ever in the world. So I wouldn't say that is holding back in any capacity.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, does the White House have any insight or assessment of the negotiations between Ukraine and Russia? President Zelenskyy seemed to indicate there'd been some progress, but President Putin's remarks later did not make the same impression.

MS. PSAKI: We obviously stay in very close touch with the Ukrainians. But what I would note is we haven't seen any effort to de-escalate from President Putin and from the Russian military.

So while we will continue to be very supportive, in a range of ways, of diplomatic efforts -- whether that is engaging directly with the Ukrainians, with the Europeans; you saw obviously Jake Sullivan had a call with his counterpart this morning as well -- but we also are providing a range of security assistance and economic assistance to make sure we're strengthening Ukraine as they go into these discussions.

But it's hard to have -- hard to have negotiations that are going to be effective if, you know, one party is continuing to escalate.

Q President Zelenskyy, in his remarks to Congress today, again made his request for a no-fly zone. He no doubt is aware of President Biden's position on that. Is there any scenario in which President Biden would change his mind?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say that the President watched the speech -- I know some of you asked this, so let me just do this now. He watched the speech from his residence, in his private library.

As you heard him say, he thought that President Zelenskyy was passionate, was powerful. And certainly he -- and he watched the totality of it.

We are in very close touch with the Ukrainians. Nothing that he asked for or said today was a surprise in that sense. And if we were President Zelenskyy, we would be asking for everything possible as well and continuing to ask for it, because he is watching his country and his people be attacked and brutalized by President Putin and the Russian military.

But how President Biden makes decisions is through the prism of our own national security. And as we've said before, a no-fly zone would require implementation, it would require us potentially shooting down Russian planes, NATO shooting down Russian planes. And we are not interested in getting into World War Three.

Q Last -- just lastly, does the White House view Russia as being ready to go back and allow the Iran nuclear deal to come forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we can't blissfully speak for Russia -- I'm sanctioned; they especially wouldn't let me speak for them, I guess, now -- I don't know if it's changed.

But I would say that Russia does not want Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. We don't either. While we have a range of strong disagreements with them, we can't speak for their intentions here. Certainly, we believe it's in both of our interests for this to move forward.

Go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: Jen, does the President believe that it would be important for President Zelenskyy to be at the NATO summit next week, as long as it is safe for him to do so?

MS. PSAKI: I have not discussed that exactly with the President. The President is going there to meet with NATO partners and Allies. Obviously, President Zelenskyy is -- his country is in the middle of a war. So I have not talked to him about that specifically.

Q I wanted to ask you about Jake Sullivan --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- speaking with his Russian counterpart. The Russian readout said that this happened at the U.S.'s initiative, and the NSC's readout said that if Russia is serious about diplomacy, then Moscow should stop attacking Ukraine.

You've obviously consistently said from the podium that the door to diplomacy is never closed. Are we seeing, though, a ramp-up in diplomatic efforts with Russia right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is the most senior conversation between the U.S. and Russian officials since Secretary Blinken last spoke with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

I would note that we have maintained direct and indirect contact with the Russians, through our embassy and officials there, Ambass- -- including through Ambassador Sullivan, and we also have a military deconfliction channel.

But we requested this call to clearly lay out our commitment to continuing to impose costs on Russia if they do not stop attacking Ukrainian cities and towns, and to warn them about the consequences and implications of Russia potentially using chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine.

So it's important to convey those -- those consequences directly, and this was an opportunity to do that.

Q And just one final question on a different topic. The administration has marked the one-year anniversary of the Atlanta spa shootings and spoken about some of the actions that the federal government has tried to take. As you know, this week, an Asian woman in New York, a 67-year-old woman, was hit more than 125 times, was stomped on, was called a racial slur. Obviously, that video is very sickening to watch. Do you know whether the President has seen that video?

And just what would the President's message be to anyone in the Asian American community who feels like, well, the actions that the government is taking are not enough to stop these attacks and they say that they feel afraid?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that our message to them -- I have not talked to the President about this specific video. I've seen it; a number of us have seen it. And as you said, it is very difficult to watch.

I would say that his message to them would be: Our work is not done; that we want to stand by your side and continue to stand up for you, to protect you, to call out this type of discrimination and horrific actions, as -- and including in the

example you gave.

And that what he has done is tried to elevate this type of anti-Asian hate in this country so that people are aware of it, so that communities across the country can continue in that fight as well.

But the work clearly is not done, and we need to be steadfast in it.

Go ahead, David.

Q Jen, a couple of questions on today's events. So, first, in the conversation that Jake Sullivan had with his Russian counterpart, he issued a very specific warning about chemical and bio. There was no mention in the readout of nuclear, which is obviously a concern for battlefield weapons. Was that a deliberate omission? Has that conversation taken place in a different channel?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to go back to them and see if there's more we want to read out from the conversation. I think what the most important component here to take away, I hope, is that we wanted to have a direct conversation about what the consequences would be of further escalatory action.

But I don't have more to read out at this point in time.

Q Okay. And then on your answer, just before, about your concerns about the MiG planes -- we went through a little bit of this yesterday -- I think you just said that you didn't want to have NATO pilots bringing down Russian planes. But under the administration's policy of moving out this long-range anti-aircraft, it's okay to have NATO equipment bringing down Russian planes, as long as it's launched by a Ukrainian? Am I understanding the policy right?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think -- you've heard us talk a fair amount about the Poland -- the planes from Poland. And again, Poland is a sovereign country so they can make decisions on their own.

What we have done is done an assessment of our role and the U.S. role, and what our view would be of NATO, of this -- of these planes taking off from NATO airspace. Again, I would note that the equipment that we've provided is defensive, as you know, not offensive. And we see that as being a difference.

We're also looking at --

Q Because the planes can be used for an offensive purpose and the antimissile systems --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Q -- cannot?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

Also -- also, I would note that what our Department of Defense officials also assessed is what's most effective. And while the Ukrainians still have squadrons of planes to utilize, as I think any military official could confirm for you, the types of assistance that we are providing today, including Stingers and other assistance that we're amping up support for, is exactly what we feel is effective in fighting this war.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Today, in Putin's speech, he implied that there's going to be even greater crackdowns on civil liberties inside of Russia. Is there anything that you all believe that you can do, in terms of sanctions or supporting the opposition there, that you all are not already taking?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we look at all of the actions that President Putin does, and we assess what responses we may have.

I have nothing to predict at this point in time, but obviously, as he has taken actions, we have taken actions in response.

Q And then, specifically on the case of Aleksey Navalny, he -- prosecutors there just said that they want to sentence him for a 13-year prison sentence. Does the White House have a response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I think we've spoken a number of times in the past about the courage of Aleksey Navalny, about the role he's played in being an outspoken advocate for freedoms in a country that has been void of them. And I would echo those -- that response now.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Can you talk a little bit about what President Biden specifically hopes to accomplish in his trip next week -

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- beyond shoring up NATO Allies?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's a big part of it. That's a very important part, Ashley -- shoring up NATO Allies.

Look, I think from the beginning, and even before this conflict began, we have viewed rebuilding alliances in the world as a key component of what the Biden administration and President Biden could specifically do on the global stage following his predecessor's -- his predecessor's actions.

So what he'll be doing -- he's -- while he's there: He's meeting with our NATO Allies to coordinate our deterrence and defense. So they will obviously talk about where things are on the ground, coordinated responses, assistance we're providing.

NATO, at this point, as you all know, is more united and more determined than we've been in decades. So we certainly would -- would be focused on continuing that unity.

He would also -- he's also going to join European leaders in a separate part of the day to discuss our work to impose economic costs on Russia. As I noted earlier, there are obviously a range of coordinated steps and costs we've taken. There's more that we could do, we have the capacity and the ability to do, and we want to continue to do as much of that in a coordinated fashion.

We're also looking to continue to provide a range of humanitarian support, especially as we're seeing a surge of refugees continue to grow across the border, and, you know, discuss a range of ways we can address the challenges stemmed from Putin's war in a coordinated fashion.

Q And on a slightly lighter note, does the administration have a position on the effort in Congress to make Daylight Savings Time permanent?

MS. PSAKI: I have seen those reports. I was trying to think of a joke; I couldn't think of one. I don't have a specific -- we are obviously coordinated and work closely with Congress on all legislation they consider, but I don't have a specific position from the administration at this point of time.

Q Is it something -- is the President more of a morning person or afternoon? (Laughter.) Because people are often divided in those ways, so I'm just curious if you could talk about that.

MS. PSAKI: That is true. Now, to de-link it from this specific question, he is more of an evening person. But I don't know what analysis you'll provide, but I'll look forward to reading it tomorrow.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Has President Biden spoken to President Zelenskyy today?

MS. PSAKI: Not since this morning. If he does and when he does, which I'm sure he will soon, we will provide that readout to all of you.

Q Got it. Thanks.

Today, President Zelenskyy made a distinction between a humanitarian no-fly zone and a blanket no-fly zone. Does the administration view them as being different or the same thing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there have been descriptions of both of those over the past couple of weeks. And sometimes a humanitarian -- and I don't want to put words in his mouth, but a humanitarian no-fly zone can be specific geography or a portion of Western -- or parts of Ukraine, whereas a no-fly zone -- sometimes people refer to it as the totality of the country.

In our view and the view of the military, there's not a difference in terms of the implementation and the escalatory impact.

Q Thank you.

And then, today, the Vice President spoke with the President of Slovakia, which is one of three countries that can actually provide those S-300s. But the readout does not mention the missile system. So can you tell us whether the Vice President directly asked Slovakia to provide them to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I can't get into more specifics, other than to convey that we are having conversations with a range of Allies about providing additional assistance -- anti-aircraft assistance.

And again, there are a range of -- of systems, including some of the systems that we provided and we are going to be expediting delivery of to Ukraine from the United States.

Q And one more on the warplanes that Zelenskyy asked for today. I mean, you've made very clear that the U.S. is opposed to doing that right now. I wonder if the U.S. is also discouraging other NATO Allies from providing fighter jets, even if the U.S. would not have to serve as a middleman.

MS. PSAKI: Other countries can make their own sovereign decisions.

Q Okay. And then one more on the Asian hate crimes, because you mentioned them at the top, too. Do you know if the DOJ has concluded that there is not enough evidence to charge the shooter in Atlanta with a federal hate crime?

MS. PSAKI: I couldn't speak to that from here. You'd have to ask DOJ that question.

Q Okay. And then, more broadly, since the administration adopted new policies that are meant to make it easier to identify these crimes as hate crimes, do you -- can you point to any progress that --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'd point you to the Department of Justice, who are implementing.

Q Okay. Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Go ahead, Jacqui.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just one more. I know a lot of people have asked about the MiGs, but can you lay out for us why the administration sees MiGs as provocative and Javelins and Stingers as not provocative?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, Javelins and Stingers are defensive weapons. MiGs or planes are offensive weapons, which are a different type of military system.

I would say the other assessment that we've done -- not through here, not through the White House, not through the President -- from -- from the Department of Defense is to assess what is effective and what works in terms of fighting this war on the ground.

And that is why we provided an additional \$1 billion -- \$800 million announced today, but \$1 billion this week -- of assistance, utilizing a number of the high-level military systems -- Stingers, Javelins, counter-artillery, counter-mortar radar, anti-armor systems -- that we know have been effective and we know the Ukrainians are trained on.

Third, Ukraine's Air Force already has several squadrons of mission-capable aircraft, and giving them more would not significantly change their effectiveness.

And finally -- I touched on this in the beginning, offensive versus defensive -- but we also do risk assessments from the Department of Defense about what would be escalatory and what -- and that is obviously what we would like to avoid.

Q And then, John Kirby has said that success for the U.S. mission in Ukraine is a free, independent, sovereign Ukraine. We've also heard that the official mission is to prevent escalation beyond Ukraine. Which is it?

MS. PSAKI: Both are true.

Q If we're not specific about what exactly the desired outcome is, how do we expect to be able to be successful?

MS. PSAKI: Why could -- why could both not be true: a sovereign Ukraine and preventing them from expanding beyond?

Q Okay.

And then, moving on to the nuclear deal, General McKenzie told the Armed Services Committee that, from everything that he can see, the IRGC is a terrorist organization. Is the White House willing to de-list the IRGC from the Foreign Terrorist Organization list in order to get a deal with Iran?

MS. PSAKI: We're still in the negotiations, so I'm not going to speculate or outline from here what the final details look like.

Q And these are likely the group responsible for firing missiles at U.S. facilities in Iraq. So as long as Americans aren't killed, are there -- are there are no consequences for something like that, all in an effort to get a nuclear deal?

MS. PSAKI: Again, you're speculating on something that is not even finalized. The deal is not finalized.

What I would note -- and I would just go back to why we're negotiating this deal. And right now, we're negotiating this deal because nu- -- Iran's nuclear gains are threatening U.S. interests. There's urgency to taking steps to contain that, which is why we've been engaged so closely.

And that is all the result of President Trump pulling out of the deal and Iran moving closer to having the capacity and

And that is all the result of President Trump pulling out of the deal, and Iran moving closer to having the capacity and acquiring a nuclear weapon and speeding up their breakout time.

So we are here thanks to the actions of the last president and the last administration. And it is in our interest, it is in the global interest to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Go ahead, Kristen.

Q Thanks, Jen. How quickly can Ukraine expect to receive the list of military aid that President Biden laid out today?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have expedited, as you -- as you would -- as we've noted from here, about 300 million dollars worth of military and security assistance over the last couple of weeks. We continue to have channels to deliver military assistance. And so, we would continue to work to deliver it quickly.

There have been military deliveries even in the last few days.

Q So, it has been rolling and you're confident it will continue to be including these new elements that he laid out today?

MS. PSAKI: We continue to have channels to do exactly that, yes.

Q Okay.

And the President said, going back now to the long-range air defense systems, that he was working with Allies to acquire them. Can you tell us where they are and what the expectation is in terms of the timeline for getting those systems to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I can't outline where they are because we're going to keep those conversations private.

I would note that a great deal of what we're doing is augmenting the type of effective military assistance that we're doing from the United States and working to prioritize equipment that they are trained on.

But we are discussing with a range of partners. When we say "Stinger" or "Javelins," those are brands. There are different kinds of similar assistance or other types of assistance that different allies have around the world.

Q And I want to go back to the MiGs quickly and just be crystal clear about what you're saying. Because when I asked the President about this earlier, he said he's not going to comment. He didn't say that it's not an option. So --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've spoken to it approximately 167 times. So, maybe he --

Q But --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Well, here's 168.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead. (Laughter.)

Q There's a growing -- there's a growing number of Republicans and Democrats who are supporting the U.S. striking a deal with Poland to send the MiGs. You have Elise Stefanik earlier today saying Ukraine "needs those MiGs." You have Scalise saying, "Getting [those] MiGs in immediately is...critical." There's a growing chorus of voices saying that now is the time.

Has the President reconsidered his stance at all at this point?

MS. PSAKI: No, because our military makes assessments, which -- they put out that assessment last week and I would just echo that one part of the assessment is based on what equipment is effective in fighting this war. Anti-armor and air-defense systems, they are effectively defending the country. That is what we have provided additional assistance on.

Second, they have several squa- -- squadrons of mission-capable aircraft --

Q But they don't think that's enough, Jen. You heard President Zelenskyy --

MS. PSAKI: -- that are not being --

Q -- very clearly say --

MS. PSAKI: -- Kristen, that are not -- Kristen, that are not -- Kristen, that are not being utilized. This is the assessment by our Defense Department.

Third, they re also assessing that the transfer to Ukraine may be mistaken as escalatory.

So this is how our Defense Department is assessing. They're assessing also that it would not significantly change the effectiveness of the Ukrainian Air Force. And these are the types of risk ass- -- risk assessments.

We certainly understand. We share the passion, the anger, the horror at what we re seeing. And that is why we are -- we significantly increased the types of military assistance, the types of equipment that we know is effective and our Defense Department has determined is effective in fighting this war.

Q President Zelenskyy ended his speech today by saying, "Being the leader of the world means to be the leader of peace." Is President Biden satisfied that he s meeting this leadership moment, given that we re now three weeks into this war?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that President Zelenskyy also thanked the President for the role he s played. And without President Biden, there would not be 30 countries around the world providing security and military assistance, NATO would not be as aligned as it is, we would not be unified in our implementation of the most crippling sanctions we ve ever implemented against a foreign country.

We will continue to stand by President Zelenskyy's side, the side of the Ukrainians and the brave and courageous Ukrainian people, and continue to build on the efforts that have been underway to date.

Q And one more very quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q In the wake of the Second Gentleman testing positive, has President Biden been tested today and has the Vice President been tested?

MS. PSAKI: The -- I can check on the Vice President. The President has not been. He was tested on Sunday. He was not a close contact, so we have not changed our testing mechanism.

Let me check on the Vice President. I know they put out some information last night. I ll see if there s an update.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Can you confirm that Switchblade drones were part of the package? And if so, do you consider that still defensive?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more details beyond what was in our factsheet to confirm from here.

Q Okay. And is the U.S. monitoring the hostage situation in Chernobyl? And did that come up in the call with Sullivan today?

MS. PSAKI: We are definitely closely monitoring that situation. And I can check and see if that was a topic of discussion during their call.

Q Also, just lastly here, what does the administration make of the Russian proposal of Ukraine being a demilitarized Austrian-and-Swedish-type model?

MS. PSAKI: As a part of their 15-point discussion?

Q As part of -- right.

MS. PSAKI: Look, our focus is on supporting the Ukrainians in their efforts. Obviously, pursuing diplomacy is something we will always support. But as President Putin and the Russian military continues to take escalatory steps on the ground and take military action against civilians and innocent people, we think that is the biggest place where we need to see change.

Go ahead.

Q I wanted to ask if you're -- if you're in a position today to say more about the contours of the President's travel next week. What's after Brussels, if anything?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more for you at this point in time. We're still finalizing the additional -- any additional details.

Q The fact that the Second Gentleman did test positive, does that raise concerns here about the state of -- the situation of the country with BA.2 or any other variants that might be around?

MS. PSAKI: It does not. Not from our health officials.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, back of the room.

MS. PSAKI: I'll go to the back in a second.

Go ahead.

Q Can I ask just very briefly? Sarah Bloom Raskin --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- withdrew her nomination yesterday.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q I'm wondering if you could speak to that. And in particular, will you name a new no- -- will the President name a new nominee soon for that post?

MS. PSAKI: He certainly will nominate a new person to serve -- to nominate to that post. It's been less than a day, so it may be a little bit more time.

We are certainly disappointed. Sarah Bloom Raskin remains one of the most highly qualified people to ever be nominated to this position. But it's an important role, and he will nominate someone to fill the position.

Q Can you speak to how those final, sort of, days played out on that? Did -- was there an attempt to get bipartisan support, or was Senator Manchin's statement sort of seen as the decisive one when that came down?

MS. PSAKI: No. I would say, as I said from this podium, it -- there was continued efforts to seek bipartisan support and continue to support her candidacy.

Q Great.

And, sorry, going back to the drones, is your position that the drones were assessed by the Defense Department to not be perceived as escalatory and to not be perceived as offensive weapons?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I don't have anything more to confirm beyond what was in the factsheet and the specifics in there. But defensive weapons is what we have provided.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I'll go to the back in a second.

Q The administration -- including you, yesterday -- have raised very dire warnings about what will happen --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- if this COVID money doesn't come through.

President Biden held a bill signing yesterday -- a very celebratory bill signing for a piece of legislation that that was stripped out of -- that funding was stripped out of. Why didn't the President mention it? And is he willing to expend political capital on this?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, he is. Absolutely. I would say that we have been working around the clock over the last few days, behind the scenes and publicly, to convey very clearly to elected officials across the country and the American people what the impacts will be. So, I would expect you'll hear from him more soon about it.

Q And on the meeting that Jake Sullivan -- or the conversation that Jake Sullivan had with the Russian Security Council Secretary, can you say why that particular person was the one that the U.S. reached out to, why he was the one that Jake had a conversation with? Is there anything about his proximity to Putin or anything else that we should know?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think there's more to detail from here.

Go ahead.

Q A couple of questions on Russia. Obviously, the President calling Vladimir Putin personally a "war criminal" today. Are you going to be detailing whether orders to strike maternity wards, residential buildings, innocent children were coming from the very top?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say there's a legal process where all of the data and information gathered will be fed into any international investigations. That's led by the State Department.

I think I spoke to this a few minutes earlier, where I conveyed the President was directly answering a question and speaking to his own passion in watching the barbaric actions of a brutal dictator invading a foreign country. But there is a legal process that is ongoing. The State Department has oversight over that.

Q And then the Chinese ambassador to the U.S. published a -- an op-ed in the Washington Post. He said that threats against Chinese entities and businesses are unacceptable and, quote, "wielding the baton of sanctions at Chinese companies while seeking" Chinese -- "China's support and cooperation simply won't work." I'm wondering if you have a response to that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that our -- I don't believe that's what we've -- that's an accurate depiction of what we've been doing. What we've been conveying is that rhetorical support or the clear rhetorical lack of denunciation of what Russia is doing flies in the face of what China stands for, including basic principles of the U.N. Charter, including the basic principle of respect for sovereignty of nations. And that's just a statement of fact.

Obviously, our objective and what we'll watch closely is -- and I don't have an update on it from here -- is, you know, any decision to provide additional support to Russia while they're invading a foreign country.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Senator Chuck Grassley has put a hold on nomination of LA Mayor Eric Garcetti for U.S. Ambassadorship to India. Has the President spoken with his friend, senator? Or has the White House reached out to him to lift the hold? Or is the White House considering a new name for India? Is the absence of a U.S. Ambassador to India having an impact on your bilateral relationship?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he can't actually prevent a vote from moving forward on the floor. I mean, he can convey his opposition as is the right of any senator. But Mayor Garcetti is out of committee, and we're hoping to see a vote on the Senate floor soon. And the President has confidence in Mayor Garcetti and believes he'll be an excellent representative in India.

It is critical, of course, that we have confirmed leadership at all of our embassies, including India, and we urge the Senate to confirm him as quickly as possible.

Q And in the middle of this war with Ukraine, how are the world's largest and oldest democracies working together to bring peace in the region?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, as you know, we remain in touch through a range of channels from our national security team with leaders in India, and continue to encourage leaders to work closely with us to -- to stand up against President Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The wheat supplies from both Russia and Ukraine have been disrupted and are forecasted to be disrupted quite a bit going forward. Does the U.S. see the danger, as some have been talking about, about a breakdown, actually, of food supplies to large parts of the world, maybe starting with Africa? Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: This is something we're watching very closely. I have a little bit of information on this, so let me see if I can find it. Let's see.

And we are concerned about how the wheat supply could impact different parts of the world, less the United States and more other parts of the world. There are also impacts we could see in the United States, including fertilizer and the

production of fertilizer. Ukraine is a large producer of fertilizer. So, there are steps the Department of Agriculture has announced, and we are taking steps to work to address.

But this is something -- to go back to your original question -- we are monitoring closely and we are, of course, continuing to evaluate what types of humanitarian assistance we can provide to address.

Q Okay. And just a quick one on another part of the world. Taiwan's foreign minister said just this week -- it might have been yesterday -- that the U.S. is about to announce more arms sales to Taiwan. Do you have anything on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to predict, confirm, or read out on that. I'm happy to check with our Defense Department.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. So, the President has obviously sanctioned a lot of Russian oligarchs. I wonder about some of the laws -- our laws that enable this sort of international kleptocracy.

Obviously, the President's been outspoken about his belief that America's tax code should be more fair, that it should be enforced better. And I wonder if the President has thought about or has had conversations with people on the Hill about possible legislation that would change some of these laws, make real estate transactions more transparent, require companies and trust to be registered to people by their actual name, prevent Americans from using offshore banks as tax havens. Any of that under consideration?

MS. PSAKI: A number of those he's expressed support for in the past. I'm happy to check with our economic team and see if any of those are under discussion.

Q But no sense that those talks have picked up in the last few weeks?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have an update on it.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Just to get back to Jake Sullivan's call: You noted when you were first talking about it that this was the most senior conversation between the U.S. and Russia since Secretary Blinken's last conversation with Lavrov. So, why now? Why today? Has something changed that's given the administration any reason to think this could produce some progress -- a call like this?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't put that much optimism in it. I would say that there have been ongoing direct and indirect conversations with the Russians. It's not that it stopped at any point. We've -- they've -- those have happened through our Ambassador, and it just felt like the appropriate time for our National Security Advisor to have a discussion and directly convey that there will be additional consequences should things proceed, including if there is a use of chemical weapons.

Q I guess, to ask you the inverse then --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- would there be any increasing concerns that prompted that call today?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that, you know, diplomatic conversations and talks -- there isn't always a magic reason why they happen in a particular moment. And this was -- just felt like the appropriate time for them, for us to engage at that level.

Go ahead. I have to wrap up in a second here, but go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. You put out a list of all of the military equipment --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- included in that \$400 million -- \$800 million --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that's being provided to Ukraine. Among those items -- let me read them to you: 100 grenade launchers, 5,000 rifles, 1,000 pistols, 400 machine guns, and 400 shotguns. Are you saying those items are not offensive weapons?

MS. PSAKI: They're weapons that help the Ukrainian people fight against an invasion by a foreign country.

Q They can be used offensively, can they not?

MS. PSAKI: Again, they are weapons. What I'm talking about is weapons that can be used to fight --

Q The answer is "yes." The answer is "yes." I mean, although you don't want to say it, that answer to that question is "yes." And so, obviously, you're trying to make this distinction between offensive and defensive weapons --

MS. PSAKI: Well, what we're talking about -- let me finish. Let me finish.

Q Well, let me finish, because I give you my point --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish my answer.

Q -- you make -- no, you weren't -- no, I was finishing a point, and then you can respond to my point.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead.

Q All right. You're making this distinction between offensive and defensive weapons. Anybody that looks at that list of weapons that I just mentioned, they would say, clearly, they're offensive.

If a Ukrainian military officer or someone who is enlisted has one of these weapons, they can take out a Russian military official of some sort with these weapons. They're offensive in nature. So, why not provide more offensive weapons like this to the Ukrainian military?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first of all, we are providing a range of rifles, et cetera. There is a difference between a plane and planes and massive military systems -- I think anybody would recognize this -- and what we're talking about, which is giving rifles and pistols to many of them farmers and people living in countryside to defend themselves. I think there's a difference that most people recognize.

Thank you, everyone, so much. Have a nice day.

Q Jen, you promised the back of the room today.

MS. PSAKI: I will get to you tomorrow. I'm sorry, I have to wrap up. I apologize.

Q There's going to be another kerfuffle, Jen. (Laughter.) No more kerfuffles!

3:52 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 17, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:55 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Sorry, I think I jumped the two-minute gun. I was just excited to see you all on St. Patrick's Day.

Okay, a couple of items for all of you at the top. Today, we wanted to highlight the strong unemployment claim data out this morning. In a little over a year, President Biden has brought the American labor market back to one of its strongest positions in history, driving a robust recovery from the economic catastrophe he inherited.

The number of new jobless claims Americans filing for unemployment for the first time fell below the pre-pandemic average in 2019. And the number of Americans who have been receiving unemployment benefits for more than a week fell to the lowest level since 1970.

Three hundred thousand fewer Americans are receiving unemployment claims now than before the pandemic. That means more Americans are getting back to work and fewer are drawing governmental -- government benefits.

As we've said many times, the data can be volatile week to week or month to month, so it's important to focus on the broader trends. And those trends show remarkable progress across our economy over the last year, including the fastest year of job growth in U.S. history with 7.4 million jobs created and unemployment down to 3.8 percent.

I also wanted to mark another historic milestone of 500 million vaccines that we have distributed to the world -- an

unprecedented campaign reaching 113 countries, something that has never been done before.

We did not get here by accident. This is a testament to the same whole-of-government effort we applied domestically, navigating logistical, legal, and regulatory processes to get lifesaving vaccines across the world.

As we mark today's milestone of delivering a half a billion vaccines to the world, let me be clear: Without additional funding from Congress to support getting shots into arms, USAID will have to cut short our crucial and effective efforts to turn vaccines into vaccinations.

Congress must promptly provide the administration with the urgent funding we need to continue the work of both vaccinating the world and protecting Americans at home.

Last thing I just wanted to note: As you saw this morning reported, Jeff Zients, who has served as our COVID Coordinator, will soon be leaving. So I just wanted to take a moment just to note his service and thank him from the President and all of us.

The President called on Jeff to lead our COVID-19 response because there is no one better at delivering results. I know this personally. I worked closely with him through many challenges over the course of many years in public service and government.

And the thing about Jeff is at every moment, at every opportunity, when there is a big challenge -- a pile of manure sometimes -- he dives right in to fix the challenge. And that's what he does. That is what he has done time and time again through his career in public service.

And he led this effort to stand up a mass vaccination campaign; achieve equity in vaccinations across communities; ensure that Americans have access to treatments, tests; and embark on an unprecedented global vaccine campaign that we celebrate -- can celebrate today. It would not have happened without Jeff Zients in this job and in this role.

And we are stronger that he is -- his service and the service of his deputy, Natalie Quillian, who's also departing, has literally saved lives in this country.

So we want to thank them for their work, for their leadership, and we will miss them a great deal here.

Zeke, why don't you kick us off?

Q Thanks, Jen. First, on COVID, the President has had a couple of close calls over the last couple days -- the Second Gentleman and the Irish Prime Minister last night. Has he been tested today? And did he test -- is there a result of that test you can read out?

MS. PSAKI: He was not tested today. He was tested last Sunday. Neither of these individuals were considered close contacts.

The doctors at the CDC determine what "close contacts" look like. And that -- a close contact is someone who was less than six feet away from an infective -- infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. That is how they define it.

And, of course, our doctors look closely at that as well. And neither of these two individuals was -- did he spend that amount of time with. And so, his weekly testing cadence remains as it has been; it has not changed.

Q And I know there are a number of particular precautions that exist, you know, to protect the President and keep him safe and healthy. The testing cadence here is not like most people -- or it has --

MS. PSAKI: That's true.

Q -- but this broader issue, though, of, you know, the President coming into -- maybe not CDC "close contact," but having close exposure to some people, even for a brief amount of time, it sort of -- you know -- you know, getting into that bubble around the President. You know, this is something that people around the country are dealing with on a daily basis, but they don't have the same sort of precautions that are here.

So, you know, if the President hypothetically were to come down with COVID, is that something -- or any -- or the First Lady or anyone else in this administration -- is that a failure at this point? Or is this just a new fact of life that everyone has to sort of, you know, make -- you know, make peace with at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Well -- (a cellphone chimes) -- that was very soothing. I don't know where that came from. (Laughter.)

I would say our view is: While we've made a significant amount of progress across the country in fighting the pandemic -- with more than 75 percent of adults fully vaccinated, according to the definition of the CDC -- and obviously, we've seen hospitalizations come down across the country, including Washington, D.C., the President was very clear when he made his remarks about COVID just a few weeks ago that we are still working -- we still have work to do to address the pandemic, to fight the pandemic.

That's exactly why we need additional funding to make sure we have the types of treatments, the types of testing mechanisms to make them free and available to Americans across the country, to make masks available so that people who are uninsured or people who don't have the resources can tap into a lot of these -- these effective treatments and effective prevention mechanisms.

I would say, for us, you're right, the testing -- the testing modes are a little bit different around here because we are around the President of the United States and the Vice President and, of course, the First Lady and the Second Gentleman. That means, before you see the President, if you are in for a meeting or you travel with him, you are tested. And everyone has different testing cadences, depending on their frequency of seeing him.

Q And then, in anticipation of the call between the President and President Xi tomorrow, has the U.S. government made a determination whether China has decided whether or not to, you know, sort of agree to Russia's request to provide assistance for its invasion of Ukraine? Is that -- is it still a live ball that the President is going to warn President Xi of off of? Where are they in terms of making that decision?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, why don't I give you a little bit more of a preview on the call, and hopefully it will answer exactly your question.

The President, as I think you've heard him say before and I've said, is a big believer in leader-to-leader diplomacy. And they have a lot to discuss, given the last time the President met with President Xi virtually was last November -- a couple of months ago.

The meeting tomorrow, in terms of how we got here, came as a direct follow-up to the meeting national -- our national Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, had with his counterpart. They talked about the two presidents meeting or engaging in the near future during that meeting. So, hence, it is happening tomorrow.

And that meeting, earlier this week, of course, came at an important moment in the conflict, but it also -- in Ukraine, of course -- it also covered issues beyond Russia's invasion, and I would expect -- of Ukraine -- I would expect this meeting would as well, because there are obviously a range of issues that we continue to discuss with the Chinese and the President discusses, of course, when he speaks with President Xi.

But to go to your question, this is an opportunity for President Biden to assess where President Xi stands. There has been, of course, rhetorical support, or the absence of clear rhetoric and denunciation -- or the absence of denunciation by China of

what Russia is doing. This flies in the face, of course, of everything China stands for, including the basic principles of the U.N. Charter, including the basic principles of respect for sovereignty of nations.

And so, the fact that China has not denounced what Russia is doing, in and of itself, speaks volumes. And it also speaks volumes not only in Russia or in Ukraine, but around the world.

And this call also comes as the -- as Jake Sullivan's meeting earlier this week, as we have made clear our deep concerns about China's alignment with Russia and the potential implications and consequences of that.

So the President will also share his assessment of that during the call, but I don't have another -- an update for you on any internal assessment. That is just how we are approaching -- or he is approaching the call tomorrow.

Q How specific is the President going to be in laying out the consequences for China if they do help Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President is -- never fails to be direct, including in his conversations with President Xi. But we'll let the call happen, and I'm sure we'll have more to read out for you after the call.

Q And do you have any idea what military equipment they are thinking about providing Russia?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any assessment of that from here.

Q Okay. And what do you make of the Putin comments basically calling for a purge of anti-war opponents?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think this is a clear sign that this war is not going how President Putin planned for it to go. And there has been an outpouring of courageous protests and many speaking out against the war, even within Russia.

So, his effort to crack down on dissent, to crack down on the freedom of press, on the freedom of media, on the freedom of protest is actually quite consistent with what we've seen his approach to be over the course of the last several years. But I think it's an indication of exactly that.

Go ahead.

Q Which side requested this call between President Biden and President Xi tomorrow?

MS. PSAKI: It was discussed on the -- during the call -- during the meeting that our National Security Advisor had on Monday.

Q So are you saying it was mutually agreed upon?

MS. PSAKI: They mutually agreed to move forward with it during that meeting.

Q Secretary Blinken just said that the U.S. is concerned China is considering directly assisting Russia by providing them with more military equipment to use in Ukraine. That is not something that we have heard from the administration before. And so, can I get you to speak to how high of a concern that is from the -- for the White House right now?

MS. PSAKI: It is a high concern, a significant concern, given our Secretary of State just conveyed that. And certainly, our concerns about China assisting, in any way, Russia as they invade a foreign country is of significant concern and would -- the response to that would be consequences.

Q Before Russia invaded, the White House was pretty clear that if they did invade, there would be sanctions imposed on them as a result of that. With China, you've just said if they do help Russia, that there will be consequences, but you haven't said specifically that they will be sanctions. Can you say, without saying what they are, that they will be sanctioned

if they do help Russia with military equipment for this invasion?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to outline what the consequences would look like. And I -- the President, obviously, will speak with President Xi tomorrow, and he'll speak directly about that.

Go ahead.

Q Just on that point, just so I'm clear: I mean, I understand you don't want to detail what the consequences could be, but the President in the phone call will make clear not just that there will be consequences but what those consequences could be to Xi?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure we'll have more to read out after the call happens tomorrow. But we have not -- our National Security Advisor, obviously, didn't hold back in his conversation he had. Our Secretary of State did not hold back in his comments he just made publicly. And the President always takes the opportunity when he speaks with foreign leaders to be candid and direct.

Q You said the phone call is going to be an opportunity to assess where Xi stands. Should we take that to mean that it's not clear that the Chinese have made up their mind whether or not to assist the Russians?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think if you look at the last couple of weeks, Mary, you can see that they abstained from a vote in the U.N. Security Council, but they also -- and they spoke -- they had put out a comment during the Munich Security Conference defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but they also echoed some of the conspiracy theories about chemical weapons and U.S. and Ukrainian intentions.

So, for any country, it's a question of where you want to be as the history books are written.

Q And do you believe that this is a sign that -- or can you characterize at all your understanding of how low the Russians may be running on some military equipment, given that they seem to be turning to China for some help?

MS. PSAKI: I can't provide an assessment on that from here. But, you know, I know my colleagues at the Department of Defense have conveyed clearly -- and I'm happy to echo -- that it's not only not going as they planned; they have had challenges, obviously, with the operations of equipment, with the amount of equipment, even with MREs and food and other supplies. And, you know, that is what we have seen occur on the ground, but I don't have a numerical summary from here.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. So, one of the clearest responses we have seen from the Chinese about their possibly helping Russia came from the Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, who told Spanish officials on a call, "China is not a party to the crisis, nor does it want the sanctions to affect China." What sanctions are they talking about? Did Jake Sullivan specifically bring up the sanctions during the meeting in Rome?

MS. PSAKI: I can't speak to what he meant. You'd have to ask the Chinese.

Q Okay. Well, has the Chinese expressed the same thing to the U.S. -- that they do not want to run the risk of being sanctioned?

MS. PSAKI: I would -- the Chinese would speak for themselves. We typically don't speak for others.

Q Okay. So, just now, Secretary Blinken joined Ambassador Greenfield and the President in describing Putin's actions as war crimes. I know that you said just yesterday that there is a legal process that is ongoing. How long does that process typically take? How much evidence do we need to collect? And can you clarify who will ultimately determine whether

these are war crimes or not?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think Secretary Blinken, in his remarks, also gave some specifics about who from the State Department will be leading that effort. It's a legal process where they review all of the evidence, and then they provide that evidence and data and information to the international bodies that oversee the investigations. And the international bodies that oversee the investigations would make determinations about violation of international law and whether it's war crimes by their standards and what the consequences would be.

So we would be supporting those efforts.

Q And do you know how long that usually takes?

MS. PSAKI: A legal process internally in the State Department? It can take some time. But again, I can't -- I would point to the State Department for any update they want to provide on the timeline.

Q Okay. And one more on Jeff Zients. He and Dr. Ashish Jha, who's going to replace him, have such very different backgrounds and different skillsets.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q So what does that say about how the stage of the pandemic has evolved from then and now?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I would say: What it says is that Jeff Zient's superpower is that he is an operational and managerial guru of sorts and someone who has taken those skills to a range of jobs he's had throughout his career, including in the Obama-Biden administration when he oversaw the fixing of Healthcare.gov and oversaw the fixing of the technology that was severely broken and outdated within government at that time.

So, when we came into this administration -- I would remind you it's now a long time ago -- there was no real plan. We were left no plan by our predecessors. We needed to put in place a plan to not only get enough access to vaccines but also ensure there are enough vaccinators and vaccine locations. That's a massive operational undertaking.

Right now, we're at a point in the process where we have all of the tools and we know the operational systems that are needed. And so, right now, it's the appropriate time. And Jeff, of course, made this decision on his own. He extended a couple of times to stay longer through some ups and downs in the pandemic.

We're having a public health expert, somebody who's as known -- as well known as -- Dr. Jha -- is effective in communicating with the country about how we're going to continue to approach and tackle the pandemic.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President called Putin a "war criminal" yesterday. The Secretary of State just said that that was also his view today. So, given all of that, why are we still having Putin's Russia broker the Iran nuclear deal talks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that it's not in our interest for Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. And Russia is a member of the P5+1. So, that is the pursuit of a deal that would be in our national security interests.

Q So, basically we're just stuck working with him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think how the President and any of the P5+1 partners or Europeans or others look at this is: If we can achieve a diplomatic solution where we prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon -- despite the efforts by former President Trump to pull us out of the deal, allowing Iran to move far -- move closer to acquiring a nuclear weapon, that would be good for our national security and good for global security around the world.

Q The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act says that Congress is required to review any new agreement. This is obviously not the same agreement that Obama worked on in 2015. Does President Biden believe that this treaty needs the advice and consent of Congress? And if so, does he believe he has the votes to lawfully affirm it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if -- if and when we have a deal -- and we don't have a deal at this point; otherwise, you would all know -- we would carefully consider the facts and circumstances of any U.S. return to the JCPOA to determine the legal implications, including those under the Iran Nuclear Review Act of 2015. And we're committed to ensuring the requirements are satisfied. So, certainly, we would abide by that.

But we have been keeping members very updated. We've been briefing them regularly. Brett McGurk conducted a call just a couple days ago. And we've been briefing them with a range of national security officials.

Q And then, has the IGRC -- or -- done any -- or rather, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the IRGC -- has it done anything to be eligible to be removed from the terror blacklist?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you're asking me this because it's been out there as a possible discussion, but there's no deal at this point. So, if and when there's a deal, we'll have a discussion about what's in the deal.

Q Outside of the deal, though, does it take action to be removed from that terror blacklist? Do you have to do something to get off of it?

MS. PSAKI: You have to make a decision, yes.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I want to ask you a slightly different version of a question that I asked you yesterday --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- about the \$800 million military assistance. I asked if you could tell us how quickly it would arrive. And I understand this is a complicated process. To flip it around a little bit, can you tell us how quickly will the first shipment be out the door?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've been doing shipments or deliveries every day or every couple of days. And obviously, the Department of Defense would have more specifics.

But we have effectively and successfully delivered \$300 million in military assistance to the Ukrainians on the ground over just the last two weeks. And our effort would be to continue to rapidly provide infor- --

Q And of this --

MS. PSAKI: -- provide equipment.

Q -- of this new tranche, this new \$800 million announcement, can you give us -- just characterize how quickly this round will start to be sent (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the operations of that would be led by the Department of Defense, so I would point you to them for more operational specifics.

Q And to stay on the Department of Defense --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- the Defense Secretary was speaking with his Slovakian counterpart who said that they were willing to send long-range S-300 surface-to-air missiles if the U.S. would backfill. Does the administration see this as a done deal, as something that is imminent, that would happen?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's the decision of any foreign country, as a sovereign country, to decide what equipment they want to provide. What we are mindful of is ensuring that we are maintaining -- we have to be careful in our desire to support other countries, that we're not inadvertently impacting NATO readiness or capabilities or our own.

And again, this is something the Department of Defense can most effectively speak to, but a lot of these military systems would -- some of them require months to manufacture or to build. We just don't -- we don't have a warehouse of just military equipment that's ready to typically be sent all the time. So, that is a factor.

But we want to find a solution that both enables Allies and partners to provide the support they have available to Ukraine, while addressing the very real need to backfill their defense systems, which is often a significant challenge.

And we just want to make sure that if and when our Allies are donating material, including us, they're not leaving a gap in their own defenses.

Q Okay. And just, finally, Ukrainian refugees are being turned away at the southern border -- I know you've gotten some questions about this -- because of Title 42, obviously put in place in the early days of COVID-19. Where is the administration in trying to work around this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, right now, as I noted I think the other day, there are discussions about any ways we could be helpful in welcoming refugees into the United States, something the President -- Ukrainian refugees, of course -- we welcome many refugees, as you know -- something the President is willing, of course; happy to do.

The role we've been playing to date, Kristen, has been really providing humanitarian assistance. We've provided \$300 million in humanitarian assistance to the people in Ukraine and neighboring countries. A lot of that is going to help provide support to refugees. Three million in three weeks, which is a startling number, that are going to neighboring countries.

And the bipartisan funding bill the President just signed a couple of days ago provides more than \$4 billion in humanitarian assistance, including \$2.65 billion through the USAID International Disaster Assistance program, which provides everything from food, healthcare, other urgent support, and \$1.4 billion for migration and refugee assistance to support refugees fleeing Ukraine.

But that is where -- because the vast, vast majority of refugees want to stay in neighboring countries, that is where we have been focusing our energies at this point.

Q The President has been clear that he welcomes those who do want to come here. But given this law, it -- are there discussions about revoking Title 42?

MS. PSAKI: The revocation of Title 42 wouldn't be done in response to a war in a European country. It's done by a decision -- would be made by the CDC, and then it would be implemented when that is done. And it will be done, at some point, of course, with the interagency, including the Department of Homeland Security.

But, you know, there is a range of discussions about if there are ways for Ukrainian refugees to come. Right now, they'd have to apply, obviously, through existing refugee programs where they would apply from a third country.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Given the COVID surge in China and the lockdowns that we're seeing there, is supply chain issues and, you know, these getting worse, perhaps going to be part of the call tomorrow at all, or is it focused on -- mostly on Russia?

you know, those getting worse, perhaps, going to be part of the call tomorrow at all, or is it focused on -- mostly on Russia?

MS. PSAKI: It will be focused on a range of issues. Certainly Russia and Ukraine -- Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be a part of that, but our economic relationship with China, a range of issues of mutual concern will certainly be a discussion.

So, I don't -- I will -- we will have more to read out for you once the -- once the meeting concludes tomorrow.

And this is, of course, an issue that we are watching very closely. While the ports, I believe, still remain open, one of the challenges we've seen on the ground and we are tracking very closely is the number of manufacturing facilities or the number of workers who are not working. Sometimes there's a lag in what that impact can be in terms of the production of materials and how that impacts the supply chain. So, we are tracking that very closely.

But again, I expect this to be a wide-ranging conversation tomorrow. And we'll have more to read out once it's concluded.

Q Also, just to follow up on the President being around some people who've --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- now tested positive, why not just test the President every day at this point? The administration has done a lot in terms of, you know, saying certain actions are being done out of an abundance of caution. So, in this case, even if it doesn't quite follow CDC guidelines or goes above and beyond, why not just do that because he's the President?

MS. PSAKI: Because we're guided by his medical doctor, and he has kept him at the same cadence. And if that changes, then we will change how often he's tested.

Q And is the cadence once a week? Or --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Questions on a couple of different topics.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q To try this a different way: Does the President have specific things he wants to accomplish in tomorrow's conversation with President Xi? Are there specific deliverables he's hoping to get out of it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is, again, an opportunity for him to speak directly, leader to leader, about a range of issues. Of course, the invasion of Russia -- Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be a part of that, and what role or how -- how President Xi sees the role of China in that conflict will be a part of that.

There's also a range of other topics that they will discuss. But I'm purposely leaving some space for the President to have a direct conversation with his counterpart.

Q And then, on the COVID cases that -- for example, with the Second Gentleman testing positive this week, why did the Vice President appear today -- I understand she was masked -- but in an event with other people around, when CDC guidance is currently that people who have been exposed should stay home and not interact with others for five days?

MS. PSAKI: Well, she is fully boosted. I don't actually believe that's an accurate description of CDC guidance of having a close contact. We obviously all have had close contacts here. And you're tested at a regular cadence. And she is abiding

close contact. We, obviously, all have had close contacts here. And you're tested at a regular cadence. And she is abiding by that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just to kind of follow up on that bit on COVID: Is one of the reasons why the administration is not going -- being extra cautious with the President and the Vice President, even though there is national security issue around this, in part to kind of lead by example for Americans to say, "You can get back to living your normal lives, and you shouldn't be concerned that even if you get exposed to somebody just briefly, you shouldn't freak out about that. You don't need to test a bunch of times"? Is that basically the dynamic that you're trying to say --

MS. PSAKI: Look -- oh, go ahead.

Q -- even though if the President -- 79 years old -- the President of the United States were to get COVID, it might be more serious than, you know, somebody in their twenties?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't know that.

Q Right. We don't. But (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: But we also know that COVID impacts people of all ages and a range of -- but we take -- what we do here, Jen, is not -- not exactly as you said. So I wouldn't agree with your description there.

I would say we do take extra precautions, including individuals who are around the President being tested -- that goes over and above, of course. He is the President of the United States, so we do take those additional steps. And we, of course, abide by what the recommendations and advice are of his medical doctor. And if that would be to do increased testing, we would certainly do that. But he does not feel that that is necessary at this point in time based on these recent contacts.

Q I also wanted to ask about oil and gas companies and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q There's been some reports, from the fourth quarter, of them increasing their stock buybacks. There was already, you know, a time when there was a spike in gas prices last year, I think in the fourth quarter. And you're also just seeing the companies saying that they're kind of reluctant to up production. And they kind of, in some ways, point to the administration's policies overall in the sense that even if they were to up production, that, one, it takes months to get to market; and two, it doesn't fit in with the overall approach that this administration is taking. So what do you say to that kind of viewpoint?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's hard for them to make the argument it's anything other than business decisions on their part, and they have said that themselves.

The CEO of Occidental Petroleum said, quote, "We have no need and no intent to invest in production growth this year."

The CEO of Marathon Oil said, quote, "Our cash flow-driven return of capital framework uniquely prioritizes our shareholders as the first call on cash flow generation, not the drill bit."

The CEO of Pioneer Natural Resources said, quote, "We're not going to change our growth rate." "We think it's important to return cash back to shareholders." That's a business decision.

The oil and gas industry right now is receiving profit -- windfall profits; we've seen that. They publicly report their profits. They publicly report this information

they publicly report this information.

And instead of keeping up with current demand, too many of these companies, in our view, are making the calculated decision of returning money to investors and shareholders through buybacks and dividends, instead of expanding production enough in the short term, which is what we need.

Again, it's a business decision, but I think there's clear evidence of them acknowledging and even shouting that out.

Go ahead.

Q So, I have a China question and, with full awareness of the news cycle, a St. Patrick's Day question.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, okay. All right.

Q China question first. About a week ago, you said that for everything else, by and large, the White House saw China as still abiding by international sanctions. But on Russia, does that view still hold a week later? Is that generally how the White House views China?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a new assessment of that. We're obviously watching very closely.

Q St. Patrick's Day.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Given the fact that the President very much likes to share his pride of the Iri- -- his Irish heritage but also the fact that --

MS. PSAKI: He does.

Q -- so many ceremonial--

MS. PSAKI: "More Irish than Irish." Is that what he said? "Irish Americans consider themselves more Irish." I think that's true. I will confirm that.

Go ahead.

Q But like that, and also the fact that so many of the ceremonial parts of the job --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- have been canceled over the past year, I'm wondering: Did he express particular frustration or sadness that the Oval meeting had to become yet another Zoom meeting today?

MS. PSAKI: He was disappointed. He was looking forward to having the meeting today. And having meetings over Zoom, I think as we've all experienced, are not the same. Having spent a lot of time with the President, he is an extrovert, extrovert, extrovert and loves that engagement with people in person. And he was really looking forward to the meeting today.

There will be more in the future. We certainly understand we are still facing the pandemic. And there are more events that he has been able to participate in today to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. So, fortunately, many of them still moved forward.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Yesterday, in his remarks to the Congress, President Zelenskyy called for the creation of this new global organization that he called “U-24. United for Peace,” described as an alliance that would supply assistance, including weapons, within 24 hours. I was wondering if the administration has a view on that idea. Is it something that you guys are discussing with Ukraine? And does the U.S. view this as Zelenskyy’s, kind of, alternative for Ukraine entering NATO?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, just to reiterate, it’s up to NATO to determine who enters NATO. And obviously, any country, we would support their aspiration to join NATO should they choose and they meet the requirements.

We, of course, did see him convey that in the speech. We don’t have more details. We are very closely engaged with the Ukrainians and speak with them every day.

Beyond that, I would say: In terms of the delivery of weapons, we do it as quickly as we humanly possibly can through our system and in coordination with our NATO partners and Allies. But we know -- we support a range of ideas being put out there. We’ll discuss it with the Europeans and others and see if there’s more to report out from there.

Q I also wanted to try one more time on --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- on the President and COVID.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q A lot of the questions are focused on testing, which you’re pretty clear that the testing cadence is not changing. As he looks particularly to a trip next week that is quite important -- to Brussels and maybe elsewhere in Europe -- is there anything else that he’s doing, I mean, as he’s having these -- what the CDC does not consider a close contact but are certain people that he’s around and aware of -- is anything about his behavior changing? Are there any other precautions that you guys are taking that are not testing-related?

MS. PSAKI: We have continued to take the same testing protocol -- steps which are significant and go farther than CDC guidance goes. But beyond that, the test -- his testing cadence remains the same, and there haven’t been additional changes to our internal protocols.

Go ahead.

Q Hey. Thanks, Jen. The Kremlin responded to President Biden labeling Putin a “war criminal” yesterday by calling his remarks “unacceptable and unforgivable.” What is the White House’s reaction to getting criticism from Russia about the President’s remarks?

MS. PSAKI: It’s pretty rich coming from a country where -- whose actions are unforgivable in the eyes of the world -- global community.

Q Given that there’s an ongoing legal process and investigation by the State Department into whether there was, in fact, war crimes committed, what is the purpose of the President and now Secretary of State getting ahead of that investigation?

I know you said -- or the Pr- -- you said yesterday that the President was speaking from his heart.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is that what this is -- just speaking from their heart?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think Secretary Blinken was as well. And as you heard Secretary Blinken convey in his remarks, what we're seeing -- whether it is the destruction of a theater, where the words "children" or "kids" was written in Russian outside of the theater, according to photos; or whether it is the, you know, targeting of civilians, of hospitals, of maternity wards -- if that's not considered a war crime by human beings, what is?

And there is a legal process that is important to continue that we have at the State Department that is ongoing, that Secretary Blinken spoke about. And any of that information and data we gather would go to the international bodies that would have prosecuted war criminals in the past. That's where that information would go. It wouldn't be the United States doing that; it's the international bodies that do that.

So, we will continue to feed information into that. But, you know, I think it's important to call out what we see happening on the ground, and I think that's exactly what the President and the Secretary did.

Go ahead.

Q Even though it would go to those international bodies, would the U.S. have a response if that investigation does conclude that there were war crimes? Would --

MS. PSAKI: Well, typically, it's an international response and it goes through these international systems for a reason. So we will continue to provide data and information to that process.

Q And then, if I can have one more question on behalf of a colleague? There are growing calls from civil rights advocates and some lawmakers to pass Temporary Protected Status for Cameroon. Some have alleged a double standard in how the administration prioritizes predominant [sic] -- predominantly Black and brown countries when it comes to immigration. For example, it took seven months to grant TPS status for Afghanistan, but only took about a week to grant TPS to Ukraine. Is TPS for Cameroon something the administration is considering and looking at?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the Department of Homeland Security, who oversees that process.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. This morning, Senator Mitch McConnell was talking about Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson on the Senate floor, and he was specifically talking about how some of her supporters have framed her experience as a public defender. He said, quote, "If any judicial nominee...does have special empathy for some parties over others, that's not an asset. It's a problem." He also said the President is "deliberately working to make the whole federal judiciary softer on crime." Do you have a response to that?

MS. PSAKI: He also said he expected her to get confirmed with some Republican votes.

What I would say, though -- because there are others in the Senate who have made faulty accusations about Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's record and specifically about her record on child sex crimes, so let me just take the opportunity to clear that up -- not that most people have confusion about it.

But in the vast majority of cases involving child sex crimes, the sentences Judge Jackson imposed were consistent with or above what the government or U.S. probation recommended. For example, there are -- there are arguments that have been made out there by Senator Hawley and others that -- where he took a snippet of a transcript out of context, when, in fact, Judge Jackson was repeating something a witness said in order to ask a question about their testimony.

So some who are accusing her of being, quote, "soft on crime" also failed to note that what was omitted is a sentencing commission report that's been touted out there, was unanimously supported by a bipartisan Sentencing Commission.

She comes from a law enforcement family, has devoted her career to standing up for the rule of law, which is why she is endorsed by so many leading law enforcement organizations in the country. And attempts to smear or discredit her history

and her work are not borne out in facts.

Q I know Monday is a long ways away, given the news cycle --

MS. PSAKI: It s all relative.

Q Yeah. Will the President stop at around 11:00 to watch the beginning of the hearing up on Capitol Hill? And will his schedule be adjusted around that?

MS. PSAKI: I don t know what his schedule is yet. I m certain that he will catch coverage or catch some of her hearings over the course of next week. But I don t know what his schedule looks like yet for Monday.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. I have two questions. You have already announced President Biden's trip to Europe, to Brussels. But there were also reports about a possible trip to Poland. Can you confirm that such a trip is under consideration?

MS. PSAKI: I don t have any more details about his trip to announce at this point in time. As we have them, we will announce them all to you.

Q One more. There are negotiations ongoing between Ukraine and Russia. Does the White House support those negotiations? And what -- what s -- how can you describe your involvement -- the U.S. involvement in those talks between Russia and Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we ve been involved in a couple of ways. One, we ve been leading the effort to build support in the global community to put in place sanctions that are crippling the Russian economy, to provide military support and economic support to the Ukrainians that strengthen their hand as they participate in these discussions and negotiations. And we also engage every day with Ukrainians to discuss.

Obviously, I would note that, as you know, our National Security Advisor also talked to his counterpart yesterday as well. But we are continuing to support the Ukrainians' efforts.

What our concern is, though, is -- you know, these diplomatic talks -- as they re ongoing, we have seen no effort, no movement, no evidence that President Putin and the Russians are de-escalating. And that is really what we are going to continue to closely watch.

Go ahead.

Q A follow-up on your point about Senator Hawley. Obviously, he s consistently voted against the President s nominees. I don t think he was a swing vote you guys were counting on. However, will his criticism, will the explosiveness of this line of attack -- do you worry that it will affect your ability to win over other Republican votes? Is there any concern about this campaign upping the pressure on, say, Senators Collins and Murkowski, who may be more amenable to voting for (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I m not sure that someone who refused to tell people whether or not he would vote for Roy Moore is an effective and credible messenger on this.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I m going to try again on President Biden and President Xi s call tomorrow. If you won t detail the consequences of what happens if China does start supporting -- more support Russia, might you indicate whether there are any carrots that the administration has prepared to offer, perhaps tariff reductions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this is a conversation about where President Xi stands. It's up to the Chinese to decide where they want to stand, where they want to be as the history books are written. So I think it's more through that frame than it is about carrots.

Q Okay. And then just one more -- two more, actually.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q As the administration continues to condemn and take action against Russia's invasion on Ukraine, are there any plans to revisit, review, revoke the Trump administration's recognition of Israel's annexation on the Golan Heights and Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any updates on that front. I'd point to the State Department.

Q But at this point, can you -- can you describe just the administration's position on the difference between Russia's invasion on Ukraine and Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the State Department.

Go ahead.

Q Okay. And then one more. One more logistical question. Cambodia, the chair of ASEAN, has announced last week that the U.S.-ASEAN summit that the President is supposed to host on the 28th, I believe, is postponed. We haven't been able to get a confirmation from either you guys or State. Can you clarify on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any updates on the schedule. I know we were working through the schedules of a number of leaders, so that's always a challenge and a factor. But I don't have any updates.

Q So it's still on the table?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any updates on it.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Two on COVID. There are some Americans who have received a second booster -- i.e., for a fourth total shot. Is that something that the President has done or will do?

MS. PSAKI: He has not done that. If the CDC recommends it, he would get another booster. They have not.

Q And then, secondly, the White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain, in a tweet today, celebrated the idea that --

MS. PSAKI: Uh-oh. (Laughter.)

Q You know who he is -- said -- and that he tweets. You said -- he said -- celebrated the idea that there is a low number of Americans in ICUs today because of COVID. But he also wrote, quote, there's a "great risk of a new wave." And there are -- certainly, we're seeing cases surge right now in China and in Europe. And one of the truisms of this pandemic: If it's in Europe, it ends up here a few weeks later.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q What precautions and preparations is the administration taking federally and encouraging states to take ahead of a

possible new COVID wave?

MS. PSAKI: So, what we have seen -- and I think you're talking about the BA.2 variant -- and we are closely watching and monitoring the situation both in Europe and in China -- BA.2 is a more transmissible version of Omicron. But we do know the tools the United States has -- including the mRNA vaccines, therapeutics, and tests -- all are effective tools against this variant.

And China has not used mRNA vaccines, which is an important component of how we're seeing the response there -- or how it's impacting people there. But BA.2 has been circulating a little different from Omicron, when we were going through that surge in November. It has been circulating here for some time. We currently -- it may be higher than this, but as of earlier this week, there were about 35,000 cases in this country. And we expect some fluctuation, especially at this relatively low level.

But this is an example of where the President's Preparedness Plan that we rolled out just a couple of weeks ago, which lays out what the tools are that we need to move forward safely, is important.

And what we've been conveying to governors, to go to your question, or leaders around the country and certainly members of Congress, is that just because COVID isn't disrupting some of our lives in certain communities as much as it was a few weeks ago, it doesn't mean it's gone; it's not gone. And I think this variant is an example of that.

We do know what we need to manage it. But we are also at great risk of running out of money to do exactly that. And so that is a key part of what we're communicating to governors, to members of Congress, and others about where we are with funding and the need to end some of these programs soon if we don't get the funding we need.

Q Just a very short, quick follow-up. Is there concern, though, that this variant, which is more -- it seems very transmissible -- is coming at a moment when a lot of Americans are seeing waning protection from their boosters just because the timing of the shots, as well as the fact that mask guidelines and other restrict- -- regulations have been lifted across the country?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question. I would point to our medical experts to answer that. I mean, it is more transmissible, but we know it can be treated. So I think what it is -- is a reminder of is that while it has decreased in many parts of the country, it is not gone, and it means we still need to continue to take steps we can to fight the virus.

Go ahead.

Q Japan hosts the largest number of U.S. military, about 50,000 troops, about a half a million Americans at any given time in Japan. And many Japanese remember, at that time, Vice President Biden came all the way to Japan about 10 years ago when there was a terrible disaster, but there's been no interview with any Japanese media.

MS. PSAKI: Oh.

Q Do you think we could arrange that? Just to assure them that the treaty is enforced. Especially the Senkaku, the southern islands, they're very worried about --

MS. PSAKI: The President does have --

Q Could we get a positive --

MS. PSAKI: He does have a great deal of affection for Japan and has spoken, of course, with their -- the current leader a couple of times. I'm happy to take your interview requests under -- under advisement.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask you about the refugee situation in Ukraine. Does the White House see the refugee situation that was created in Afghanistan last year as different than the one created by Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

And the reason I say that is -- is your policy response different? I hear you say that your understanding is that neighboring countries -- that's where people are going from Ukraine right now and not necessarily coming here. But, at some point, is that going to not be an option anymore?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's different, in part, for the reason you mentioned. That -- in Ukraine, there are -- while there have been 3 million refugees or about that number over the last couple of weeks, they have been -- the vast, vast majority of them have moved into countries -- neighboring countries who have set up really remarkable systems for welcoming these refugees at a really challenging and difficult time.

I know there's been a lot of reporting from a lot of your networks in Poland and other places where they have had systems in place to welcome refugees. That has been the preference of a -- of these refugees. That's why we have been providing our humanitarian assistance to these countries and to Ukraine directly, in order to help augment the support in -- in the best way possible.

Every refugee circumstance is different and has different needs and requirements. And we try to adapt our own response from USAID or from our refugee and migration programming and funding to meet what the needs are in that conflict.

Q I also wanted to ask, on a completely different topic: The President, in the State of the Union, said that he would sign an executive order on identity theft. And I think he called it "pandemic aid fraud" or something similar. Do you have an update on where that is? I know it hasn't been published yet.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's see. What we know at this point in time is that -- I mean, he talked about addressing unemployment fraud -- right? -- through the pandemic. And so, what we're doing now is ensuring that we're taking steps toward that.

Last week, the Department of Justice announced a new chief pandemic prosecutor. And we're working to escalate efforts to crack down on bad actors and support and augment that. But in terms of the executive order, I don't have an update on the timeline on it.

Go ahead in the back.

Q Jen, two questions: one foreign policy, one domestic.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I like the setup. (Laughter.)

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q So are you -- what do you make of the fact that there now appear to be Chechen and maybe Syrian regular forces fighting on behalf of Russia in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any confirmation of that from here.

Q And then, on the domestic front, Kathy Hochul, the governor of New York, proposed today making changes to the state's progressive bail reform law. And it looks like Mayor Adams, who I think we can describe as an ally of the President, would support those changes. So does this administration stand by it's -- what I would describe as a "wholesale endorsement" of bail reform?

MS. PSAKI: I would have to check on the specifics of the New York changes. I haven't looked into those. I'm happy to do that and talk to our Counsel's Office about that, and we'll get back to you.

Go ahead.

Q So the Chinese have been very public about how they're going to continue their normal economic activity with Russia. Is the President going to press President Xi on that? And is he going to ask them to sort of back off their activity like the rest of the world?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that the conversation tomorrow will be a continuation of the conversation our National Security Advisor had with his counterpart earlier this week. And certainly, China's alignment with Russia, in a range of ways, is and the potential implications and consequences of that are a central part of that conversation.

Q And then, domestically, on another subject, the Congressional Progressive Caucus Recommendations for Executive Action are out, and they're asking for a decision to declare a climate emergency and ban all U.S. exports of oil. Is that something that President is thinking about doing (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: There are a range of really good ideas out there. The President is looking at all of them. But I don't have anything to predict for you at this point in time.

Q One last quick one to start for the room: When is the President going to nominate a new Fed nominee? (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that one of the most eminently qualified people ever to be nominated only withdrew her nomination, I think, 48 hours ago, 72 hours ago; it's all running together.

He very much intends to nominate another eminently qualified person, but I don't have an update on the timeline of that. Let the financial wires games begin.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. If the U.S. plans to still engage with Russia on the Iran nuclear deal and perhaps some of these other climate initiatives, what does President Biden expect Russia to bring to the table? I know what the goal is -- that we don't want Iran to have a nuclear weapon -- but how does the President think that Putin will be helpful after the President rightfully turns him into a pariah on the global stage?

MS. PSAKI: As it relates to the Iran nuclear deal? I think that our view on this is that it's not, obviously, in our interest and it's not in Russia's interests either for Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.

And so, while these negotiations -- I mean, the people are back in their capitals at this point in time, as you know, but they're, for all intensive purposes, ongoing.

There have been roles and implementation that Russia has had in the past. But I think what we recognize is that it's not in their interest either. And we will consider -- continue pursuing the diplomatic path forward.

Q And then one more. The New York Times has authenticated emails that appear to have come from a laptop abandoned by Hunter Biden in Delaware. The President previously said that the New York Post story about this was "a bunch of garbage" and that it was "a Russian plant." Does he stand by that assessment?

MS. PSAKI: I'd point you to the Department of Justice and also to Hunter Biden's representatives. He doesn't work in the government.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. So, there are the recent peace talks going on between Ukraine, Russia, as was already mentioned. It seems that a couple of the things that are being floated -- one, some sort of withdrawal by Russia, but they still hold on to these pieces of Ukraine they already have in the east and Crimea.

So, my first question is: Would the U.S. ever back that kind of deal if it's something that Ukrainians agreed or felt they had to agree to?

MS. PSAKI: We're here to support the Ukrainians, but we're not going to negotiate about a negotiation that has not -- has not resulted in even the implementation of humanitarian corridors at this point.

Q Fair enough. But the other thing that's been floated by Zelenskyy himself is that -- he basically said the other day, "Ukrainians, get used to that we're not going to be in NATO, they're never going to want us."

But then, he said, "What we would like is some kind of other security guarantees." Is that something that you're talking about to them? And what on Earth would that look like -- "security guarantees"?

MS. PSAKI: It's a de- -- it's a decision for President Zelenskyy and Ukrainians to make if they're going to pursue membership in NATO, a decision for NATO to make if they're going to be members, including -- in terms of other security guarantees, we're in touch regularly with them but I don't have more information of what that would look like.

Q Couldn't -- the President isn't talking about some kind of long-term new mechanism where the U.S. somehow or Western countries or Europe somehow protect --

MS. PSAKI: I think that's a little premature at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q If I may, on -- back to the weapons package.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Up until now, the administration has been really very tight lipped about what was being sent to Ukraine. Yesterday, that all changed. We got a whole laundry list. Is that a change in strategy, in messaging? Is that a message for -- you talked before about the Russian troop morale, for example, or maybe a message to domestic critics of President Biden? What's changed there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we made a decision that we wanted to be very clear about what types of security assistance we're providing and how it is helping Ukrainians fight the Russian -- Russia's war against them.

And so, yes, you could say that was a change -- a decision to make that information available. And we don't typically, to your point, outline all of those specifics publicly.

So -- but we did determine -- made a determination to do that because we felt it was important for all of you and the American public to fully understand the range of military and security assistance we're providing, how it's working, and how it's helping them in this war.

Q But was Russian morale a factor in that sort of decision?

MS. PSAKI: It was not, but it was more a decision about recognizing that everybody doesn't always understand what many people in this room do when we say "security assistance" what that is and how it helps the Ukrainians fight this war.

And there is an understandable outpour of support, of compassion for the plight of the Ukrainian people. And we want to provide as much detail as we can about how we're trying to help them in this war.

Q And if I may, you were asked about Hunter Biden's laptop. You also, in October 2020, dismissed it as "Russian disinformation." Do you stand by that assessment?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'd point to the Department of Justice and Hunter Biden's representatives. I'm a spokesperson for the United States; he doesn't work for the United States.

Go ahead. Go ahead in -- okay, we'll do the last one here.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. I have two questions: one on North Korea and China. North Korea fired new missiles the day before yesterday. What is the -- President Biden's reaction on this? And how do you analyze the type of missiles?

I have a follow-up -- second question.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we condemn North Korea's missile launches. North Korea's tests risk raising tensions and are destabilizing to the Indo-Pacific. Our commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea and Japan remains ironclad.

As we have said and North Korean officials, including Kim Jong Un, have publicly noted, we continue to seek diplomacy and are prepared to meet without preconditions. But North Korea continues to not respond.

Q Thank you. When the -- President Biden talks with Xi Jinping, the President of China, tomorrow, do -- he are going to discuss with President Xi Jinping regarding on North Korea's missile provocations?

MS. PSAKI: I expect there'll be a range of topics discussed, including security in the region, but we'll have more to read out when that conversation continues -- is done.

Thanks, everyone. See you tomorrow.

3:49 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on President Biden's Call with President Xi Jinping of China
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 18, 2022 5:08 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2022

**Background Press Call by a Senior Administration Official on President Biden's Call
with President Xi Jinping of China**

Via Teleconference

2:53 P.M. EDT

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thank you. Thanks, everyone, for joining. just -- at the top, want to say, you know, incredibly sorry for the delay today. We really try for this not to ever happen. And just some scheduling and logistical challenges today put us a little bit back. So, again, true apologies, and we know how important your time is.

So, that being said, you know, welcome to the call. This call is on background. It is attributable to a "senior administration official." And this call is embargoed until the end of the call.

For your awareness and not for reporting, the speaker on this call is [senior administration official]. And with that, 'll turn it over to you to give some remarks, and then we'll take some questions. Thanks, again, everyone.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks, [senior administration official]. And 'll just reiterate: Everybody, thanks for your patience today. And 'll, with that, just get right to it.

You all have hopefully now seen the readout that has gone out. So, just building on that with a little bit more detail for all of you, you know, the call between President Biden and President Xi this morning lasted approximately two hours. Of course, it was conducted by a secure video link.

would say the conversation was direct. It was substantive and it was detailed. The two leaders spent the preponderance of their time discussing Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, as well as the implications of the crisis for U.S.-China relations and the international order.

President Biden shared with President Xi a detailed review of how things have developed to this point, his assessment of the situation today, and President Biden underscored his support for a diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

The President described our assessment of Putin's actions and his miscalculations. He also described the unity of the United States and its Allies and partners, the unprecedented coordination with our European, NATO, and Indo-Pacific partners, and the overwhelming global unity and condemnation of Russia -- Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as the support for Ukraine.

President Biden made clear the implication and consequences of China providing material support -- if China were to provide material support -- to Russia as it prosecutes its brutal war in Ukraine, not just for China's relationship with the United States but for the wider world.

And he stressed concerns, as you've heard us speak about more broadly, that Russia is spreading disinformation about biological weapons in Ukraine as a pretext for a false-flag operation and underscored concerns about echoing such disinformation.

President Xi raised Taiwan. President Biden reiterated that the United States remains committed to our one-China policy and is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. And he underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

The two leaders also discussed the importance of managing competition between the two countries -- between the United States and China -- of addressing areas of strategic risk and maintaining open lines of communication. And to that end, they tasked their teams to follow up on the leaders' discussion in the days and weeks ahead.

Of course, today's conversation followed up on National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's meeting with his counterpart in Rome earlier this week in which the two agreed that the two presidents would speak -- again, as both sides believe that there is no substitute for leader-to-leader engagement.

And, as you all know, this call comes amid the intensive engagement we've had with allies and partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific in recent weeks.

And with that, I will be happy to take your questions.

Q Hi, [senior administration official]. Thanks for doing this. First, I wanted to ask if President Biden warned Xi Jinping specifically about sanctions, or did he refer

to more vague consequences should China provide any support for Russia in the war? And regardless, what was Xi's response to that?

Yeah, appreciate that.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Of course. Well, thanks, Michael. So, you know, as mentioned, the President described the implications, you know, if China provides material support to Russia as it prosecutes this brutal war, but 'm not going to talk -- 'm not going to, sort of, publicly lay out our options from here.

We're going to continue to talk directly with China, as well as to our Allies and partners, about the broader situation. And will let the PRC characterize what Xi Jinping's comments were.

Q Thank you. Do you have an assessment of whether or not China has made a decision to go down this road with Russia?

And then, second: More broadly, was there any talk of, sort of, the commercial ramifications that have happened for Russia as a result of this war, with big Western companies leaving and the prospect that that could happen to China if they were to get involved in assisting?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks, Aamer. On your first question, 'm not going to comment on specifics at this time.

On the question about the actions -- the economic responses to Russia and the private sector: Yeah, would say, you know, the President, you know, really laid out in a lot of detail the unified response from not only, you know, governments around the world but also the private sector, to Russia's brutal aggression in Ukraine.

And, you know, the President made clear that, you know, there would be -- that there would likely be consequences for those who are -- who would -- who would step in to support Russia at this time.

Q Thank you. Can you tell me if the President expressly asked Xi -- Xi Jinping -- to intercede with Moscow, with Putin, to stop the war and specifically to withdraw from (inaudible)?

And did Xi offer in any way to use his influence with Putin to end the aggression?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks, Ellen. Yeah, look, you know, the call wasn't really -- and mean, the President really wasn't making specific requests of China. He was laying out his assessment of the situation, what he thinks makes sense, and the implications of certain actions.

You know, think our view is that China will make its own decisions, and so 'd describe that as sort of the nature of the call. And again, on any response from President Xi, you know, you'd have to talk to Beijing.

Q Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for doing the call. Can you tell us if President Xi made any guarantees to President Biden that he would not help Russia?

And did the President come away from the call with a sense that President Xi is ready to condemn the invasion? Because China's still hasn't done that publicly. Did President Xi condemn the invasion in this call, or did President Biden come away with this with a sense that he will do so? Thank you.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Yeah, look, on your first question, you know, China will make its own decisions. And think you probably have seen the readout that they have put out; would refer you to that as their characterization of President Xi's words.

You know, as said, think the President was -- President Biden was candid and direct in discussing his assessment of the situation and, you know, what he believes would be necessary, in order to find a diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

But, you know, think, in terms of what President Xi said, again, 'm going to leave it to the Chinese side to characterize their words.

MODERATOR: Can we do our next question, please?

Q Thanks so much. And thanks for doing this. Two questions for you. Did President Biden get the sense that President Xi was caught off guard by the nature of the Russian invasion and how it's gone? And during this two-hour call, did Xi ever refer to it as an invasion?

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Sorry, was taking down notes to make sure remember your questions.

You know, look, on the first question: You know, think, you know, the National Security Advisor has -- has spoken publicly about our assessment of Beijing's reaction to the invasion. And so, will just point you to his comments. don't have them exactly in front of me, but think he's been on the record about this.

You know, and in terms of how Xi referred to -- you know, referred to the situation, again, would just point you to their own words as they have characterized them.

Q Hi, [senior administration official]. Thanks for doing the call. Can you just share a little bit of color on whether the President felt more or less optimistic about where China st- -- where President Xi stands on the issue of Ukraine after this call?

And just a follow-up: The Chinese readout suggests that President Xi complained to President Biden about people in the U.S. sending wrong signals to Taiwan's independence forces. Can you detail President Biden's response to this? Thanks.

SEN OR ADM N STRAT ON OFF C A : Thanks so much, Patsy. ook, -- you know, think, as we felt with the conversation in Rome with Director Yang earlier this week and the conversation with, you know, President Xi here today, this was really about President Biden being able to lay out very clearly in substantial detail, with a lot of facts, and a lot of just -- you know, really walking President Xi through the situation, making very, very clear our views, the views of others, what we have laid out in the

previous months and the actions we're taking now.

And think it was the -- think, from our perspective, we will -- we will see what decisions China makes in the days and weeks ahead.

And so, think it was sort of less about coming away with a particular view out of the conversation today and more about making sure, again, that they were able to really have that direct, candid and detailed and very substantive conversation at the leader level. And we know there really is no replacement for that.

So, that's how would think about the conversation today.

In terms of the question about Taiwan, President Biden was very clear that our policy has not changed, that -- you know, he reiterated our one-China policy based on the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Communiqués, the Six Assurances.

And he underscored, as well, concerns about Beijing's coercive and provocative actions across the Taiwan Strait. President Biden made clear that we remain opposed to any unilateral changes to the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.

And, you know, would just remind, obviously, that President Biden himself voted for the Taiwan Relations Act, and he's firmly committed to the principles in it, and that the Biden administration has consistently demonstrated rock-solid support for Taiwan and will continue to do so.

But, again, you know, President Biden's response was really about just reaffirming our continued, consistent policy -- very longstanding policy -- while underscoring concerns about Beijing's coercive and provocative actions across the Strait.

MODERATOR: Great. Thanks, [senior administration official]. And thanks, everyone, for joining.

You know, again, very sorry for the delay. You know, know we'll have a press briefing shortly, so hopefully more questions can be taken there. And then if there's still more that you all need, we're here to provide any sort of help that you might -- you might need.

So, just as a reminder, this call was on background, attributable to a "senior administration official." And the embargo on the contents of the call have now lifted.

So, thanks again, everyone. Have a good day.

3:07 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 18, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 18, 2022 10:10 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, March 18, 2022

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:25 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. There's a lot of pink in this room today. (Laughter.) Zeke -- Zeke and Mary are going to the prom together. (Laughter.) Well, you know.

Okay, just one item for all of you at the top.

On Monday, the President will join the Business Roundtable CEO Quarterly Meeting at their headquarters in Washington, D.C., to discuss the United States' response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war with Ukraine and the President's plans to lower costs for working families, create good-paying union jobs, and tackle the climate crisis.

On Wednesday, as you all know, he will travel to Brussels, Belgium, where he will have a packed Thursday. He will -- he's traveling that day; there's not a schedule that day. But eat your Wheaties, eat your spinach. It's going to be a long Thursday -- because on Thursday, to start the day, the President will attend an extraordinary NATO summit to discuss ongoing deterrence and defense efforts in response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine.

He will also reaffirm our ironclad commitment to our NATO Allies and to defend every inch of our NATO territory -- of NATO territory.

Then he will join a scheduled European Council summit to discuss our shared concerns about Ukraine, including transatlantic efforts to impose economic sanctions on Russia, provide humanitarian support to those affected by the

violence, and address other challenges related to the conflict.

Later in the day, he will attend the G7 meeting called by Germany to further discuss with our Allies and partners the consequences we are imposing on Russia for its war of choice.

We'll have more announcements, I'm certain, on the trip in the days ahead. I don't have additional details. We've also, of course, invited our National Security Advisor, who always enjoys engaging with all of you, to join us to preview the trip early next week. So we're just figuring out the date and the time depending on when the charter leaves.

With that, Zeke why don't you kick us off?

Q No updates on the Friday schedule?

MS. PSAKI: Don't have any updates at this point in time.

Q On to the President's call this morning with President Xi -- does the White House now have a sense of whether or not China has decided whether to assist Russia and backfill its supplies and fulfill its request for materiel in support of its invasion of Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to give an assessment of that from here. What I can tell you is that the majority of this call, as I think you heard -- you saw in the readout, and you heard, I think, on the call we just did, but was focused on Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

The President spent -- the vast majority of the nearly two hours was spent with the President outlining the views of the United States and our Allies and partners on this crisis, including a detailed overview of efforts to prevent and then respond to the invasion, how we got here, steps we've taken, where we've gone, and why.

And, of course, as was also noted in the readout but let me just reiterate, he also conveyed and described the implications and consequences if China provides material support to Russia. But again, I'm not going to provide any additional assessment from here.

Q The President has cast the efforts to sort of build up the Western alliance as sort of, like, democracies versus autocracies.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q One very large -- the largest democracy in the world is, in fact, buying Russian oil right now at a discount -- expanding its purchases, taking advantage of the situation. Does the White House have any response to India's purchases there? And does the President plan to reach out to the Indian government to try to get that decision reversed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have not -- while we made a decision about banning the Russian import of oil, every country has not made that decision, and we recognize that. And they have different economic reasoning as to why different countries do, including some in Europe.

We have been in touch, of course, with Indian leaders at a range of levels, not through the President. If that happens, we will, of course, provide that readout and information to all of you.

But what we would project or convey to any leader around the world is that the world -- the rest of the world is watching where you're going to stand as it relates to this conflict, whether its support for Russia in any form as they are illegally invading Ukraine.

Q And on a different topic. On COVID, (inaudible) we saw this week Pfizer request a EUA for a fourth shot or a second

booster dose for seniors. And Moderna, last night, boosters for all adults -- another round of boosters. Does the federal government have the money right now to purchase the doses needed to give everyone the boosters should be FDA and the CDC clear that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, just to reiterate some of the pieces of where the process is: So, the CDC does recommend fourth doses for the immunocompromised -- although it hasn't been, of course, as you noted, approved for others -- and they're running a vigorous data-driven process. And right now, over 100 million Americans have been boosted; millions more have not done so and are eligible to do so and need to get boosted.

But to go to your question, we've been clear we need additional funding from Congress. You've heard me talk about that a fair amount in here, including for the possibility of a fourth dose or a variant-specific vaccine. So we would indeed need additional funding to ensure that can be widely available.

Go ahead.

Q During the readout of this call, a senior official said that the President was really sort of laying out his assessment of the situation to President Xi, that he was making clear the implications of certain actions but that President Biden wasn't making specific requests of China. Why not, given the stakes here?

MS. PSAKI: Because China has to make a decision for themselves about where they want to stand and how they want the history books to look at them and view their actions. And that is a decision for President Xi and the Chinese to make.

Q Given the growing concerns about China possibly aligning with Russia, would you say it's more concerning at this point that they would help Russia resupply, help Russia with military equipment, or that they would offer economic support to help Russia evade sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Any of those would be concerning to us, but I'm not going to give a rank-order assessment of which we're more concerned about.

Q And you don't have a sense that China may be leaning more in one direction or another?

MS. PSAKI: Not an assessment I can provide from here.

Q And can I ask sort of a logistical question?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You know, the Chinese got out a readout of the call fairly quickly.

MS. PSAKI: Before it was even done. (Laughter.)

Q It was, I think, three and a half, maybe four hours before --

MS. PSAKI: Remarkable.

Q -- before your readout was out. Should we read anything into the time that it took to get your side of the story out?

MS. PSAKI: So, it was a lengthy call, as you all know. A two-hour call is, of course, a lengthy call, even with translation. And what typically happens -- and this time, it was a little longer than typical -- but is -- there's a -- you know, a meeting to discuss what happened during the meeting and assess what kind of information we can provide publicly.

Obviously, we want to do as much as that as possible to all of you, but we also want to ensure we're protecting the

diplomatic channels and conversation. So it was an effort to do exactly that.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, I just wanted to ask -- so, you know, we've spoken to U.S. and European diplomats who say that there's still not exactly an agreement on what the red line would be; that -- you know, what -- when China would face consequences.

Can you say a little bit more about those discussions and whether there is agreement with G7 allies and others who have joined in about what the trigger is and what sort of consequences they would face?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Andrea, I would say, you know, the movement of China to align with Russia or to -- yeah, the movement of them to align with Russia or their proximity of moving closer together is certainly of great concern to us, as we've expressed. And we are not the only country that has expressed that concern, including many other members of the G7 have expressed exactly that concern.

So this is part of the discussion; it has been an ongoing part of the discussion. Expect it certainly would be when the President goes to Europe next week. But we're not in a place at this point to outline the specifics. We're still discussing.

Q And then, just to follow up on that: Initially, I think going into the call, we were expecting that there would be discussion about Iran and North Korea as well. Did the two leaders get around to those issues? And are they any closer in terms of alignment on those issues?

And then, just to your first point -- or your response: One of the issues that has separated the U.S. and China over -- in recent years has been disputes over trade and lots of tariffs. And would you anticipate that China would face a larger trade war if -- or additional sanctions and tariffs if it does proceed to align closer -- more closely?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a range of tools that could be considered, and sanctions are certainly one tool in the toolbox, as they are for other countries as well, even if we -- as we have not outlined specific consequences. And we'll communicate those directly to China and, of course, with our European partners and counterparts.

The call was focused, as the readout conveyed -- the vast majority of it was on Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. But also, the issue of Taiwan was raised by the Chinese, and the President reiterated the U.S. policy on Taiwan has not changed. That was really the vast majority of the focus of the call.

Obviously, there are a range of issues and topics we discussed with the Chinese. And as a part of this call, there was an agreement on ensuring there was an open line of communication and that the discussion would continue in this critical period ahead, of course at lower levels.

Go ahead.

Q During this two-hour call, did President Xi ever refer to it as an "invasion"?

MS. PSAKI: We'll let President Xi and his team outline any more specifics about his component of the conversation.

Q Why not reveal if he called it an invasion or called it a war, given he's not (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Because we don't, as a policy, speak for other countries. They can speak for themselves.

Q Yesterday, Secretary Blinken said the administration was concerned that China is considering answering Russia's requests for more military equipment. After this two-hour call, does the White House still have that concern?

MS. PSAKI: We have that concern. The President detailed, you know, what the implications and consequences would be if

China provides material support to Russia as it conducts brutal attacks against Ukrainian cities and civilians. And obviously, that is something we will be watching and the world will be watching.

Q So, that concern hasn't gone away following the call?

MS. PSAKI: Obviously, actions are a key part of what we'll be watching.

Q And Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov says that Russia will view any weapons shipments into Ukraine as, quote, "legitimate targets." Obviously, President Biden just authorized \$800 million in more security assistance -- aka weapons, potentially -- going into Ukraine. So, what is the President's response to that comment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's a threat that he has made before, I would just note -- Foreign Minister Lavrov. I would note that -- just in terms of how it works, without getting into too many logistics -- of course, there are no U.S. troops operating inside Ukraine. Our forces are in NATO territory, and so are NATO forces in NATO territory.

So, as we're talking about the operations of the movement of convoys and the movement of assistance, that -- those are not the bodies that would be moving those assistance within Ukraine.

So, beyond that, though, I would say, of course, we -- we watch closely what the actions are -- the continued escalatory actions of -- of the Russians. And -- and we will watch closely if they follow up on that threat.

I would remind you all that all of the convoys are not just moving military assistance; many of them are moving humanitarian assistance as well -- food, you know, and other aid that is getting to people who have been injured through this brutal invasion.

Q I guess the question is: How concerned are you about being able to get all \$800 million of that assistance that's obviously so critically needed into Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we continue to have the means of getting that assistance in. And we have effectively been doing that in recent days, so we will continue to work through those channels.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Did President Biden directly ask President Xi if he intends to help Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he made clear what the implications and the consequences would be if China provides material support to Russia as it conducts brutal attacks against Ukrainian cities and civilians. And that made clear what the consequences would be should they do that.

Q But did he ask, "Do you intend to help Russia -- yes or no?"

MS. PSAKI: I think making clear what the consequences are made clear we don't want them to do it.

Q So can you offer any explanation for why the U.S. still has concerns after this call?

MS. PSAKI: Because we'll -- we'll continue to watch until we see what actions they take or don't take.

Q Okay. And following up on Andrea's question, does the administration view any distinction between financial support and military support for Russia? Or will the consequences -- will there be consequences regardless of what kind of aid?

MS. PSAKI: We would watch closely, and there -- we would be prepared for there to be consequences, but we would look closely on what it is and we would align with our partners around the world.

Q And is it going to be escalatory consequences, like we've seen with Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to get into a hypothetical at this point in time. We'll have those discussions directly with the Chinese and directly with our European partners.

Q And one more. Short of getting any guarantees from China that they are not going to help Russia, and short of China condemning Russia for its actions, what is it about the call that President Biden thinks "went well," as he said to one of my colleagues?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it was an opportunity for the President to convey directly what our detailed efforts have been, what we have seen on the ground, how we have responded to the invasion, why we have the significant level of concern that we have, and also to convey very directly, leader to leader, what the implications and consequences would be if Russia provides material support.

And that leader-to-leader engagement and opportunity for there to be a continuing discussion, certainly the President sees as a positive -- as a positive development.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. A couple of days ago, you described Javelins and Stingers as "defensive weapons" and MiGs and planes as "offensive weapons." So how do we classify the armed drones that we're sending?

MS. PSAKI: Any -- I would remind everybody that Russia is invading Ukraine, not the other way around. Ukraine is not invading Russia; they are not going into a foreign country and invading that country.

And what we're sending to Ukraine is security assistance, all of it, and weapons that they are effectively using to defend their country against Russian aggression. And that is how all of this material would be categorized.

Q In that sense, then, wouldn't MiGs also be defensive since Ukraine is defending itself from attacks from Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, this is all assessments made by our Defense Department, but I would tell you that as it relates to the transfer of fighter planes from a U.S. base in Germany into contested Ukrainian airspace where our military and intelligence community determine the benefits provided to Ukraine's defense are low and the risks of escalation are high, that is how we assess that.

But also, those type of planes would be a different category of military assistance.

Q It seems like we're splitting hairs over semantics in terms of how we're classifying some of these weapon systems. And obviously, the President has gotten some criticism from both sides of the aisle for, even when he takes action, sometimes doing it after there's been a lot of political pressure -- for instance, on imposing the sanctions, on sending the Stingers and the Javelins, on banning Russian oil.

So if there's any chance that the U.S. is going to facilitate the transfer of MiGs in some way, why not just do it now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we've outlined pretty clearly why we've made the decision not to do that, including the fact that they have multiple squadrons of planes that they can utilize and the fact that, most importantly, the types of assistance that we've been providing -- anti-armor, anti-tank, anti-missiles -- is what is effective in fighting this war on the ground. That is why we've provided that assistance.

None of the weapons we've sent to Ukraine could be used to launch an invasion of another -- of a country like Russia. That's a fact. That's why we call them defensive weapons. That's why the Defense Department calls them defensive weapons.

And I would remind everybody that they are the country that are under attack.

Q I want to move on to the Iran talks. This week, the President said that "we are crippling Putin's economy with punishing sanctions [that are] only going to grow more painful over time..." But the State Department said that the administration would not sanction Russian participation in nuclear projects that are part of the JCPOA.

So how does the administration justify calling for such strong sanctions on Russia but giving them a pass when it comes to Iran? Isn't that hypocritical in some sense?

MS. PSAKI: There's absolutely no pass given. They're not getting additional assistance or sanctions relief of any sort. They have an implementation role -- they've had an implementation role in the past as it relates to the Iran nuclear deal, and that is certainly what we would be talking about in this regard.

But for clarity purposes, there's absolutely no -- no additional sanctions assistance that Russia would be receiving that is outside of the Iran nuclear deal.

Q So -- but just carving out what's already there and giving it protection that it -- that it will not be sanctioned?

MS. PSAKI: Well, to explain to you or for those of you who have covered: Back in 2015 -- you may remember this -- that there was -- there have been roles in the past that Russia has played in terms of the movement or the protection -- the nuclear protections, in some capacity, of -- as we're implementing the Iran deal.

And that's what we're really referring to. That's part of the discussion and the deal.

Q This is a new deal that we're doing.

MS. PSAKI: It's the similar implementation components. It's implementation and discussion around a similar deal that was discussed back in 2015.

Q And then, the Director of National Intelligence Annual Threat Assessment last month said that Iran has threatened to kill former and current U.S. officials in retaliation for the U.S. killing the IRGC's leader, Qasem Soleimani. So, do those threats constitute terrorism?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would just remind you all that where we are -- one, I'm not going to confirm or get into specifics about any threats through intelligence channels.

But what -- where we are right now --

Q It's a public report, though.

MS. PSAKI: Well, where we are right now is that not only has Iran's nuclear program advanced, but their behavior in the region and beyond has gotten more aggressive, including by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

So, the notion that the actions of the past administration pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal has -- has cut down on the actions or the escalatory behavior of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is inaccurate.

They've actually -- the Iranian government has actually doubled their budget or something like that.

So, the notion that the approach -- that the status quo is effective and making us safer just doesn't bear out in any form of facts.

Q So, they should not, then -- the IRGC -- be delisted from the terrorist blacklist?

MS. PSAKI: There's an ongoing negotiation. I'm not going to get into specifics of it. But I would just note that the status quo where we stand has done nothing to make us safer in any regard. In fact, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard has only been strengthened.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, I want to follow up with you on the call. You have, from the podium and in the readout -- it says the President described the implications and consequences if China provides material support to Russia.

So, to be clear, did President Biden warn President Xi not to send any support to Russia?

MS. PSAKI: I think he made clear what the implications and consequences would be if he did. That is laying out what the consequences would be. President Xi has to decide what he's going to do here.

Q And not to split hairs, but is it fair to characterize that as a "warning"?

MS. PSAKI: I would characterize it exactly as I said it.

Q And did President Biden and President Xi discuss the possibility of lifting sanctions and/or tariffs as a way to get China (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: This was not about carrots. This was about laying out what the implications and consequences would be.

Q Did the President step away from the phone call and have a sense that he can work with China as it relates to Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think he came away feeling that he had conveyed clearly what the implications and consequences would be, and also that he had the opportunity to lay out specifically what steps we've taken, why, and what we're seeing on the ground.

And he also said that we would continue conversations at -- task the teams to continue conversations. So that indicates that we will continue to engage with them.

Q I want to follow up with you on something we've been discussing throughout the week: the issue of refugees. Newsweek has reported that the U.S. is actually detaining Ukrainian refugees in the ICE detention centers -- those who are seeking entry into the country -- which seems like a contradiction of President Biden saying that he would welcome them here. Can you tell us why this is happening and what's being done?

MS. PSAKI: I can't confirm any specific cases. I'd point you to the Department of Homeland Security.

But what I would say is that we are still implementing our immigration laws at the border. That means that Title 42 is in place. And for individuals who come through, you know, abnormal migration, we approach that through the same laws and implementation. When the President says he would welcome refugees, of course he would, but they have to apply through the refugee programs.

Q Understood. But do you acknowledge, Jen, that detaining them is a contradiction to President Biden saying he would welcome them with open arms?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, Kristen, we implement and we -- our immigration laws across the board, no matter what country

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, Kristen, we implement and we -- our immigration laws across the board, no matter what country you come from. And that has been our case and approach from the beginning.

Welcoming refugees means applying through the refugee process. And again, as I've said in here, we're looking at a range of options, including providing a broad range of humanitarian assistance to the countries where the vast majority of refugees are going.

Q Is it a priority for President Biden to address this situation so that refugees are not being detained at ICE detention centers?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we are continuing to apply our immigration laws at the border. And so, refugees who want to come to the United States -- of course we would welcome Ukrainian refugees. That is why -- but they have to apply through the existing programs.

There's an ongoing discussion about what programs or what steps we could take. And we certainly -- that's an important conversation and process internally.

Where we have put all of our efforts to date -- the vast majority of them to date has been on providing a historic amount of funding to countries in the region, including a huge amount -- billions of dollars -- that has been approved through the omnibus bill the President just signed into law to make sure that the countries that are welcoming the vast majority of these refugees have assistance and support and aid that they need.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Jen, you mentioned Taiwan. Will the U.S. deliver Javelins and Stingers on time this year to Taiwan? Can you answer that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update for you on military assistance to Taiwan. I would point you to the Department of Defense.

Q And a separate question, real quick. The White House -- is it aware of ongoing destruction and vandalism of Catholic churches across the United States, statues as well? Is the President aware of that destruction taking place right now across the U.S.?

The most recent example is in Florida, at the Holy Family Catholic Church; in Royal Oak, Michigan, St. Mary Catholic Church; in Georgia, Sacred Heart Catholic Church. All vandalized, destroyed. (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: We can assure you that the President, the White House, and the United States would oppose any destruction or desecration of religious institutions of any kind. And certainly, Catholic churches -- the President himself is a Catholic, of course.

Q And finally, does the President believe that perhaps Pope Francis could play a role in mediating an end to this Ukraine crisis -- the war?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have anything on Pope Francis's role. Obviously, we're focusing our efforts at this point in time in engaging with our European allies and counterparts around the world.

Go ahead, Ashley.

Q Jen, thanks. If President Biden does not make a second stop on his trip abroad next week, as has been rumored, to Poland or to some other place, what would be the reason? Would it be security concerns? Would it not be wanting to visit refugees at the border to draw resources away from that crisis?

MS. PSAKI: I expect we'll have more on the trip soon, so I don't want to get too ahead of where we may or may not be.

But we factor in a range of factors whenever we make any travel plans, including pulling resources away, as you noted; including security concerns; including, you know, ensuring that we can implement it effectively.

But we pulled this trip together pretty quickly, so we're working as quickly as we can to get any other details finalized.

Q And one more on a different topic. Following up on what my colleague asked yesterday, President Zelenskyy mentioned in his address this idea of a "U24. United for Peace."

What -- it's a little unclear, to me at least, what exactly that would look like. I mean, what is the White House's understanding of what he's asking for? Is that an alternative to NATO? What role would it fill? Can you try to fill in some of those gaps?

MS. PSAKI: We just don't have any other assessment or explanation from here. I mean, I'd certainly point you to the Ukrainians to discuss in more detail. We talk with them regularly.

Q But have they not conveyed any of that to you?

MS. PSAKI: I don't -- I would let them speak for their own proposals.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, did -- when the President spoke to President Xi, did he set out any particular benchmarks by which he would measure their compliance, either financially, on the arms issue? Any timeframes out there?

In other words, did he lay -- did he come to some kind of understanding or declaration to President Xi about how he would be measuring success?

MS. PSAKI: Success in terms of whether or not he provides material support?

Q That's right.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more to outline on that for you. I would just say that the call was not about making asks. It wasn't about making assessments. It was about having an ongoing discussion and dialogue about the illegal invasion -- the invasion of -- of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

Q And was there any discussion of the agreement that President Xi reached with President Putin, just at the opening of the Olympics?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have more details on the call to read out beyond what we've conveyed to date.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, what can you say about the severity of the implications and consequences for Russia -- for China if they do, indeed, in the estimation of the U.S., provide material support to Russia? I mean, are these to the level where it should really make China think twice before assisting Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's up to President Xi and the Chinese to make that decision.

But the President, again, laid out very clearly and directly in the call what the implications and consequences would be if they provided material support

they provided material support.

Q Why is the White House choosing not to elaborate and disclose more about what the consequences could be here?

MS. PSAKI: Because we feel that it would be most constructive to have those conversations directly with the Chinese.

Go ahead.

Q Hi. A senior administration official just told us that the Pres- -- that President Biden didn't make any specific requests to Xi and that China will make its own decisions. But we're hearing that --

MS. PSAKI: I think I just said that too.

Q (Laughs.)

MS. PSAKI: There you go.

Q But we're nearing a pretty critical point in the war where, according to your own assessment, Russia seems poised to potentially deploy bio or chemical weapons. How much time is there for China to really weigh in here with Putin? And why not press for that while on the call?

MS. PSAKI: I think that the primary focus of this call was for the President to lay out specifically the consequences and specifically where we've come to date. His assessment was that was the most constructive way to spend the call and that it's going to be up to President Xi and the Chinese to determine what role they're going to play moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q Implications and consequences.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q I'm asking about this again because --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q -- in the leadup to Russia's invasion, the White House was really extremely transparent, laying out in call after call and briefing after briefing a lot of the specifics that we then saw implemented.

Why, in this case, is it just saying "implications and consequences" and not giving those same specifics?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Because we feel it's the most constructive way to engage and have a constructive dialogue.

Q But just to -- just to clarify: The specifics were given out in detail on this call, it sounds like what you're saying?

MS. PSAKI: Correct. Every -- every -- well, again, I'm not going to give you more details about the level of detail, but it was a detailed engagement. I'm not going to outline that more from here.

But it was -- he was -- again, he was specific about what he described on the call.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, Jen. I hope I'm not beating a dead horse here.

MS. PSAKI: It s okay.

Q Yeah, okay. It s Friday.

So, you said recently the point of this call would be to see where Xi stands.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q You re obviously reluctant to tell us where Xi stands, based on that call. And you point to the Chinese, but their readout, if you ve read it, is -- yeah -- doesn t tell you much either.

So, can you at least say, after a two-hour call: Is the White House confident and knows where Xi stands and you just don t want to tell us? Or are you not telling us because you don t really understand where he stands?

MS. PSAKI: I think what I can tell you is that they tasked the teams with having continued discussions, but I m not going to provide you any additional assessment from here.

Go ahead, in the middle.

Q How does President Biden define the current Chinese and U.S. relationship right now? Have you scheduled more communications, meetings, calls?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, they tasked the teams to follow up on today s conversation and on -- in this critical period ahead. I don t have anything in terms of when that will take place, but that was part of it.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, following the recent Texas primary election, the AP is reporting that roughly 13 percent of ballots were discarded following, you know, new state-wide election laws. One, is the White House concerned about these new numbers? And has the White House put in any new plan to try and get some sort of federal voting rights legislation or executive order enact -- put into implementation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly we will continue to stay -- we remain committed -- the President and the Vice President remain committed to doing everything we can to get voting rights legislation passed and move forward. And these reports are certainly a reminder of how important that is.

In terms of the specifics of it, I d really point you to the Democratic Party Committee on the political side of this, and I will see if our team has any other specific reaction from here.

Q I have one other question.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q We know next week the Supreme Court nominee Jus- -- or Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson will be going forward with hearings. There are some new accusations from Capitol Hill, some Republicans still saying that she s soft on crime.

Senator Josh Hawley, for instance, saying that she is soft, particularly, on sex offenders. What is the White House s response to these new accusations? And are you at all concerned that it might taint public view as we go into hearings next week.

MS. PSAKI: I think, as we broadly look at it, I mean, after weeks of trying hard to find some way to attack Judge Jackson - - first saying that she was an affirmative action pick, then saying she was the product of dark money, then saying she

should be -- she should be suspect because she was a public defender -- a group of far-right Republican senators, as you noted, have launched a last-ditch, eve-of-hearing desperation attack on her record on sentencing in sexual offense cases.

What is important here, I think, are the facts. And the facts are that in the vast majority of cases involving child sex crimes broadly, the sentences Judge Jackson imposed were consistent with or above what the government or U.S. probation recommended.

And so this attack that we've seen over the last couple of days relies on factual inaccuracies and taking Judge Jackson's record wildly out of context. It dishonestly took a snippet of a transcript out of context, when in fact, Judge Jackson was repeating something a witness said in order to ask a question about their testimony. It also admits that -- omits that the Sentencing Commission Report mentioned was unanimously approved by the Commission and is by law -- which is, by law, bipartisan with equal representation.

So we're going to continue from here to reiterate what the actual facts are, and we hope that those who are taking this process seriously -- or state that they are taking this process seriously -- will also look to the facts and not disingenuous attacks.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions about COVID. You talked earlier, to Zeke's question, about the additional funding being needed to ensure that the fourth-dose boosters would be widely available.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Secretary Becerra said today that, hopefully, soon the government will be telling parents of kids under five that they can get their kids vaccinated. And he said that will also put strain on the system. Is there any chance that the vaccine doses for the kids under five wouldn't be available if this COVID money doesn't come through?

MS. PSAKI: It's not about available; I think it's about making them free. So -- because, obviously, these companies are going to produce doses. If it's -- if and when, at some point -- as a -- as a mother of a child under five, God willing, soon -- making them available.

But what we want to be able to do is continue to make them free. So that is where our focus and our concern is. And obviously, beyond that, for people who are uninsured, for people who don't have the resources to cover the cost of a fourth dose or a vaccine for their kid or otherwise, this is pretty important that we move this funding forward so that we can continue to provide these type of programs across the country.

Q But if there isn't additional funding, would this be the first age group that would not get free shots potentially? Like are you counting on that money to make sure that those doses are free?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check with our COVID team on it. Obviously, they look -- since it hasn't been approved yet, what we've been able to do is outline for you what programs would have to be ended or halted and the timeline of them. But I can check with them and see if there's any specific planning for this.

But obviously, if we don't have funding, it's hard to make vaccines for anyone free.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. There was a report earlier today that Iran secretly set up banking and finance system to get around the U.S.-led sanctions. I'm wondering if the U.S. has a response to that, and if you think it might complicate the negotiations?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to check with our team on that. I don't have confirmation of the accuracy of that, so let me check with our team and see if we have concerns and what our response would be.

Q And then, earlier this week, you were asked whether Jake Sullivan, in his conversation with his Russian counterpart, brought up the hostages at Chernobyl. You said you'd check. I'm just wondering if you had any updated info on that?

MS. PSAKI: I did mean to get back to you on that. I apologize. So, let me venture to do that this afternoon.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Two questions. First, on the call, there's been, in recent days, concerns voiced by U.S. officials about China amplifying Russian disinformation about the situation there. Did that come up on the call? What was said?

MS. PSAKI: I just don't have more details. We've obviously been very vocal about our concern on that front, but I don't have more details about whether that was part of the discussion.

Q And secondly, an update on -- earlier this week, the Second Gentleman tested positive for COVID. Can you give us an update on the Vice President? Has she tested again since?

MS. PSAKI: She did, and she tested negative again today.

Q Today. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Patsy.

Q Thanks, Jen. You mentioned that on the call the President focused on Ukraine, the Chinese side raised the issue of Taiwan. Obviously, you're not giving us any specifics on sanctions, export controls, and such, but was there a discussion about broader trade relations between the U.S. and China?

And then I'll have a follow-up question specific about American investments in Chinese tech firms after that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, the vast -- the vast, vast majority of the call was about those two topics. So, beyond that, I don't have more to read out for you, but that was really the focus of the call.

Q Okay. And so, a couple of administration officials have been advocating that the President issues an executive order that ban -- that would ban American investments in Chinese tech firms. What is the status of that? What is causing the delay? Does it have anything to do with the TikTok-Oracle deal? Is there an anticipated timeline?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update or preview of what that looks like at this point in time.

Q Okay. Can I ask one more thing on the -- on the global pandemic response?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q With the House of Representatives slashing the \$5 billion that you've asked from the omnibus bill, do you have a plan B in trying to meet the goal of delivering what the rest of the 700 million, now, out of the 1.2 billion doses that you have pledged?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can certainly check on how many of those have already been purchased, which I think would be a helpful piece of information.

But there is not a secret fund that we have not told you about to continue to provide the type of free programs we have in the United States, or to provide the level of international assistance that we would like to continue to provide.

But let me check and see, of those doses we've committed, if there is a set number that have already been purchased.

Q But, so, basically, if there is no more money, then there will be no more doses other than the ones that's already been purchased because there might not even be any money for the delivery of those doses that have already been purchased, right?

MS. PSAKI: We need -- we need additional funding to continue to be the arsenal of vaccines in the world.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to go back to the Supreme Court nomination hearings for next week.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Can you talk -- in the President's schedule, you didn't mention that. And obviously, he's not testifying in the nomination hearing.

MS. PSAKI: No. Not that we're tracking. (Laughter.) But, yes.

Q Can you talk about how this White House is preparing, how Judge Jackson is preparing for next week; how the President will be involved -- given he's got a lot going on next week as well?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that Judge Jackson, as you know, has a whole team of people internally and externally who has been helping her through the preparation process.

And she -- which won't surprise anyone -- started studying and practicing and preparing as soon as she was nominated to serve on the Supreme Court, and that process has obviously picked up over the last couple of days. And so our team will be closely watching and monitoring the hearings next week.

I'm sure we'll be responding to the inevitable doses of misinformation that travel out as well.

Q I also wanted to ask about COVID testing. The administration announced that families could order a second round of rapid tests a few weeks -- a few weeks ago? -- I don't know when it was, but recently.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, in the State of the Union.

Q Yes, thank you. Could you provide an update on how many tests you've shipped at this point and whether there's been interest in that second round?

MS. PSAKI: I can certainly check and see if we have an updated number. I know there has been interest, but we'll see if there is an updated number to provide.

Brian, go ahead.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. I wanted to ask about the rapport between Xi and President Biden. The two men have shared a meal together. They've known each other for more than 10 years.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q This is an important moment in U.S.-Chinese relations. How did their personal rapport play into today's call?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say they know each other. As you've noted, they've spent time together, they've had a range of direct and candid conversations. This is not the first. And that certainly contributes to the President's ability to be as direct as he is, whether it is laying out how -- where we've come from and why we are at this point, and his great concerns and significant concerns about Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and also what the implications and consequences would be.

So, there's no question that the President's time on the world stage, his prior relationship with President Xi, having spent time with him, engaged with him directly, had many multi-hour calls and meetings with him contributes to his ability to have those type of conversations.

Q Did the President bring up those past meetings in this two-hour call today?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think there is a reason to bring them up. They both know that they've had past meetings, so, you know, I think it just starts the meeting from an understanding of where the other is coming from.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, in the first event with the President today, why didn't the President chose to address the phone call personally between he and President Xi?

MS. PSAKI: Because it was about a different topic, and there's a lot of things the American people care deeply about, so it was his effort to communicate about a range of thi- -- a range of issues.

Q But when you have the leader of the largest economy in the world and the second-largest economy in the world, and they're talking, they call could fall on either side of an invasion, you know, the American people might want to hear directly from the President.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've provided a range of updates, briefings, readouts, and hopefully you all will be effective, as I'm sure you will, in communicating that to the American people.

Q And one more thing -- on the call, did the President push China about business -- the Chinese companies doing business in Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say first that, you know, the President, as we all have made clear that there have been implications, as you see, while we have not asked companies to take specific steps, you look at Russia and what's happened there and what the implications have been for the Russian economy of companies pulling out.

And I know that's certainly something for every country to watch as they're making decisions about which side of this conflict they're going to stand on.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Poland is calling for an international peacekeeping mission in the Ukraine. Is that something the U.S. would entertain or support and possibly participate in?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to get more details on what that looks like. I'm happy to talk with our national security team about that.

Q And then I have, like, a fun Friday question.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. (Laughs.)

Q The House passed the CROWN Act, which bans discrimination based on hairstyle. Is this something the administration supports? Would they sign it into law if the Senate passed it?

MS. PSAKI: I have seen that. I have not talked to our legislative team about it. I'm happy to do that. And we'll see if we can get you a fun Fru- -- fun Friday answer back.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. In response to the mistreatment of African immigrants fleeing Ukraine, the White House did put out a statement a couple of weeks ago saying that they received assurances from the U.N. and Ukrainian authorities in government that they're committed to the fair and equal treatment of those seeking departure.

But doubling down, what are those assurances? Because we're still hearing a lot of stories of incidents that are happening with those who are trying to flee.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it is -- it is something we continue to watch closely. And we have seen reports of -- that -- you know, that we would be -- we are concerned about. So we would just raise those concerns we have directly, and we felt it was important to put out a public statement at that time to follow up on.

Q And just a couple more questions. One, how soon can we expect the President to sign the anti-lynching bill?

MS. PSAKI: I can check and see what the timing -- I know we were waiting for the Vice President, I think, to get back from travel. But, yeah.

Q And then, lastly, about a quarter of Americans are not vaccinated or are partially vaccinated. Numbers aren't really budging. Is there any move or change to the definition of what is "fully vaccinated"?

MS. PSAKI: That would be for the CDC to determine. There hasn't been a change at this point in time. It still remains two doses, but we are continuing to encourage any American who has not received a booster to do exactly that because it would provide them additional necessary protection.

Go ahead.

Q On Judge Jackson's hearings next week, has some of that prep work included conversations between the nominee and the President and any advice from the former chairman of the Judiciary Committee?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get into details about their private conversations.

Q So is he -- so he has not played a role in sort of the prep or the --

MS. PSAKI: He's not participating in the mock preps, no. But he is certainly excited about her hearings next week and being confirmed to serve on the bench.

Q Thanks, Jen. I've got a quick clarification and two questions about presidential conflicts of interest in foreign affairs.

The first brief clarification is: The New York Times reported this week that the First Son remains under criminal investigation. Does the President still intend to stay out of that case?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. It's the Department of Justice, and I would point you to them.

Q And my two questions about conflicts of interest in foreign affairs. First, I have a question about Russia and then one

about China.

On Russia: You told me last year that you were unfamiliar with the Senate report that alleged that the First Son -- or a company linked to the First Son received \$3.5 million from the richest woman in Russia.

Subsequent reporting indicates that President Biden, when he was Vice President, had a dinner in Georgetown with the same woman in 2015.

This -- Yelena Baturina, she has not been sanctioned yet by the U.S. government. How is President Biden navigating conflicts of interest when it comes to sanctioning people who have done business with his family? And can you explain to us what this \$3.5 million was for?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any confirmation of the accuracy of that report, so I have no more further details.

Q Can you say anything about the conflicts of interest, though -- how he's navigating those when deciding sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: What would be his conflicts of interest?

Q Well, his son's company allegedly got \$3.5 million from --

MS. PSAKI: He -- which I have no confirmation of. And he has continued to sanction oligarchs more than we've ever sanctioned in the past. I'm not sure that's a conflict of interest, though.

Q But she hasn't been sanctioned, though.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q She hasn't been sanctioned, though. She has --

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Go ahead.

Q I have a question about Russia now. My -

MS. PSAKI: I think we're moving on because we got to get to more people.

Q I'm sorry. I'm sorry. We could -- hold on.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q My question about the conflict of interests when it comes to China is: Last year, the First Son's attorney said that he divested from a Chinese investment fund controlled by Chinese state-owned entities. We have received not even basic transparency about who bought out his stake, when this happened, and how much money changed hands. Did he actually divest? And if so, can you agree to basic transparency?

MS. PSAKI: He's a private citizen. He doesn't work for the government. I'd point you to his representatives.

Thank you.

Q But there's a blaring conflict of interest for his father's role as President, dealing with China.

MS. PSAKI: I think we're done here. Thank you very much.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Did President Biden talk to President Xi Jinping about the escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula? How did the President Xi respond to this?

MS. PSAKI: Again, the vast, vast majority of the call was about Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. And again, when the Chinese -- when President Xi raised Taiwan, the President reiterated the U.S. policy on Taiwan. Obviously, there are a lot of important issues that we discussed with the Chinese -- some where we work together, some where we have strong concern. And there's a lot of channels for that. But that was the primary focus of the conversation.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks so much. This is Jahanzaib Ali from ARY News TV Pakistan. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan requested for a telephone conversation with President Biden like many, many months ago -- it's like more than 14 or 15 months. We haven't heard anything about that. Is there a specific reason for not communicating with the Pakistani leadership?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on a planned call or engagement. Obviously, we engage with Pakistan and a range of leaders at a number of levels through the State Department, through our national security team. But in terms of a call or engagement with the President, I don't have anything to predict on that front.

Q After his recent visit to Russia, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan told a public gathering that he will not be a slave of America like other politicians do. Would you like to comment on that? (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: We have a long relationship with Pakistan, and that is a relationship we'll continue through diplomatic channels. So I don't have any more comments on that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, we can go to both of you. Go ahead.

Go -- I don't know whoever wants to go. You can rock, paper, scissors.

Q Thanks, Jen. You might have seen that President Putin held a rally at which he said, of the Russian people, that "we have not had unity like this for a long time." Is that your perception? Do you have any comment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not going to respond to Putin's -- President Putin's misinformation and propaganda rally, which is how we see it.

Q And secondly, just a bigger-picture question: There's been a lot of discussion this week about war crimes and war criminals. You're well aware the United States does not recognize the International Criminal Court. Does --

MS. PSAKI: We're not a member, yeah.

Q Yeah, not a member. President Biden believes that is the correct stance? And if so, doesn't that undercut the United States' moral authority on this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would note that there are a range of international bodies that have ongoing international investigations. We would not be the ones prosecuting, of course. There'd be international bodies prosecuting any case on

war crimes. We're going to feed data and information into that, and they support their process.

Q Okay. The Western Balkans, please. Russia and China spreading their influence a lot in the Western Balkans, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. And President is a friend of the Bosnians and the Kosovans. Can you assure people over there that America is still with them?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. Please -- please send that directly.

Go ahead, Nazira.

Q Yeah, thank you very much, Jen. As you know, we celebrate our Nowruz New Year. Afghan people (inaudible). Do you have any message?

And also, yesterday, President Biden signed some document -- TPS -- for the new arrival Afghan refugees to --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, TPS.

Q TPS.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Yes, yes. We did. So, the President did sign TPS for Afghans, which means that those who have been in the country -- and let me get to the exact information on that. Let's see. So -- let's see.

Okay. So, basically -- okay, so the TPS will apply only to those individuals who are already residing in the United States as of March 15, 2022, and meet all of the requirements, including undergoing security and background checks. And this is a designation decided by the Department of Homeland Security through their process. And their designated Afghanistan -- they designated Afghanistan for TPS on the statutory basis of ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions.

U.S. Citizens -- Citizenship and Immigration Services estimates that approximately 74,500 individuals in the United States would become eligible for TPS through the designation for Afghanistan, and that includes 72,500 who have been paroled into the United States through Operation Allies Welcome and approximately 2,000 Afghan nationals who did not participate in the Operation Allies Welcome and were otherwise in the United States already.

So this is a new designation just announced this week.

Q How about the New Years -- Nowruz? Any message for Afghan people, especially Afghan women?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say we would send a message of Happy New Year's to the Afghan people and certainly a special shout-out to Afghan women. And we have huge admiration for their courage, their bravery, and we will continue to stand with them during these challenging times.

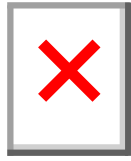
Thank you, everyone. Happy Friday.

4:12 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against Saudi Arabia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 20, 2022 12:11 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against Saudi Arabia

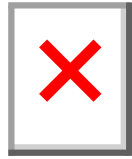
We condemn the Houthi attacks over the last 48 hours against civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia. These attacks reportedly targeted water treatment facilities as well as oil and natural gas infrastructure. The Houthis launch these terrorist attacks with enabling by Iran, which supplies them with missile and UAV components, training, and expertise. This is done in violation of UN Security Council resolutions prohibiting the import of weapons into Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Government have endorsed multiple UN calls for ceasefires and de-escalation over the last year. The Houthis have rejected these calls, responding instead with new offensives in Yemen and terrorist acts, such as those launched against Saudi Arabia last night. It is time to bring this war to a close, but that can only happen if the Houthis agree to cooperate with the United Nations and its envoy working on a step-by-step process to de-escalate the conflict. The United States stands fully behind those efforts, and we will continue to fully support our partners in the defense of their territory from Houthi attacks. We call on the international community to do the same.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Readout of the Administration's Briefing of CEOs on Russia's War against Ukraine
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 21, 2022 4:57 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2022

Readout of the Administration's Briefing of CEOs on Russia's War against Ukraine

Today, Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Senior Advisor Cedric Richmond, and National Economic Council Director Brian Deese met with 16 CEOs of major companies across several industries including energy, food, and manufacturing to provide a briefing on the latest developments on Putin's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. The President joined for part of the discussion. They conveyed the Administration's commitment to continue imposing heavy costs on Putin to degrade Russia's war machine and support the people of Ukraine, while taking concrete actions to mitigate the price increases on American consumers caused by Putin's action. Participants also discussed the need to work together to address Putin's disruptions to global markets and supply chains, especially for energy and agricultural commodities, and identify alternative sources of supply for key goods. The private sector and the Administration committed to close communication and coordination going forward.

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Deputy NSA for Cyber and Emerging Technologies Anne Neuberger, March 21, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 21, 2022 6:55 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Deputy NSA for Cyber and Emerging Technologies Anne Neuberger, March 21, 2022,

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:45 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay, we have a very special return guest today, Deputy National Security Advisor Anne Neuberger, who is here to provide a brief update on cyber. You probably have seen the statement from the President we issued, as well as a factsheet; she'll talk about that. Has a little bit of time to take some questions, and then we'll do a briefing from there.

With that, I'll turn it over to Anne.

MS. NEUBERGER: Thank you, Jen. Good afternoon, everyone.

This afternoon, the President released a statement and factsheet regarding cyber threats to the homeland, urging private sector partners to take immediate action to shore up their defenses against potential cyberattacks.

We've previously warned about the potential for Russia to conduct cyberattacks against the United States, including as a response to the unprecedented economic costs that the U.S. and Allies and partners imposed in response to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine.

Today, we are reiterating those warnings, and we're doing so based on evolving threat intelligence that the Russian

government is exploring options for potential cyberattacks on critical infrastructure in the United States.

To be clear, there is no certainty there will be a cyber incident on critical infrastructure. So why am I here? Because this is a call to action and a call to responsibility for all of us.

At the President's direction, the administration has worked extensively over the last year to prepare to meet this sort of threat, providing unprecedented warning and advice to the private sector and mandating cybersecurity measures where we have the authority to do so.

For example, just last week, federal agencies convened more than 100 companies to share new cybersecurity threat information in light of this evolving threat intelligence. During those meetings, we shared resources and tools to help companies harden their security, like advisories sourced from sensitive threat intelligence and hands-on support from local FBI field offices and sister regional offices, including their Shields Up program.

The meeting was part of an extensive cybersecurity resilience effort that we began in the fall, prompted by the President. Agencies like Energy, EPA, Treasury, and DHS have hosted both classified and unclassified briefings with hundreds of owners and operators of privately owned critical infrastructure. CISA, NSA, and FBI have published cybersecurity advisories that set out protections the private sector can deploy to improve security.

The President has also directed departments and agencies to use all existing government authorities to mandate new cybersecurity and network defense measures. You've seen us do that where we have the authority to do so, including TSA's work that mandated directives for the oil and gas pipelines following the Colonial Pipeline incident that highlighted the significant gaps in resilience for that sector.

Our efforts together over the past year has helped drive much-needed and significant improvements. But there's so much more we need to do to have the confidence that we've locked our digital doors, particularly for the critical services Americans rely on.

The majority of our critical infrastructure, as you know, is owned and operated by the private sector. And those owners and operators have the ability and the responsibility to harden the systems and networks we all rely on.

Notwithstanding these repeated warnings, we continue to see adversaries compromising systems that use known vulnerabilities for which there are patches. This is deeply troubling.

So we're urging, today, companies to take the steps within your control to act immediately to protect the services millions of Americans rely on and to use the resources the federal government makes available. The factsheet released alongside the President's statement contains the specific actions that we're calling companies to do.

I would be remiss if I didn't reiterate the President's thanks to Congress for its partnership in this effort, including making cybersecurity resources available in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and, most recently, for working across the aisle to require companies to report cyber incidents to the federal government. That will ensure federal resources are focused on the most important cyber threats to the American people.

We welcome additional congressional work to identify new authorities that can help address gaps and drive down collective cybersecurity risk.

Bottom line: This is about us -- the work we need to do to lock our digital doors and to put the country in the best defensive position.

And there is them. As the President has said: The United States is not seeking confrontation with Russia. But he has also said that if Russia conducts disruptive cyberattacks against critical infrastructure, we will be prepared to respond.

Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: All right. Let me just first ask, for those of you in the aisles, if you're not a photographer, there's plenty of seats. So if you could sit down, that would be great, and not crowd the others in the seats.

So, we don't have unlimited time, so if people -- we just want to get to as many people as possible.

So, go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Hi, Anne. Just a quick question on the Viasat attack that happened on the 24th of Feb, the day Russia attacked Ukraine. We've obviously seen that impact satellite communication networks in Eastern Europe. And since then, the FBI and CISA have issued warnings that similar attacks can happen against U.S. companies.

Is the U- -- is the U.S. in a position to perhaps identify who is behind the hack at this moment?

MS. NEUBERGER: It's a really good question. So, first, I want to lift up: FBI and CISA and NSA also highlighted protective security measures that U.S. companies can put in place to protect against exactly that kind of attack. We have not yet attributed that attack, but we're carefully looking at it because, as you noted, of the impact not only in Ukraine but also in satellite communication systems in Europe as well.

Q Does the sophistication of the attack, perhaps the timing of it, suggest that it's a state actor? I mean, are you willing to -

MS. NEUBERGER: Those are certainly factors that are -- we're looking at carefully as we look at who is responsible for them.

MS. PSAKI: Phil.

Q The "evolving intelligence," it doesn't mean that it's a certainty there's going to be an attack. Can you explain for the layman what you're seeing right now that precipitated this statement today, and what the evolving intelligence may be now compared to on the 24th or prior to the invasion?

MS. NEUBERGER: Absolutely. So, the first part of that is: You've seen the administration continuously lean forward and share even fragmentary pieces of information we have to drive and ensure maximum preparedness by the private sector.

So as soon as we learned about that, last week we hosted classified briefings with companies and sectors who we felt would be most affected, and provided very practical, focused advice.

Today's broader, unclassified briefing is to raise that broader awareness and to raise that call to action.

Q So there was something specific you saw last week that was raised to the industries that it would have affected, is what you're saying?

MS. NEUBERGER: So I want to reiterate: There is no evidence of any -- of any specific cyberattack that we're anticipating for. There is some preparatory activity that we're seeing, and that is what we shared in a classified context with companies who we thought might be affected. And then we're lifting up a broader awareness here in this -- in this warning.

MS. PSAKI: Major?

Q Hey, Anne. When you say a "call to action," many who hear you say that might believe that something is imminent. Is it?

MS. NEUBERGER: "Call to action" is a phrase that we use to describe a warning that we're giving to the public. It's not a call to action in the sense of a call to arms or a call to arms. It's a call to action in the sense of a call to arms.

MS. NEUBERGER: So, first, a call to action is because there are cyberattacks that occur every day. Hundreds of millions of dollars were paid in ransoms by U.S. companies just last year against criminal activity happening in the U.S. today. Every single day, there should be a call to action.

We're using the opportunity of this evolving threat intelligence regarding potential cyberattacks against critical infrastructure to reiterate those with additional focus specifically to critical infrastructure owners and operators to say, "You have the responsibility to take these steps to protect the critical services Americans rely on."

Q And as a follow-up: "Critical infrastructure" is a broad term. Is it as broad as you typically mean it when the government speaks about critical infrastructure, or is there something you've seen that you can be more -- a little bit more specific within that large frame of critical infrastructure?

MS. NEUBERGER: I won't get into specific sectors at this time, because the steps that are needed to lock our digital doors need to be done across every sector of critical infrastructure. And even those sectors that we do not see any specific threat intelligence for, we truly want those sectors to double down and do the work that's needed.

MS. PSAKI: Jacqui.

Q You guys, the administration, successfully declassified a lot of intelligence about what the Russians were planning leading up to the invasion to prebut what they might do. Can you do that a little bit here and at least list some of the industries that might be the biggest targets so that they can have a heightened awareness about what might be coming?

MS. NEUBERGER: As we consider declassifying intelligence, to your excellent point, that really has been the work that has been done the last few weeks and was driven by a focus on outcomes. It was driven by the President's desire to avoid war at all costs, to really invest in diplomacy.

So, as we consider this information, the first step we did was we gave classified, detailed briefings to the companies and sectors for which we had some preparatory information about. And then for those where we don't, that's the purpose of today's unclassified briefing: to give that broad warning. And I want to lift up the factsheet, which is really the call to action for specific activities to do.

Q So you believe the people, the industries that need to know about this risk know?

MS. NEUBERGER: We believe the key entities who need to know have been provided classified briefings. I mentioned, for example, just last week, several hundred companies were brought in to get that briefing.

MS. PSAKI: Peter.

Q Does the U.S. have any evidence that Russia has attempted a hack, either here in the U.S., in Europe, or in Ukraine, over the course of the last several weeks since this offensive began?

MS. NEUBERGER: So, we certainly believe that Russia has conducted cyberattacks to undermine, coerce, and destabilize Ukraine. And we attributed some of those a couple of weeks ago.

We consistently see nation states doing preparatory activity. That preparatory activity can pan out to become an incident; it cannot. And that's the reason we're here.

Q So, specifically in the U.S., as there was an assessment early on that we thought that we would be a likely target here, why do you think we have not seen any attack on critical infrastructure in the United States to this point so far?

MS. NEUBERGER: I can't speak to Putin or Russian leadership's strategic thinking regarding how cyberattacks factor in.

What I can speak to is the preparatory work we've been doing here in the U.S. and the fact that as soon as we have some

what I can speak to is the preparatory work we've been doing here in the U.S. and the fact that as soon as we have some evolving threat intelligence regarding a shift in that intention, that were coming out and raising the awareness to heighten our preparedness as well.

Q So you can't say declaratively that we stopped an attack, I guess I'm saying, to this point on critical infrastructure?

MS. NEUBERGER: Correct.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Colleen.

Q Can you explain a little bit more what preparatory activity on the part of the Russians would be? What does that look like?

MS. NEUBERGER: So, preparatory activity could mean scanning websites; it could be hunting for vulnerabilities. There's a range of activity that malicious cyber actors use, whether they're nation state or criminals.

The most troubling piece and really one I mentioned a moment ago is we continue to see known vulnerabilities, for which we have patches available, used by even sophisticated cyber actors to compromise American companies, to compromise companies around the world. And that's one of the reasons -- and that makes it far easier for attackers than it needs to be.

It's kind of -- you know, I joke -- I grew up in New York -- you had a lock and an alarm system. The houses that didn't or left the door open clearly were making it easier than they should have. Right? No comment about New York. (Laughter.)

So, clearly what we're asking for is: Lock your digital doors. Make it harder for attackers. Make them do more work.

Because a number of the practices we include in the factsheet will make it significantly harder, even for a sophisticated actor, to compromise a network.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Sorry, just to be clear: The warning today, is this in response to some of these more desperate tactics we've seen from Russia on ground? Are you now fearing that there might be more of a cyber risk because of what we're seeing on the ground in Ukraine?

MS. NEUBERGER: So, we've given a number of threat intel -- of threat warnings over the last number of weeks that Russia could consider conducting cyberattacks in response to the very significant economic costs the U.S. and partners have put on Russia in response. This speaks to evolving threat intelligence and a potential shift in intention to do so.

Q And do you have a message for individuals? You're talking a lot about private companies. What about households? Should they be worried about cyberattacks here?

MS. NEUBERGER: The items in the factsheet apply to companies and individuals as well. I'm specifically speaking to companies because there's a responsibility to protect the critical services Americans rely on. But every individual should take a look at that fact sheet because it's a truly helpful one. We only put in place the things that we really try to practice and work to practice ourselves.

MS. PSAKI: Jordan.

Q Thanks. As part of this preparatory activity, do you have evidence that Russian hackers have infiltrated the networks of U.S. companies already and just haven't carried out the attacks?

MS. NEUBERGER: There was -- as I noted, we frequently see preparatory activity. Whenever we do, we do sensitive

MS. NEUBERGER: There was -- as I noted, we frequently see preparatory activity. Whenever we do, we do sensitive warnings to the individual companies and provide them information to ensure they can look quickly at their networks and remediate what may be occurring.

Q So have you seen any evidence that there have been infiltrations as part of that activity?

MS. NEUBERGER: We routinely see information about infiltrations. Right? Technology is not as secure as it needs to be. I mentioned the ransomware activity. There are multiple nation-state actors. It's a line of work for the intelligence community and the FBI to knock on a company's door and say, "We've seen some evidence of an intrusion. We'll work with you. We'll make these resources available via a regional office to work with you to help you recover." That's -- that's pretty routine practice.

What we're seeing now is an evolving threat intelligence to conduct potential cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. And that raises up a point because we're concerned about potential disruption of critical services.

MS. PSAKI: Ken.

Q Anne, you did a briefing for us about a month ago. Do you think the U.S. banking system is more vulnerable, less vulnerable since the briefing, given the warnings that the government has produced?

MS. NEUBERGER: The U.S. banking sector truly takes cyber threats seriously, both individually and as a group. Treasury has worked extensively with the sector to share sensitive threat intelligence at the executive level, at the security executive level, repeatedly at the classified and unclassified level. So, I do not believe they're more at risk, but it is always important for every critical infrastructure sector to double down in this heightened period of geopolitical tension to carefully look at any threat.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Can you paint a worst-case scenario picture for us? What exactly are you most worried about if people -- the private sector chooses to not take these steps?

MS. NEUBERGER: Clearly, what we're always -- I won't get into hypotheticals, right? But the reason I'm here is because critical infrastructure -- power, water, many hospitals -- in the United States are owned by the private sector. And while the federal government makes extensive resources available -- I mentioned FBI's 56 regional offices -- you can just walk in; CISA has offices near most FEMA sites in the United States. They've had their Shields Up program. We can make those resources available. For those sectors where we can mandate measures like oil and gas pipelines, we have. But it's ultimately the private sector's responsibility, in our current authority structure, to do those steps, to use those resources to take those steps.

So, the purpose here is to say: Americans rely on those critical services. Please act. And we're here to support with the resources we have.

MS. PSAKI: Kayla, last one.

Q Thank you. Anne, are you still seeing the Russians carrying out cyberattacks inside Ukraine? It's been a few weeks since we've been discussing that in particular.

And as financial tools levied by the West have proven ineffective, what cyber tools does the West have that it can possibly utilize?

MS. NEUBERGER: We do continue to see Russia conducting both -- as you know, right? -- significant malicious activity in Ukraine; major kinetic attacks, which have disrupted and killed lives; as well as cyber activity. And we believe the unprecedented economic costs the United States and partners have levied is significant in that way.

unprecedented economic costs the United States and partners have levied is significant in that way.

With regard to your question about whether cyberattacks would change that: I think the President was very clear we're not looking for a conflict with Russia. If Russia initiates a cyberattack against the United States, we will respond.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, Anne, so much for joining us.

MS. NEUBERGER: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Q Thanks, Anne.

Q Thank you, Anne.

MS. PSAKI: All right. I just had two brief items for all of you at the top.

There was a scheduled meeting today that Secretary Yellen, Secretary Raimondo, Jake Sullivan, and Brian Deese had with 16 CEOs this afternoon. The President also dropped by for about 20 minutes and provided them an update on Russia, Ukraine. I'm sure we can get you a list of the attendees at that meeting as well.

Also wanted to note -- a number of you have asked about whether the President would be watching the hearings today. One scheduling note is the Quint meet -- call he had this morning was at exactly the same time as her opening statement, but he did request regular updates -- or has been requesting regular updates from members of the team on how the hearing is going.

And he also called her last night to wish her good luck this week at the hearings.

And I would also note that he's very grateful to Judge Tom Grif -- Thomas Griffith, as well as Lisa Fairfax, for introducing her today.

So with that, I will stop. And, Colleen, why don't you kick us off.

Q Okay. So, do you -- can give us a readout of the call with the European leaders from earlier? Just sort of what was discussed, what happened.

And then I have one other question after that.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. If you haven't already -- there should be a readout going out shortly, but let me give you a few of the preview points of this call:

During this call with President Macron of France, Chancellor Scholz of Germany, Prime Minister Draghi of Italy, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom, they discussed their serious concerns about Russia's brutal tactics in Ukraine, including its attacks on civilians. They underscored their continued support for Ukraine, including by providing security assistance to the brave Ukrainians who are defending their country from Russian aggression and humanitarian assistance to the millions of Ukrainians who have fled the violence.

They also reviewed recent diplomatic efforts in support of Ukraine's effort to reach a ceasefire.

I would note: The President will obviously see these leaders -- a number of them -- in person later this week. And this is a call with this group that he has already had a few times. And when he had the last call with them -- I believe it was last week or the week before; it may have been last week -- they talked about doing this on a regular basis, not necessarily because there is a big deliverable out of it but just to keep an open line of communication as they're continuing to respond to the brutal actions of President Putin in Ukraine.

Q And then, on the potential discussions with Ukrainian leaders and Russia, has the White House or has the President been in communication with Ukrainian leaders, with Zelenskyy on this? Has he given any sort of counseling on how to go about these talks with Russian leaders in the hope of, you know, ending the conflict?

MS. PSAKI: We are in touch with the Ukrainian government -- senior government officials every day. The President obviously speaks with -- has spoken with President Zelenskyy a number of times, as you all know. And we convey, through all of those discussions, that we support any diplomatic effort that they choose to take part in.

The role that we feel we can play most effectively is by continuing to provide a broad range of security assistance, military assistance to them as well as economic and humanitarian assistance to strengthen their hand in these negotiations.

And what we always convey publicly and privately is that we're going to be watching closely their actions, not just what words they say.

But we just continue to support their efforts and whatever decisions they make about choosing to engage diplomatically.

Go ahead.

Q President Zelenskyy said if those talks don't work out, it's World War Three. Does the President agree?

MS. PSAKI: Without knowing more of what President Zelenskyy means by that, I would say that our view and the President's view is that the way we need to avoid World War Three is preventing the United States from having direct military involvement on the ground and same on NATO, direct involvement on the ground, and that the most effective role we can continue to play is by providing that extensive military assistance that we have been providing -- economic and humanitarian assistance. So, I can't assess.

Obviously, I know many of you will speak or hear more from President Zelenskyy soon, and I would expect he can speak more to what he meant by that.

Q And related to that, does the President believe that President Zelenskyy owes him or other NATO leaders a check-in as these negotiations progress and as he may approach a final resolution? Meaning, does NATO or does the President want either implied or soft veto power over whatever Zelenskyy might decide to do?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we support President Zelenskyy and Ukrainian leaders' decisions -- ability to make their own decisions through the course of these negotiations.

Now, obviously, if it involves something related to the United States or NATO, we're here to support. But, of course, we'd need to be engaged in that aspect of the discussion.

Q One last thing.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q On "Face the Nation," the Chinese ambassador said China's position is for peace and that it's constantly doing everything it can to de-escalate. Do you agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I would note --

Q Do you say it's a fair characterization of what China is doing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I would note: Also in the same interview, he failed to condemn the actions of --

Q He said it wouldn't do any good.

MS. PSAKI: -- President Putin.

I'm sorry?

Q He said it wouldn't make any difference. Do you agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: I think our view is that verbal condemnation of the actions of President Putin and the actions of Russian military is important and vital, and it's about what side of history you want to stand on at this point in time.

At the same time, as you know, the President had a lengthy discussion with President Xi on Friday, and we're going to continue to keep those lines of communication open.

But what we would note here is also what is absent from a lot of their public commentary, which is condemnation at times; sometimes it has been echoing of conspiracy theories that the Russians have put out there about chemical weapons. And we note that, you know, what we want to hear is condemnation of what we're seeing on the ground.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Can you walk us through the President's trip a little bit later this week? We know he's going to stop in Brussels first, obviously. Then he goes to Poland, as you announced this weekend. Will he see refugees? Will he deliver a speech? Are there deliverables? Can you walk us through what you can tell us?

MS. PSAKI: There will certainly be deliverables, as there always are on these trips.

Q Yeah, there are.

MS. PSAKI: And -- there always are. We're still finalizing, believe it or not, the details of the trip and the specifics of what he'll be doing while he's in Poland.

He, of course, will be seeing his counterpart there. And he will certainly thank him for the efforts and the work that Poland has done and the leaders have done there to welcome refugees, to get them settled in Poland for this time being as devastating as the circumstances are.

Jake Sullivan is going to be joining us here tomorrow. And hopefully by then we will have more specifics to lay out for all of you, but we're finalizing the details as we speak.

Q Let me ask you about their assessments we're hearing from NATO right now that are -- some are saying that if we're not in a stalemate, we are rapidly approaching one. Does the U.S. have a position on that that appears to be the way this is heading and how that changes the sort of trajectory of this, and what your view is --

MS. PSAKI: You mean in terms of the military situation on the ground?

Q In Ukraine. Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Well, here's what we've seen on the ground: We're seeing that -- the Department of Defense has assessed -- and I know they've done briefings in this regard, so let me echo this -- that there certainly could be some morale issues of troops on the ground, that they are in a stalemate in the sense that they have not been making the -- the level of progress or the pace of progress that they had hoped from the beginning.

Now, obviously, things can change rapidly in conflicts, and so we are mindful of that as well. We're also seeing, obviously, over the course of the last couple of days, that fighting around Mariupol is fierce but remains, at this point, isolated. It remains a high priority for Russia because it would provide President Putin with a land bridge to Crimea and cut off Ukrainian forces there from the rest of the country, provide the Russians with a new port.

But the military situation elsewhere in Ukraine, according to our assessment, remains largely static. It doesn't mean that can't change; it's just an assessment as of this moment.

Q Last quick one, as it relates to Belarus: Right now, some in NATO are saying that Russia is preparing to potentially -- or that Belarus is potentially preparing to let Russia position nuclear weapons on Belarusian soil. Does the U.S. have a message to the government of Belarus? And how would you view that escalation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't have any confirmation of those reports or suggestions. Certainly, that would be of concern to us, yes.

Go ahead, Jacqui.

Q Thanks, Jen.

In the past, you've said that domestic oil producers have the leases, resources that they need to ramp up production. Is there any thought about invoking the Defense Production Act when it comes to energy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a range of ideas out there -- that's one of them -- that a number of people have put forward. I would say that the Defense Production Act is -- would mean giving government funding to companies or to purchase products. That's how it typically works, as you've seen it work with COVID supplies and otherwise. And we think they have the resources they need in order to expand their production.

Q And then, on government money and supplies: There are reports that the EU is seeking to stockpile iodine pills and nuclear protective gear amid an increased concern about a nuclear threat, and also looking for more ways to deal with potential biological and chemical attacks.

Is the U.S. taking similar measures when it comes to these things, especially with iodine pills? Are we taking, sort of, the lessons learned in the pandemic and applying it to this challenge?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Jacqui, it's a good question. Let me check with our national security team and see if there's any details I can get into. We are always prepared, even as we aren't making predictions at this point in time. I don't have confirmation of that report about the Europeans, but I will -- I will check and see if there's more to report out to all of you.

Q And then, there are reports that China has fully militarized at least three islands in the disputed South China Sea with anti-ship, anti-aircraft missile systems; laser and jamming equipment; and fighter jets, despite Beijing's promises not to turn these islands into military bases. What is our takeaway from that? And how are we responding to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Jacqui, again, I don't have confirmation of that from here. I've certainly seen the reports. I would point you to the Department of Defense for any more specific analysis. But, obviously, any escalatory actions in the South China Sea would be of concern to us.

Q And then one more on the White House assessment of global food insecurity --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- that's sort of coming out of all this in Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is there any -- is there any money that's going to be allocated to provide diesel fuel to Ukrainian farmers to try to mitigate some of this?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, so, let me -- so, let me give you a couple of things on this, because there's been a lot of interesting reporting on this, and where the impacts are is a good question.

While we're not expecting a food shortage here at home, we do anticipate that higher energy, fertilizer, wheat, and corn prices could impact the price of growing and purchasing critical fuel [sic] supply -- food supplies for countries around the world. And early estimates from the World Bank suggest disproportionate impacts on low- and middle-income countries including in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

And actually -- and Ukraine is a big exporter of fertilizer. So as it relates to even that need in the United States and other parts of the world, that's something that we're continuing to closely assess as well.

But right now, to go back to the root of your question, we are working with our partners in the G7, multilateral development banks, the World Food Programme, and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to mitigate the impacts to poorer nations.

So we are discussing what that looks like and how to mitigate the shortage on those -- on those growing and purchasing entities from impacting parts of the world that would be severely impacted, even if we're not.

Q What kind of a timeline do we think we have to take some action on that before it becomes a really big problem?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there -- there are active discussions now. And we're certainly mindful that even if we're not seeing an impact in this moment that sometimes supply chain impacts can have a lagging -- can be a -- have a lagging impact.

So we're having discussions now with all of those partners. Those have been ongoing so we can do everything we can to mitigate it in advance.

Q And can I ask one question -- just a reaction to the Israeli Prime Minister. This weekend, he said, on the JCPOA, "Unfortunately, [we're seeing a] determination to sign a nuclear deal...at almost any cost, including saying the [biggest] terrorist [group] in the world is not a terrorist organization. This is too [steep] a price." Can I get your reaction to that? Is that what we're saying by pursuing this deal?

MS. PSAKI: I would say we are in regular touch with our Israeli counterparts, including leaders. We don't have a deal yet. We're consulting with our allies and partners, including Israel, as we negotiate.

And the President is going to make a decision on whether to reenter the deal based on what's in the best interest of American security and strategic interests, including the security of our partners in regions like Israel.

And once -- if and when we have a deal, I'm sure we can discuss more specifics.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. We've now had a chance to hear from some of the Judiciary Committee members in this confirmation for Judge Jackson. Any thoughts on whether she will receive bipartisan support in her confirmation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, without being able to get into the minds of a range of Republican members, our view is that given she has been confirmed three times with bipartisan support, that she has extensive experience, that she has ruled in favor of

Democrats and Republicans under leaders of both parties, that she certainly deserves that. But we will see what the outcome ends up being.

Q And has the White House had any contact with Justice Thomas, given his hospitalization? Do you have any updates there?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of any direct contacts. Of course, we wish him a speedy recovery. And of course, thoughts - thoughts out to his family.

Q And just a quick follow-up on the NATO trip. Can you give us just the big picture of what would a successful NATO summit look like to the White House? What are we looking for to measure that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I mean, I think what's important to remember here from the beginning of the President's presidency but also, certainly, over the last couple of months is that unity has been front and center for the President in terms of how -- what will make us successful over time -- unity with our European counterparts, unity among NATO, unity among the G7. And that doesn't happen by accident.

And so, coming out of this, what the President is hoping to achieve is continued coordination and a unified response to the continued escalatory actions of President Putin.

Go ahead.

Q The U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. was asked about this this weekend, but given the Poles appear to be planning to put upon the table some type of peacekeeping force idea, is there any feasible structure that the White House could support for something like that? Or have you guys looked into the idea at all?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we, of course, will continue to work with Poland and other allies and partners in Europe to provide support for the Ukrainian people and help them defend their country against Russian aggression and provide relief to the people of Ukraine. And we will continue to impose severe consequences.

The President -- we've been -- he's been clear: We're not going to send American troops to fight Russian troops. It's not in the interest of the American people or our national security. But we'll continue to discuss a range of ideas, including this one out there.

Q And then, there's been, kind of, a reinvigoration in the EU of discussions about banning -- or sanctions on energy. Can you update us on what the efforts in the administration has been to kind of backfill, which would, I think, be a necessity if those actions were taken? Where do those stand at this point?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. In terms of engagements with global energy suppliers? Those engagements are ongoing. And, you know, they are -- they are led, in part, by Amos Hochstein, Brett McGurk has been involved in many of them, other members of our national security team and National Economic Council. And we are continuing to discuss with a range of large global suppliers how we can meet the demand in the market out there.

We also are continuing to look at domestic options and what those may look like to help ease the burden on the American public. I wish I had more specifics for you, but I don't have anything more to read out for you at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. The meeting you mentioned that President Biden participated in with CEOs earlier today, there were oil industry CEOs at that meeting. And considering the White House has been engaging with them for several weeks now -- sort of, you know, talking about ways to increase production to take care of gas prices -- I'm wondering what kind of specific assurances the White House has managed to get from these companies so far, and what was really discussed in

today's meeting, especially with the oil industry CEOs.

MS. PSAKI: Well, while the President was there, he was simply giving them an update on Russia and Ukraine. He was not making an ask at that -- in that capacity. Obviously, there are a range of senior officials who participated in these meetings. We've had a range of engagements with them, as you've noted. And we've stated publicly that they should do greater production, but they can speak for themselves on what, if anything, they would commit to.

Q Have there been any assurances that the industry has perhaps offered the White House so far?

MS. PSAKI: We'll let the oil industry speak for themselves.

Q Okay. And one quick question on China. Are you getting any indications yet that China will actually heed to President Biden's appeal to President Xi to not provide material support to Russia? Or are you seeing, perhaps, evidence suggesting that Chinese companies are maybe violating or going around U.S. export controls to, you know, send the material -- the U.S. material to Russia? I mean, do you -- are you seeing any evidence to that effect?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an assessment to share on this. You can look at the public comments that one of your colleagues brought up earlier, during an interview yesterday, where the Chinese ambassador highlighted China's friendly relations and maintenance of normal economic ties with Russia while also refusing to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But I don't have a further assessment beyond that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned Ambassador Sullivan to the Ministry in Moscow and warned that U.S.-Russian relations are on the verge of rupture, said the President's comments calling Putin a war criminal were unworthy of a statesman of such high rank. Does the White House have any response to this? And is there any concern about the warning that they're going to respond with a "decisive and firm response"?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure -- the last part -- I'm not sure what you mean by that.

Q They warned of a "decisive and firm response."

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Well, I would say that Ambassador Sullivan did meet with Russian government officials today; I believe the State Department also confirmed.

While we don't provide extensive details in general of these type of diplomatic conversations, I can confirm for you that during that meeting, he repeatedly asked for consular access to American citizen detainees, which -- who have been improperly detained ac- -- been improperly denied access for months in some cases. We find this completely unacceptable.

As it relates to their comments or their calling of him in, I think it's important to remind everyone that it is Russia who is carrying out an unprovoked, unjustified war on Ukraine.

We're seeing clear evidence that they are intentionally targeting civilians and committing indiscriminate attacks. And the President's comments speak to the horror, the brutality that Russia and President Putin are inflicting.

So, they are in control of their own -- the global perception of them is based on their actions.

Q And one quick other one.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead. Yeah, go ahead.

Q So, you mentioned that the President spoke to Judge Brown Jackson last night. Is there any other details you can

share just about how she's been preparing for the hearings, who's been involved in the practice sessions, or --

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I mean, I had outlined for you guys a couple of weeks ago some of the members of her team who played a role in preparing her, of course, whether it was Dana Remus or Senator Jones and Ben LaBolt, Minyon Moore -- others who have been playing a role in preparing her for the hearings.

I would note -- which won't surprise anyone, given her credentials -- she began preparing and studying and getting ready for these hearings as soon as she was nominated.

I would note that also, over the course of the last few weeks, she's also met with every single member of the Judiciary Committee and then several more members beyond that.

So, she has been both meeting and preparing for the last few weeks, ever since she was nominated, with the team internally and externally that we had announced just a few weeks ago.

Go ahead, Zolan.

Q Does the administration expect to discuss the -- Poland's offer on the MiG fighter jets at this point? Or is the stance that the Pentagon has made the decision clear at that point and this won't be a subject in anticipation of the President's trip to Poland?

And then secondly, during the Vice President's trip to Poland, the Pol- -- Polish leaders, at that point, said one thing that -- one ask that they had in that bilateral was to expedite the processing of Ukrainian refugees who have relatives in the United States.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Does -- is the administration expecting to oblige on that request or meet halfway in any way?

MS. PSAKI: So, I would say that, while we have done our own assessment here on the Polish jets based on a couple of factors that the military -- as you as you noted, Zolan -- has outlined, including what's most effective in fighting this war on the ground, the risk assessment of what would be escalatory, and also the fact that the Ukrainians have a number of squadrons that they can utilize.

But if Poland -- if they want to raise this, I'm -- you know, these -- these conversations, these diplomatic negotia- -- or conversations are two ways, right? And we'll, of course, read out their meeting once it -- once it is complete. So, we'll see what they -- what they raise in that meeting.

In terms of refugees, we are -- we have taken a number of steps. And we do -- part of what the President wants to do is thank President Duda for the efforts of Poland in welcoming refugees, and talk about what we can do to continue to provide support.

Now, to date, that has been largely financial support, humanitarian support, even as we granted Temporary Protected Status, and also -- you know, just -- just a few weeks ago.

But what we are doing and continuing to assess is what -- if there are Ukrainian nationals who are not able to remain safely in Europe and for whom resettlement the United States is a better option, we are continuing to work with UNCR [UNHCR] and the EU to consider that.

And that might require -- because typically, individuals who are seeking refugee status have to go to a third country. So that's something we're looking at and assessing.

And we're also -- the UNHCR, the U.N. Refugee Agency, is working with the State Department and many resettlement partners and our overseas posts to determine where the Ukrainian nationals and others who have fled Ukraine were -- you know, whether there's more we can do beyond the humanitarian assistance that we are providing.

So, I'm certain it will be a point of discussion. We are having ongoing discussions internally about what more we can do to welcome refugees.

Q And specifically, the thing that's different about that process that the administration is looking at is allowing Ukrainians to basically finish the refugee process in that same country that they would receive a UNHCR referral?

MS. PSAKI: That's part of the discussion is what can be done if Ukrainian nationals are not able to remain safely in Europe, for example, and for whom resettlement in the United States would be a better option for a range of reasons -- the State Department is discussing with UNHCR and the EU how to consider them, what would be required for that process.

But this is an ongoing discussion internally. And I'm certain it will be a part of the discussion, to go back to your original question, with President Duda, as well, this weekend.

Go ahead, Matt.

Q Thanks, Jen. You had written on Twitter that the President --

MS. PSAKI: Uh-oh. (Laughter.)

Q -- did not plan to go to Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on his trip. Given that the prime ministers of Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic visited Kyiv last week and that President Zelensky was urging others to do the same, can you talk a little bit about whether President Biden had explored going to Ukraine at all, if he was asked to, and sort of what considerations went into the factors either way?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We have not explored that option. I put that -- I tweeted, I guess I should say, because there was some confusion about this question, and we did not want to leave that out there as an unanswered question.

But certainly, any president of the United States traveling into a war zone requires not only security considerations but also an enormous amount of resources on the ground, which is always a factor for us as we make considerations.

But also, the President felt and our national security team felt that he could have the most effective and impactful trip by convening these meetings with NATO leaders, the G7, the EU in Brussels to determine both continued military coordination, humanitarian and economic coordination, as well as by going to visit Poland, right next door, to talk about everything from refugees, refugee assistance, and continued assistance we can all provide together.

So, it was a decision made about what -- what would be most effective on the trip.

Q And then I just wanted to follow up quickly. You had said earlier that the President was unable to watch the opening statement of the judge in the Supreme Court hearings. I think she --

MS. PSAKI: He was on with the Quint.

Q That's right. But she has to sit through the opening statements, first, of all of these senators, so I don't think she's actually given her opening statement quite yet.

MS. PSAKI: Ah, there you go.

Q Do you know if there s time carved into his schedule? Does he plan -- through the afternoon? Is he following this? Or -

MS. PSAKI: Well, some of these are a little difficult to predict, as just evidenced. Thank you for giving me a lifeline there, because, clearly, I ve been in meetings this morning as well.

You know, he -- it was hard to plan his schedule around this, so what he asked is that he be provided updates from his team and aides as the -- as the hearings progress.

And obviously, Chairman Durbin gave his opening, Senator Grassley gave his opening this morning, and it proceeds. But it s hard to plan the President s schedule around a moving Senate hearing.

So, I m sure he ll be able to watch replays of it and more specifics, but he wanted updates from aides as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. On -- on oil, President Biden has been very vocal about his belief that U.S. producers should be producing more and that there s the possibility of price gouging, but he didn t raise any of those concerns in the meeting of oil CEOs earlier today?

MS. PSAKI: He -- it wasn t a meeting with oil CEOs. There were a couple of the 18 -- or 16 to 18 CEOs there. It was not intended to be a meeting with oil CEOs; it was intended to be a meeting with a broad swath of the economic sectors. And he provided them an update on Russia and Ukraine, so it wasn t meant to be that type of a meeting.

Q And then there was a report in the Washington Post earlier, saying that Biden administrati- -- administration officials are seeing data showing that Russian oil exports have dropped off a cliff and that there was some -- there was a data point that said there are 2 million barrels per day on tankers that have gone from close -- down to zero in a certain period of time.

Is that -- can you confirm that? Is that -- is that true in what you re seeing about Russian oil exports?

MS. PSAKI: I ve seen those reports, but I don t have a new assessment from here.

Q And then, lastly, has the President tested for COVID-19 this week? And what were the results of that test?

MS. PSAKI: He was tested today, and he was negative.

Q Thank you.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Can you walk us through the administration s thinking behind adding this Poland stop? And what is President Biden hoping to demonstrate by sitting alongside President Duda?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, we have -- this -- this trip has been coming together quite rapidly, I think, as you would all note. And so, as I noted a little bit earlier, we will have more details about his Poland stop.

But this is an opportunity for him to thank President Duda for welcoming refugees, as they have done over the last few weeks, and for being an important partner in providing a range of assistance to the Ukrainians -- to the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government. And they are an important partner as we -- as we work to remain unified in the weeks and

and the Ukrainian government. And they are an important partner as we -- as we work to remain united in the weeks and months ahead.

There will obviously be a couple of components of his trip there, which I think, as we have more details of it to announce, will showcase the purpose of the trip.

Q And then, to follow on that, one of my colleagues asked if the President would be meeting with Ukrainian refugees in -- at one of these stops. Is there any reason why the President wouldn't? Is that something we can find out more about soon?

MS. PSAKI: I think, as I noted, we're going to be providing more details to all of you in the next 24 hours, of his trip. Sometimes there are things we announce in advance, and sometimes there are not. But I've noted repeatedly that refugees is a key component of his stop in Poland.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah. If I can shift gears to COVID for a minute --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q What is the White House's response to some experts who have said that the U.S. is not necessarily doing enough to prepare for this next bit of a pandemic surge that we're already beginning to see in other parts of the globe?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say -- I'm not sure -- can you give me a little more additional context of the comments?

Q I had seen -- yes, some comments just basically that the U.S. needs to be doing more to prepare, whether that is around, you know, building up a supply. They pointed to the low rates of booster shots, in particular, as being a point of concern. And that was -- yeah. And the booster shots, in particular.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think our primary concern right now is that we're about to run out of funding, and we are always making an effort to be ahead of and be prepared for any new wave, any new variant.

And even as BA.2 has been in this country for some time -- and, as of last week, it was about a quarter to a third of cases. We know it's quite transmissible, but we know that the treatments we have are effective in treating BA.2 -- the BA.2 variant.

Our concern right now is that we are going to run out of money to provide the types of vaccines, boosters, treatments to the immunocompromised and others free of charge that will help continue to battle increasing -- you know, the increase or the upflow or the, you know, increase of -- of COVID in the future.

So that's where our primary focus is. I don't -- beyond that, I'm not sure additional context of those comments.

Q Can I ask just more question. Has the White House been in touch with any of the pharmaceutical companies who are specifically working on the under-age-five population, recently, vaccines? I know that those were put into practice and then removed in terms of actually having implementation. I just wondered what the communication has been.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, well, the -- it typically goes, of course, through the FDA and CDC, as it should -- all of the data. So we would leave those channels to continue to consider when it's ready to move to the next phase.

Q So no sort of increased communication or urgency around getting (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think data moves, science moves at the speed of science, right? And, of course, we would all -- many people here have children under five, but it's important that it moves through the effective, gold standard process

people here have children under five, but it's important that it moves through the effective, gold standard process.

And of course, we are in touch with the pharmaceutical companies for a range of reasons, including purchasing supplies to plan ahead for the need for boosters and other vaccines in the future, even as we are worried about running out of money.

But the process for when it would be ready to go through the FDA and CDC process is left to the scientists.

Q Jen, can I ask --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Jen, just on the food security issue --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Cargill and ADM are still operating in Russia. A lot of companies have obviously left. Does the administration have a view on whether these companies should stay, given the concerns about food security and production of wheat and that sort of (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: We have not asked any company specifically to take steps to pull out. We have applauded those who have made that decision, and they are going to have to make decisions of their own regard.

Q Just a housekeeping item. I know you're still getting plans for the trip. Do you expect the President to hold a joint news conference with President Duda after their meeting in Poland?

MS. PSAKI: We're still planning all the specifics of it, so I don't have that quite yet. I would expect one for sure on Thursday.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you so much. On Ukraine, we are seeing reports about Mariupol and about people and Ukrainians there being deported, arrested, and sent to remote regions in Russia. Is this something that is consistent with American intelligence? Can you comment on this?

MS. PSAKI: I -- one, those reports are horrific, but I don't -- we don't have any independent confirmation of those reports at this point in time.

Q And a follow-up on China, maybe? So, the President has warned that China would face costs if it decided to help Russia. How confident is he that European allies would also support such costs? And will that be part of the discussion in Brussels?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that certainly any -- the concern about China's closer alignment with Russia is one that's not just the United -- one of the United States, it's also a concern of many in Europe, and we expect it to be a topic of discussion over the course of the next several days.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, as I understand the peacekeeping proposal from the Polish Prime Minister: It will be a peacekeeping force, they would be in Ukraine, and they would be able to defend themselves. So, I know the President doesn't want to send Americans to fight Russians, but is the U.S. open to sending Americans as part of an internationally recognized peacekeeping force that could be NATO or not NATO?

MS. PSAKI: Again, these are a range of conversations that are happening behind the scenes. I'll leave it to those at this point in time. But forces on the ground is certainly about fighting, but it's also about having forces on the ground in

point in time. But forces on the ground is certainly about fighting, but it's also about having forces on the ground in Ukraine, which we have not supported at this point. I don't think that will change.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I have a question about the COVID-19 Response Team. Obviously, there's going to be a change in leadership in the White House Coordinator on COVID.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And, by my count, there hasn't been a press briefing with the COVID team in about three weeks. I just wondered if you could speak to, kind of, what the role of that team is at this point. You know, how often does the President meet with that team? Is there any talk of disbanding it at this point, given the phase of the pandemic? I'm just kind of curious, sort of, what (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: I hope not, for Dr. Jha's sake, given he's coming in. (Laughter.)

Q (Inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Look, this is -- communicating with all of you on a regular basis has been a huge priority for the COVID team, and I'm certain we will continue to do that.

And, obviously, Dr. Jha is somebody who is not just a medical expert and a doctor, but somebody who is a very effective communicator on public health issues, and we think that's going to be a very effective part of his role. So, I'm certain you will be seeing a lot of him, and we will continue to have a range of briefings with the COVID team. So, no, they're not disbanding.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q Go ahead. I'll go after you.

Q I have questions. First, the United States declared the Myanmar military government committed genocide against the Rohingya, today. We also know the Myanmar government has supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And what happened to the Rohingya have happened for a while now. So, based on the timing, are they supporting the Russia related to this declaration today?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me say for those of you who haven't -- I know you've been following it as closely, but for those of you who have not: Following a rigorous, factual, and legal analysis, the Secretary of State determined that the members of -- that members of the Burmese military committed genocide and crimes against humanity against a Rohingya -- against Rohingya.

His announcement at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum emphasizes, especially to victims and survivors, that the United States recognizes the gravity of these crimes.

He also announced nearly \$1 million for the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar to support its mandate to investigate, collect, preserve, and analyze evidence of the most serious international crimes in Burma since 2011.

I would note that our view is that shining a light on the crimes of Burmese military will increase international pressure, make it harder for them to commit further abuses. But this has been -- as you know. Rohingya have long faced

discrimination and been subject to exclusionary policies. And this has been a lengthy review process at the State Department to come to this conclusion, unrelated to current events.

Q My second question is -- we've been talking about being in communication with China, including President Biden's calling the President Xi last week. Besides the consequences China might face if it aids Russia, does the United States also tell China what would happen to Russia right now while or might also happen to China if it invades U.S. allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, such as Taiwan?

MS. PSAKI: During this call, which was largely focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the President also reiterated his support for the Taiwan Relations Act and the one-China policy based on the Taiwan Relations Act. And he made clear that we remain opposed to any unilateral changes to the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, and that we have concerns about Beijing's coercive and provocative actions. So that was the other topic that was discussed at the meeting during the call.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, and then we'll go -- okay, go ahead.

Q As the United States looks to up sanctions on Russia, and given Russia's history of assassinating dissidents, giving sanctuary to terror- -- U.S.-designated terrorist organizations, would the U.S. consider labeling Russia a State Sponsor of Terrorism?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any assessment of that at this point in time. Obviously, we're continuing to look at the actions on the ground and the actions of leaders.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Two immigration questions for you. First, I wanted to confirm whether the administration supports an Afghan Adjustment Act; that's potential legislation that would secure permanent status for those thousands of evacuees that are here. It would go beyond, obviously, the TPS designation last week, which is 18 months.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I'd have to check with our Department of Homeland Security. Obviously, we just announced Temporary Protected Status last week, and we're continuing to assess and consider a range of ways to welcome and -- our Afghan partners.

Q And, just quickly: It's been two years since President Trump implemented Title 42. There are protests outside the White House today. Democrats are now actively calling for it to end. COVID cases are low. Is the administration at least preparing for the possibility that this can end? And how so?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. There are timelines, including, I think, upcoming in April, on when it's -- continues to be reconsidered. And those discussions happen among the health experts from the CDC and other medical experts within the administration.

And you always have to prepare, because if they make that decision, there would be an implementation that would be, in part, led by the Department of Homeland Security and others that you have to plan for.

Q Does that include preparing for a large influx of migrants at the border, specifically?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly that would be part of it if -- if and when the CDC makes that determination.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Thanks, everyone.

Q Can I ask you --

MS. PSAKI: We'll have Jake here tomorrow. Lots of questions, I'm sure you have.
Thank you, everyone.

3:41 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Chris Meagher and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, March 22, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 22, 2022 6:42 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2022

**Press Briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Chris Meagher and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan,
March 22, 2022**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:48 P.M. EDT

MR. MEAGHER: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. As you can see things are changing and moving pretty rapidly around here today.

Obviously, we've had some last-minute adjustments to the briefing, which is why I'm up here today. I know folks might have some questions after the statement that we just released from Jen. And we in the Press Office are going to strive throughout the rest of the day to get you the answers to the questions you might have.

A few additions beyond Jen's statement that I can provide right now. No members of the press who attended the briefing yesterday are considered to be close contacts. We are considering contact tracing, or we are currently conducting contact tracing, and any member of the press who is considered to be a close contact will be contacted. But if a close contact is determined, it would not be through yesterday's briefing. So, we just wanted to be clear about that.

I'm going to speak briefly about the first day and a half of Judge Jackson's committee hearing, and then I'm going to pass it over to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who will make some remarks at the top and then he's happy to take some questions on the trip. And he has a hard out where -- I'll call it.

And then again, please let us know if you have any follow ups after the briefing. We'll strive to get you answers, and we appreciate everybody's flexibility today.

With that, just a couple of things from the first day and a half of Judge Jackson's committee hearing. The President watched portions of Judge Jackson's hearing yesterday and today and is proud of the way she is showcasing her extraordinary qualifications, her experience, and her even-handedness. Her dedication to following the facts, the law, and our Constitution as an independent judge is clear.

He was also moved by the grace and dignity she has shown, the deference to senators, and the level of detail she is offering, reinforcing the value of her experience, her intellect, and the strength of her character.

The President was particularly struck when, reacting to Senator Leahy raising the broad support she'd received from the law enforcement community, Judge Jackson spoke about her family members who have served as police officers, saying, "I know what it's like to have loved ones who go off to protect and to serve, and the fear of not knowing whether or not they're going to come home again because of crime in the community. Those are not abstract concepts or political slogans to me."

As a former Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, President Biden also appreciated her respect for the intent of lawmakers and the text of the law. He appreciated Judge Jackson's commitment to stay in the lane of judges prescribed by the Constitution and her highlighting the importance of precedent.

He was also struck by how she swiftly dismantled conspiracy theories put forward in bad faith. They've been debunked by numerous fact checks, experts, and the record itself.

In selecting Judge Jackson, President Biden sought the opinions of Republicans and Democrats, who made clear they wanted someone have deep experience in the mold of Justice Breyer.

Today's testimony and Judge Jackson's endorsements by leading conservative jurists and some of the biggest law enforcement organizations in our country make clear she is indeed in Justice Breyer's mold.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Jake, who has a topper for you, and then he'll take some questions. Thanks.

MR. SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, everybody. I'll make a few comments, and then, as Chris said, I'd be happy to take your questions.

The President is heading to Europe tomorrow to reinforce the incredible unity we built with Allies and partners in response to Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine and to consult on next steps.

Let me take a moment to set the context for this trip. Russia intended to accomplish three basic objectives in launching its unprovoked attack against Ukraine: first, to subjugate Ukraine; second, to enhance Russian power and prestige; and third, to divide and weaken the West.

Russia has thus far manifestly failed to accomplish all three objectives. In fact, it has thus far achieved the opposite.

On the first, the brave citizens of Ukraine are refusing to submit. They're fighting back. They're defending their homes. They're defending their cities. And although Russia may take more territory in these brutal military operations, it will never take the country away from the Ukrainian people.

On the second, Russian power and prestige has been badly depleted. The Russian military has dramatically underperformed. The Russian economy has been rocked by powerful sanctions. The Russian high-tech and defense sectors are being choked off from key inputs. And Russia is a pariah in the international community.

On the third, the nations of the free world are more united, more determined, and more purposeful than at any point in recent memory.

For our part, since President Biden and the United States began warning the world of impending Russian aggression back in November, we have clearly and consistently pursued three lines of effort: first, help Ukraine defend itself by supplying weapons and military equipment; second, impose severe and escalating economic costs on Russia through the application of unprecedented sanctions in close coordination with Allies and partners in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and other parts of the world; and third, fortify NATO and the Western Alliance by enhancing our force posture on the eastern flank and making our allies more resilient against other forms of Russian aggression.

We've made decisive moves on all three fronts, and President Biden's trip will involve further actions on each of these three fronts.

He will attend an emergency NATO Summit, joined by the leaders of the other 29 NATO Allies. He will join the G7 leaders. And he will address the 27 leaders of the European Union at a session of the European Council. He will have the opportunity to coordinate on the next phase of military assistance to Ukraine.

He will join our partners in imposing further sanctions on Russia and tightening the existing sanctions to crack down on evasion and to ensure robust enforcement.

He will work with Allies on longer-term adjustments to NATO force posture on the eastern flank. He will announce joint action on enhancing European energy security and reducing Europe's dependence on Russian gas at long last.

He will announce further American contributions to a coordinated humanitarian response to ease the suffering of civilians inside Ukraine and to respond to the growing flow of refugees.

From Brussels, President Biden will travel to Poland, where he will engage with U.S. troops who are now helping to defend NATO territory, and he will meet with experts involved in the humanitarian response.

He will also hold a bilateral meeting with President Duda of Poland.

I'll leave further details on the schedule and program for each of these aspects of the trip to our trusty Communications and Press team.

Let me close with this: There will be hard days ahead in Ukraine -- hardest for the Ukrainian troops on the frontlines and the civilians under Russian bombardment. This war will not end easily or rapidly.

For the past few months, the West has been united. The President is traveling to Europe to ensure we stay united, to cement our collective resolve, to send a powerful message that we are prepared and committed to this for as long as it takes, and to advance our response on all three critical fronts that I've described: helping the Ukrainian people defend themselves, imposing and increasing costs on Russia, and reinforcing the Western alliance.

And with that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

Yeah.

Q Thank you, Jake. The Russians and the Hungarians seem to be reluctant on imposing a ban on importing Russian oil and gas. Will this weaken the sanctions?

And would you call on the groups that the President is going to meet to exclude Russia from the G20, of course, group?

And do you think that an agreement with Iran could be reached without Russia?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, when the President announced that the United States was going to ban the import of Russian oil and gas, he was very clear. He said that the United States is uniquely positioned: We are an energy producer. We can do this.

We can take this step of banning the import of Russian oil and gas and coal and be able to withstand it, have resilience against it.

But he also recognized quite explicitly in that statement that some of our European Allies and partners would not be able to follow suit, and he was not going to pressure them to do so.

From his perspective, what we have achieved with our European partners -- in terms of financial sanctions, export controls, and other measures to hit the Russian economy hard -- have had unprecedented impact on a large economy at a scale we have never seen before.

And so, he believes that that is in fact increasing the costs on Russia; it is sharpening the choice for Russia. And he feels very good about where things stand today in terms of the unity and resolve of the Western alliance on sanctions.

And as I mentioned in my opener, we will have more to say on sanctions in the coming days.

On the question of the G20, I will just say this: We believe that it cannot be business as usual for Russia in international institutions and in the international community. But as for particular institutions and particular decisions, we'd like to consult with our Allies, consult with our partners in those institutions before making any further pronouncements.

Finally, we believe that if there is an Iran nuclear deal that meets the standards the President has set to verifiably block the pathway of Iran to get to a nuclear weapon and put this program back in the box after President Trump let it out of the box when he left the deal back in 2018, we will do that deal because we believe it is in the American national security interest to do so. But we will not do that deal until it meets those objectives.

Yeah.

Q Yes, thank you very much. If you can tell us anything more about the sanctions -- you did just say "further sanctions" -- anything more about what areas that could be in, that would be great.

And the other thing is, there was a report out that British troops are basically secretly training Ukrainians to use this very sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons -- the "Star," I think, or "Start" or something like that.

MR. SULLIVAN: Right.

Q Are there any U.S. troops in Eastern Europe or anywhere else currently training Ukrainians (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, as for the first question, I'm not going to get ahead of an announcement which will be rolled out in conjunction with our Allies on Thursday when the President has the opportunity to speak with them. That's on a further package of sanctions.

What I will say is that one of the key elements of that announcement will focus not just on adding new sanctions, but on ensuring that there is joint effort to crack down on evasion -- evasion, on sanctions busting, on any attempt by any country to help Russia basically undermine, weaken, or get around the sanctions. That is an important part of this next phase.

We have applied an enormous amount of economic pressure. And in order to sustain and escalate that pressure over time, part of that is about new designations, new targets, but a big part of it is about effective enforcement and evasion -- applying the lessons that we've learned from other circumstances where we have, in fact, imposed sanctions on countries. So, stay tuned for that.

On the question of U.S. troops, we do not have U.S. troops currently training Ukrainians. We do not have U.S. troops on the territory of Ukraine. We do, of course, have U.S. troops defending NATO territory, providing reassurance to our Allies, deterring Russian aggression.

And, of course, the United States is playing a key role not just in the direct provision of military equipment to Ukraine but in the facilitation of military equipment provided by many of our Allies as well.

Yes.

Q Thanks, sir. Two questions, quickly. Moments ago, you said at the beginning that Russia would never take Ukraine. But does the President believe that Ukraine can win a military victory here? And if so, why haven't we heard that from him thus far?

And then my second question is: With regards to Russia and partnership with the United States and certain institutions, what does the President hope that Russia can bring to the Iran nuclear deal? What do they have to bring to the table after they have rightfully been made a pariah on the world stage?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I can describe to you what happened with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action back in 2015.

One of the key roles that Russia played in the implementation of that deal was that Russia actually accepted the enriched uranium from Iran so that Iran's stockpile -- stockpile stayed below 300 kilograms total, meaning that stockpile was so small that Iran could not swiftly break out to a nuclear weapon. That is a key part of how we ensured that Iran's nuclear program was in a box.

Now, we don't have to rely on any given country for any particular element of the deal, but that is a role that Russia played in the past -- a practical role that didn't have necessarily political significance but did have that practical significance.

What I said was that Russia is never going to take Ukraine away from the Ukrainian people -- never going to be able to subjugate the Ukrainian people. That was not a statement about particular slice of territory that a Russian advance could occupy for a period of time or about a particular battle that some Russian element could win.

I would refer you over to the Pentagon in terms of the best military analysis for how particular battles in particular fronts will play out.

But what -- I will say this: Whether Russia takes a city or takes a town or takes more territory, they are never going to be able to achieve the purpose that they set out, which was to subjugate this country, to bring this country to heel, because the Ukrainian people have made very clear that they will not be subjugated, no matter what it takes.

Yes.

Q Jake, thank you for being here. But to follow up on that question, is it the policy of this government that Ukraine should win this, it should reject Russia and regain its sovereignty and its freedom?

MR. SULLIVAN: We've said from the outset that we are unwavering in our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. We remain committed to that as our proposition for this.

But in the immediate day-to-day of this conflict, our focus is on ensuring that Ukraine has the tools that it needs to defend itself and to be able to effectively ensure that Russia cannot achieve its objectives in Ukraine. That's what we're focused on right now.

But on the basic proposition of Russia's -- of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, from day one of the Biden administration, we have not wavered an inch on that.

Yes.

Q Let me follow up on one thing, Jake -- on Article 5 and any cyberattack that comes now. Obviously, Russians have done it before; it wasn't an Article 5 issue then. Does something in Ukraine now change the contour of a cyberattack against any member nation of a -- of NATO become an Article 5 issue --

MR. SULLIVAN: So, in the June summit last --

Q -- having the President raise that just yesterday as dramatically as he did?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, last June, when the NATO leaders gathered for the NATO Summit, President Biden -- consulting with them, we put out a statement that spoke to cyberattacks and their relationship to Article 5. And we could see circumstances in which a collective response by the Alliance to a cyberattack would be called by an Ally. That is absolutely something where we and other countries could bring capabilities to bear to help a country both defend itself and respond to a particular cyberattack.

Now, that's not necessarily the same thing as a military response. That response could take many different forms. But we have made clear through NATO documents now -- not just last year, but going back years -- that cybersecurity is an Alliance issue, is -- it is an issue where, collectively, NATO is prepared to pull together both to enhance resilience, enhance defenses, and, if necessary, use the appropriate tools to respond.

Yeah.

Q Thanks, Jake. It's been just over a week since you met with your Chinese counterpart, a couple of days since the President spoke with President Xi. Have you seen any indications that China will or will not provide assistance to Russia?

MR. SULLIVAN: I can't make predictions going forward. What I can tell you is we have not seen since those meetings or since the President's conversation with Xi the provision of military equipment by China to Russia. But, of course, this is something we are monitoring closely. We will continue to monitor it. And the President made clear to President Xi the implications and consequences of any such provision of equipment, and they very well understand one another.

Q And where does this fall on the agenda at the NATO Summit? Will there be an effort to try to put specific concrete steps in place if China does provide that assistance?

MR. SULLIVAN: The President will certainly consult on the question of China's potential participation in the conflict of Ukraine while he's in Brussels -- he'll do so with NATO. He'll also do so when he addresses the 27 leaders of the European Union, because, on April 1st, the European Union is having a summit with China. And so, this will be an opportunity -- Thursday -- for the United States and our European partners to coordinate closely on what our message is. We believe we're very much on the same page with our European partners, and we will be speaking with one voice on this issue.

Yeah.

Q Yes, I just wanted to follow up on your comment about shoring up the eastern flank of NATO. Are you -- do you anticipate additional U.S. troop deployments to Europe?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I think there are two issues that are important to lay out. One is: What's required in the immediate term? And right now, Secretary of Defense, the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe believe that they have effective posture today for what's necessary today.

But, of course, that could evolve in the coming days and weeks, depending on Russia's actions and depending on the overall threat picture.

The second is: What is the longer-term force posture -- not just for this contingency, this emergency, this invasion, but

over the course of time? That is something the President will discuss with his Allies at the NATO Summit on Thursday.

Yeah.

Q Thank you. And if I might ask a quick follow-up on Russian troop casualties -- a Russian media report that the outlet blamed on hackers and withdrew suggested that almost 10,000 Russian servicemen had been killed and 16,000 had been wounded in Ukraine. Does that -- is your assessment that that number is realistic? Or how bad do you think the casualty situation is for Russia?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'd refer you to the Pentagon for precise casualty figures. We do believe it numbers in the thousands. But it is a necessarily imprecise analysis from our part to be able to get, you know, that number down to the precise figure. So, I would refer you over to the Pentagon for that.

Yeah?

Q The President said yesterday, Jake, that cyberwarfare is a capability Putin has but has decided to not use yet in this iteration of this war, but administration sources have told us the Russians have this multi-phase plan to target critical infrastructure that is already underway.

I'll give you a couple of specifics: Two weeks prior to the invasion, 21 U.S. energy companies targeted by hackers; they're involved with LNG production.

March 9th, CISA and the FBI began working with an unnamed American pharmaceutical company whose top execs were targeted with malicious phishing attacks. Internally, the administration has attributed that to Russian intelligence.

I have a list of stuff that goes on and on here. Suffice it to say, this -- how did these acts not constitute cyberwarfare so far already?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, the President put out a statement yesterday -- a very strong, clearly worded statement -- in which he said, based on evolving intelligence, we believe that attacks could occur.

Now, the Russians have spent years preparing the ground for attacks --

Q But do you --

MR. SULLIVAN: -- trying to get inside systems.

Q -- is the position that they are not already underway? Just want to clarify.

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I -- what I think we would distinguish between is gaining access to a system, which could be used for a variety of purposes -- intelligence collection or mere preparation for a future attack -- and the actual disruptive, destructive type of attack of the kind you saw that shut down the Colonial Pipeline last year, for example, or attack JBS Foods. And it's really that latter thing that we have not yet seen.

But how one defines cyberwarfare [sic] -- warfare or cyberattacks, of course, is going to differ across individuals.

The distinction the President was making was the distinction between all of that preparatory work, which has been ongoing for years and has, in fact, intensified, and the type of destruction or disruption -- the launch of a particular form of malware, for example -- that would result in the kinds of physical effects we've seen in past attacks.

Q So no successful attacks yet? Just want to clarify --

MR. SULLIVAN: --

Q Thanks, Jake. I wanted to ask about talk -- concerns about the use of nuclear weapons, including possibly smaller nuclear weapons. Can you just address those concerns and talk about how that might come up on this trip?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, President Putin, in the early days of the conflict, actually raised the specter of the potential use of nuclear weapons. It is something that we do have to be concerned about. Based on our current analysis, we have not changed our nuclear posture to date. But we are constantly monitoring for that potential contingency. And of course, we take it as seriously as one could possibly take it.

We will be consulting with Allies and partners on that potential contingency, among a range of others, and discussing what our potential responses are. But I'm not going to speak to that from this podium today. I'm going to let the President have the opportunity to speak with his fellow colleagues on what is a very weighty matter.

Yeah?

Q Jen was asked yesterday --

Q Are Vladimir Putin's days numbered, Jake? Are Vladimir Putin's days in power numbered?

MR. SULLIVAN: From our perspective, what happens with respect to the Russian political system is something that will be worked out inside Russia.

What we can do is put forward our basic three lines of effort. That's what we're doing: helping the Ukrainians defend themselves, fortifying the NATO Alliance, and imposing costs and consequences.

MR. MEAGHER: We've got time for one more. We've got time for one more.

Q I have two questions on Russia and North Korea and China. There is a report today that the North Korea's cyber-hacking organization is related to Russians' cyber-criminal organization. Do you have any information on that?

And I follow up next.

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm sorry, can you just repeat the question?

Q Yes. North Korea's cyber-hacking organization is related to Russian's cyber-criminal organization. Do you have any information on this?

MR. SULLIVAN: All I can say, generally, is that North Korea's cyber capabilities have -- have been manifest in the world and they work with all kinds of cyber criminals around the world, including Russian cyber criminals. I've got nothing further for you on that today.

Yeah, I'll take one more.

Q Thank you, Jake. Do have any expectation -- do you have any specific comments or expectations on the meeting between --

Q What specifically does -- what specifically --

Q -- between President Xi and President Zelenskyy that's scheduled to happen soon?

MR. SULLIVAN: Sorry, I told her --

Q Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. SULLIVAN: -- that I would call on her --

Q Thank you, Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: -- so I've got to -- I've got to let her ask the question.

Q What specifically does the President hope to accomplish when he's in Poland? And why did he feel that it would be helpful for him to go to Warsaw at this time, particularly when the Vice President was there less than two weeks ago?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, Poland has taken the brunt of the humanitarian impact outside of Ukraine in terms of the refugee flows. Poland is where the United States has surged a significant number of forces to be able to help defend and shore up the eastern flank. Poland has to contend not just with the war in Ukraine but with Russia's military deployments to Belarus, which have fundamentally changed the security equation there.

And so, for all of those reasons, we feel that it is the right place for him to go to be able to see troops, to be able to see humanitarian experts, and to be able to meet with a frontline and very vulnerable ally.

So, I'll -- I'll leave it at that, guys. Thanks.

MR. MEAGHER: Thank you, everybody.

Q Jake, is he meeting with refugees?

(Mr. Sullivan returns to the podium to retrieve his facemask.)

MR. SULLIVAN: Oh, sorry.

Q Is he meeting with refugees, Jake?

MR. SULLIVAN: We'll -- we'll --

Q I thought you said -- Psaki said that you'd tell us -- you -- you might be able to tell us today.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I think I said at the outset that we'll go through the precise details of the schedule (inaudible).

2:12 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan En Route Brussels, Belgium
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2022

Press Gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Brussels, Belgium

1:43 P.M. EDT

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hi, everybody. Okay. We have National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan here. And he's going to say a few words, take a couple of questions, and then I'll take over after that and take any other questions you might have.

Go ahead, Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Hey, guys. So, we're heading into a full day tomorrow in Brussels. The President will start by meeting with the Secretary General to check signals, you know, get on the same page in terms of the agenda for the NATO Summit. And then he'll be at the NATO Summit for three hours with his 29 fellow Allied leaders. So, it'll be NATO with 30.

NATO itself has not, as institution, been involved in the coordination or facilitation of security assistance to Ukraine. It's been individual members, individual Allies who have done that. The United States, obviously, providing a really significant amount of military equipment and weapons to Ukraine and also coordinating the supplies of Allies as well to facilitate their delivery.

So, it will be a subject of discussion at the summit -- even though, institutionally, NATO is not engaged in it, how we make sure that we're continuing to support Ukraine in its effort to defend itself, you know, will be a topic of conversation among

the leaders while the President is in Brussels.

They will also discuss the question of NATO's force posture on the eastern flank. The leaders will ratify some of the decisions taken by defense ministers last week. We'll have more to say on that tomorrow.

But they'll also task the military and political instruments of NATO to set out a longer-term game plan for what forces and capabilities are going to be required in those eastern flank countries -- to be, ultimately, agreed at the Madrid Summit this summer -- so that we've got a long-term footprint that is matched to the new security reality that's been created both by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and by what's happening in Belarus, including the fact that we're seeing Russian forces and projecting Russian forces ending up in a posture where there is more of them more frequently on the territory of Belarus, and perhaps other capabilities as well.

So that'll be the NATO Summit piece of it.

The President will then have opportunity to meet with the G7 leaders, and they'll issue a statement. And it will cover a range of issues. The G7 has been a central locus for sanctions coordination. It's where many of the key elements of the sanctions architecture were agreed and have been -- have been -- the details have been worked through.

And the G7 leaders tomorrow will agree on an initiative to coordinate on sanctions enforcement so that Russian efforts to evade the sanctions or other countries' effort to help Russia evade the sanctions can be dealt with effectively and in a coordinated fashion. And there'll be, you know, a specific example of what that means discussed at the meeting and rolled out tomorrow.

In addition, we, the United States, will announce a package of sanctions designations tomorrow that relate both to political figures, oligarchs -- so, individual designations as well as entities -- and that'll be released tomorrow.

The G7 will also cover a number of other critical issues, including the global energy picture and the global food security picture, and some of the other knock-on and spillover effects of the conflict in Ukraine on the global economy and on the livelihoods of the citizens of our countries and people all around the world.

And then the President will have the opportunity to have a signals check with President Michel, the President of the European Council, before he goes into a European Council meeting where he will have the opportunity to discuss the refugee and humanitarian situation that has been fast evolving over the course of the past month since Russia's latest military action got underway.

He'll have the chance to talk about next steps on sanctions with the European Union. He'll have the chance to talk about democratic resilience and supporting civil society and journalists and other instruments of strong democracies in many of the partner countries of the European Union in the east.

And there will be a few other elements to the discussion that he will have with European leaders, including China and how we get coordinated on our approach vis-à-vis China, especially as it relates to China's involvement in the crisis in Ukraine -- because the EU has a summit with China coming up on April 1st, so just a few days after the President will be engaging them in Brussels.

The last thing is, throughout the day, the President will obviously consult on potential contingencies: the possibility of cyberattacks by Russia against the United States or other Allied and partner countries, the possibility of the use of chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, the possibility of escalation in the conflict in other ways. And as I discussed yesterday at the podium, how to deal with the rhetoric and the commentary coming out of Russia on this whole question of the potential use of nuclear weapons.

I said yesterday that we haven't seen anything that's made us adjust our posture -- our nuclear posture, but it's, of course, something that we will have to continue to stay in close consultation with Allies and partners on, as well as communicate

directly to the Russians on.

So, let me stop there in terms of what tomorrow looks like, and I'm happy to take your questions.

Q Can I ask, on energy sanctions or energy actions, what -- you mentioned this yesterday -- what is on the table in terms of some sort of deal or anything between the U.S. and the EU to try to reduce reliance on Russian energy?

Of course, European partners have been more hesitant to enact the same measures that the UK, the U.S., Canada, and others have because they rely more heavily on it, in particular on natural gas. Is there anything you're going to discuss or announce on that? Is there deal in place? What can you tell us?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, this is a substantial topic of conversation. A major priority for both the President and his European allies is to reduce the dependence of Europe on Russian gas. Full stop.

And the practical roadmap for how to do that -- what steps have to be taken, what the United States can contribute, what Europe has to do itself -- this has been the subject of intense back-and-forth over the course of the past few days and weeks. And we will have more to say on this subject specifically on Friday, particularly with the European Commission and the European Commission President, von der Leyen. So he'll discuss it tomorrow.

But in terms of further things to say publicly on the subject, I'm not going to preview it today. But you can zero in on Friday morning for more news on that, so stay tuned.

Q Can you say what the U.S. will tell its European partners what it wants to see from China or what it hopes Europe will seek from China? In other words, what is the latest in terms of what you're -- what you perceive to be China's involvement or lack of involvement in Russia's war and the trajectory, I guess?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, as I said yesterday, we have not actually seen or do not have evidence of the actual provision of military equipment for use in Ukraine from China to Russia. But we are monitoring that closely and, of course, our European allies are as well.

And we've sent a clear message to China about the implications and consequences of any such provision of military equipment. And we're on the same page with our European allies on that, and we expect that they will convey similar messages in their dealings at the highest levels with the Chinese government.

The same thing goes for systematic efforts to undermine, weaken, or circumvent the sanctions regime that we have put in place. And we've communicated on that as well to China, and we expect similar communication by the European Union and individual European countries. And we're also on the same page in that regard.

And the G7 sanctions enforcement initiative ensuring that there isn't systematic sanctions busting, that's not specifically about China, but it will apply to every significant economy and the decisions that any of those economies take to try in an intentional and active way to undermine or weaken the sanctions that we put in place.

Q Can I just follow up on the energy issue? The idea of reducing energy dependence sounds like a medium- to long-term question. Is the United States -- is the President going to be pressing the -- his European allies to do more in the immediate term -- a ban on oil, a ban on gas? A ban on coal has been raised. I mean, is -- and understanding that their reluctance is because of their greater dependence, is the message from the United States going to be, "You guys need to act now"?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, first, I think it's important to note that the United States itself is acting now to help Europe on the issue of Russia -- dependence on Russian gas, diverting cargoes to help increase the supply of gas -- U.S. LNG -- to Europe in the immediate term. And I think you can expect that the U.S. will look for ways to increase LNG supplies, surge LNG supplies to Europe not just over the course of years, but over the course of months as well. Of course, that amount will

grow over time.

So, our focus now is not on -- over the course of the next couple of days -- is not on a particular sanctions move we're asking Europe to make on this. It is, rather: How do we put in place a strategy that is not just a long-term strategy but is a short-term strategy to help reduce dependence and to create more freedom and flexibility then for different policy choices by the Europeans?

Q Can I put a finer point on the China question? You -- they have a preexisting economic relationship -- China and Russia. Are your concerns about an incremental growth in that relationship as a financial relationship? Is status quo okay? Could you maybe elaborate a little bit more about those concerns?

MR. SULLIVAN: What do you mean? I'm sorry, I'm not sure I fully --

Q China and Russia have a preexisting financial relationship: trade. Is it okay if that trade continues as is? Or are you concerned about incremental change in that -- or growth in that kind of trade to avoid sanctions? Can you put a little finer point on that?

MR. SULLIVAN: Sure. I mean, just three sort of examples that I think will give a little bit more flavor to the kinds of things we're looking out for.

One is attempting to backfill in response to the export controls that we have imposed -- Chinese companies or companies from other countries choose to backfill. We obviously have tools available to us to ensure that backfilling can't happen. That's one.

Second is, from the point of view of payment settlements and financial sanctions, systematic efforts, industrial-scale efforts to try to reorient the settlement of financial payments and so forth. That's something that, in coordination with our G7 allies, we will look at and respond to.

And then third, of course, is the kinds of non-steady state, new efforts to try to seize opportunities that have been created by the reduction in commerce between Europe, Japan, and other countries because of the sanctions not just with China but across the board. That's something that we will look at as well.

And, you know, I've been clear that we're not going to lay out in specifics the particular countermeasures we would take, the particular steps we'd impose. We're communicating that privately to countries. You know, I don't want to use the microphone to threaten; I just want to say this is something we're vigilant about and that we have tools at our disposal to deal with in coordination with the G7 and with other countries.

Q A question on chemical and biological. Has the U.S. seen evidence that Russia has moved or deployed any of these weapons in a way to threaten Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't have any intelligence to share with you today on this subject. The main thing that we're looking at right now is the deliberate drumbeat of misinformation, propaganda, and lies on this subject that has all the markers of a precursor to them actually using these weapons.

Q So is the U.S. assessment based entirely on that drumbeat of propaganda, or is it also based on movements of weapons?

MR. SULLIVAN: It's a very fair question. All I can tell you right now is I can't comment further on the intelligence picture on this today. To the extent that I'm in a position to share further information related to our intelligence, I'll be sure to do so. But right now, I don't have anything else to share.

Q Jake, was there anything in your conversations with Chinese officials last week or President -- or the President's conversations with President Xi that left you at all reassured that the Chinese would not provide weapons or other assistance to the Russians? Or do you -- are you more concerned after those conversations?

assistance to the Russians? Or do you -- are you more concerned after those conversations?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I will beg your forgiveness in advance by being sort of intentionally vague in my answer to your question. And the reason is because this is not the kind of circumstance where you just kind of feel reassurance. It's going to require constant vigilance, constant monitoring. We will have to see what happens.

So, all I can really say to you is that coming out of that conversation, we have not seen the Chinese government move forward on the supply of weapons, but it's something we're watching every day. And I really can't characterize my level of comfort with that out one way or the other; it's something we just have to maintain vigilance about.

Q I have a question on the EU. Do you want to see the European Union -- does the administration want to see the European Union spend more on defense -- such as what President Macron has suggested, that they should become -- you know, borrowing more money, spending more, bolstering its defense spending to this point?

MR. SULLIVAN: When President Biden and President Macron met in Rome in October, they put out a joint statement. And one of the points in that statement was support across the board for increased European capability and investment in the strength of their defense tools and the modernization of their defense establishments with one very important principle underlying that, and that is complementarity with NATO.

So, all of this work that's being done by individual European countries, by the European Union, this is something that contributes overall to the health and strength of the transatlantic Alliance so long it is -- it is done in complementarity with NATO.

Q Should Russia still be part of the G20? Any concern, any talk about that? There are some countries that have voiced some -- some opinions on that. I know there's a financial leadership meeting in Washington of the G20 come maybe April. Should Russia be a -- should Russia representatives attend that?

MR. SULLIVAN: So what I said yesterday, which I'll repeat today, is that we don't believe it can be business as usual with Russian international institutions. But in terms of specific answers to that kind of question for the G20 or other international organizations, we want to have the opportunity to consult with our Allies and partners around the world, including our G20 partners before I opine on that question publicly.

Q A couple. On -- if you're looking at the sanctions and the upcoming planned sanctions that you plan to announce, on -- say, on like a scale of 1 to 10, or do it on however measure you would like to -- like, what do you have left? Like, where would you be at if 10 were ratcheted up to the highest degree?

Q And what else could you do?

Q Yeah, how much room to grow do you have?

MR. SULLIVAN: So I -- I would ask you guys, I guess, two -- two questions -- two things. The first is: In terms of an analysis of the macroeconomic impact of what we have done and then, you know, what additional tools are in the toolkit, Daleep -- who is on the trip, and we'll get you with him in a backgrounder so you have the opportunity to speak with him directly on this -- is the expert and then to speak also with the Treasury Department. So that's one thing.

Because I think this is one where really getting down granularly into what hit has the Russian economy taken, in what way, and then, you know, what are other things that we could do over time.

But the second thing I would ask you is to consider this not just like we're firing bullets out of the chamber of a gun and we fired X number and there's Y number left. I think it's the wrong way to think about it.

What we've done on the financial sanctions and the export controls is create a vise that is squeezing harder and harder with each passing day and week. And then, as we see the impact and we see efforts to evade, we think about adjustments we

each passing day and week. And then, as we see the impact and we see efforts to evade, we think about adjustments we need to make to ensure that vise continues to tighten.

So our theory on this was never: Every three days we fire another bullet. It was: Put the major pieces in place, look for ways to continue to tighten the screws, and then consider other means as we go forward. And, of course, we will do that.

So I can't characterize this question of what we've done and what we have left precisely, in part because we don't think of it quite in the terms that your question posed.

Q (Inaudible.)

MR. SULLIVAN: But on -- on the kind of macro picture, which is a kind of -- the way to back into an answer to your question, I'd ask you to speak with Daleep.

Q Can you talk a little bit about Friday? There's obviously a big gaping hole in the President's schedule. Is he going to go close to the border? Is he going to meet with -- is he going to tour refugees -- with refugees? What -- what else can you tell us about Friday?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'll let Karine talk to you about Friday when --

Q When do you think we may see --

MR. SULLIVAN: -- when the time is right.

Q -- JCPOA updated? And to what extent that will be discussed on this trip during this week?

MR. SULLIVAN: So he'll have the chance to talk to our E3 European partners -- UK, France, Germany; four members of the P5+1; as well as the European Union, which plays this important coordinating role in the P5+1.

Where things stand now is we've made progress over the course of the past several weeks. There are still some issues left. We're working on those issues. It's unclear whether this will come to closure or not. But, you know, we're diligently trying to drive the diplomacy to a place where we have put Iran's nuclear program back in a box.

Q Are you sure that a deal could put more money or more freedom to use money in the hands of Iran, and that, in turn, could be a lifeline to Russia's economy? Can you talk about the sort of triangulation of that here?

MR. SULLIVAN: First, Russia posed both publicly and privately this proposition that Iran should somehow be entirely carved out of the sanctions regime, which was not accepted by any of the parties.

So the only question of sanctions as it relates to Russia in the context of the JCPOA is about sanctions on Iran being able to, for example, cooperate with the Russian Atomic Energy authorities to ship out their enriched uranium.

So we feel confident that if we were to get back into the JCPOA on a compliance-for-compliance basis. It would not create a significant economic opportunity for Russia.

And we would take whatever necessary enforcement steps to ensure that that was the case.

Q Jake, how much visibility do you have into the status of Russian-Ukrainian negotiations right now? And how much faith do you have in the Russians being a trustworthy negotiation partner in the first place?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I will point out that Russia has not been trustworthy in its public statements about its intentions with respect to Ukraine for months. So, we take everything that they say at the negotiating table or from their podiums with a very large grain of salt

with a very large grant of aid.

We are in very consistent communication with our Ukrainian friends. And President Biden speaks to President Zelenskyy on this issue. President Biden also speaks with the Presidents of France and Germany, the Prime Minister of Israel, the President of Turkey, others who have been actively engaged in discussions with President Putin and President Zelenskyy. So, we're actively engaged in monitoring the ongoing diplomacy, though the United States is not directly at the table or directly playing any kind of mediating or brokering role. And we will see how things unfold.

Our basic principle is: This is about Ukraine's future, Ukraine's destiny, and therefore it is up to Ukraine and the Ukrainian leadership, the Ukrainian people to make their own judgments about any agreement that they would reach with the Russians.

Q Can you comment on the transfer of air defense systems to Ukraine. Is that moving forward? You know, we've talked about the S-300 system -- things like that. There's a large shuffle going on. What's the latest on that? When could Ukraine expect to see those systems in their country?

MR. SULLIVAN: We feel good about the progress that we are making with respect to air defense systems. And I'm not going to get into further details on that because I don't want to compromise the ongoing effort to ensure that Ukraine gets the tools it needs to protect itself from the sky.

Q Can you confirm that NATO -- NATO Allied countries want to extend the contract of the Secretary General, Stoltenberg, and what the President's view -- possibly through September of 2023 -- and what the President's view on that might be?

MR. SULLIVAN: The President thinks very highly of Secretary General Stoltenberg. They've developed a relationship of trust. And Pres- -- Secretary General Stoltenberg has played an instrumental role in helping secure the powerful unity you've seen at NATO through this crisis. And I don't have anything for you on the question of his tenure.

Q Can you say whether he wants to see continuity there and not sort of breaking this up in the middle of this conflict?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, all I will say is: We think that Jens Stoltenberg has been doing a fantastic job and, day in and day out, has played a critical leadership role for NATO.

And you'll forgive me if for today, on this plane flight, I will add nothing to that other than our unreserved view that that Stoltenberg is a real asset to the Alliance. And then, you know, the leaders will have the chance to talk tomorrow.

Q Does the President plan to send additional U.S. troops to Eastern Europe? And if so, how many?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, we don't have any plans for announcements of specific additional units to move to Eastern Europe at this time. But the President is constantly reviewing plans for near-term adjustments to our force posture in all the eastern flank countries, depending on how things develop. So that's not a today thing or a tomorrow thing, but it's -- it's a matter of consistent reassessment.

Q Do you know if any additional troop deployments will be announced on this trip?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't.

Q And that's -- but what about the broader -- the long-term of NATO force deployment along the eastern --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, we have --

Q -- that -- that could involve U.S. troops to --

MR. SULLIVAN: Two aspects of this will be discussed tomorrow. One is the immediate need to shore up on a rotational basis those Allies on the southern end of the eastern flank, and that will be discussed tomorrow.

And then the second is, across the entire eastern flank, as we head to the Madrid Summit, what decisions does NATO have to take for longer-term force posture adjustments? And of course, some of those will involve U.S. forces.

Q On this trip, what are you looking to hear from other EU and the UK leaders? You've talked about trying to reduce Europe's energy -- energy dependence on Russian oil and gas. What else would you like to hear from the leaders that the President will be meeting?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think what we would like to hear is that the resolve and unity that we've seen for the past month will endure for as long as it takes. That's at a topline.

Then how that translates specifically: that countries follow through on the commitments they've made with respect to the supply of military equipment and add to those commitments as Ukraine's needs evolve over time; that countries remain fully committed to enforcing the sanctions on the books and, to the extent we find additional targets that can help impose pressure on Putin, we do -- we move in a joint way on that; that we all work together to do our part on the humanitarian element of this crisis, both the suffering inside Ukraine and the refugee crisis outside Ukraine -- here, Europe has really stepped up in a huge way, and it's the United States that will be coming with additional commitments on both humanitarian assistance and refugees tomorrow; and that NATO, as an Alliance, puts its money where its mouth is when it comes to actually defending every inch of NATO territory, and that means following through on the necessary capabilities and contributions to defend the eastern flank and to defend the whole Alliance.

That's what tomorrow is all about across an integrated set of three meetings. And we think that we will have a substantial set of outcomes that will emerge by the end of the day when, after many hours, the President will emerge to address all of you.

Q Does President Biden plan to have a short bilat with Turkish President Erdoğan on the sidelines of NATO?

MR. SULLIVAN: We don't have a bilat scheduled with President Erdoğan. But you know how these things go. They'll be hanging out at NATO Headquarters, and I expect he'll have the chance to have brief conversations with a number of leaders.

Q Is the U.S. position on giving planes to Ukraine -- remains the same? Or are you looking to discuss that if the Polish, for instance, bring it up? Is it still your belief that it should not be NATO giving planes to Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: There's been no change in our position on the MiG-29s.

Q And have you guys formally shot down the idea of a peacekeeping force that the Poles have raised? Or is that something that is still at least open for discussion from the U.S. perspective?

MR. SULLIVAN: President Biden's been very clear that we're not sending U.S. soldiers to fight Russian soldiers in Ukraine. I have not, myself, had the opportunity, nor has President Biden had the opportunity to consult with his Polish counterpart, or I with mine, on exactly what they have in mind. So, we'll -- we'll have that conversation.

But our position, with respect to deployment of U.S. forces in Ukraine, has been clear from the start, and it remains unchanged.

Q There's a difference between saying U.S. forces shouldn't be deployed and NATO forces should not be deployed into Ukraine. Do you have the same red line about forces under a NATO banner from other NATO countries going into Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think before I opine on what is a hypothetical or theoretical question like that, I think it's important for us to get the opportunity to hear more about something we've just seen in the press, and then we can speak to it.

All right. Thank you, guys.

Q Thank you, Jake.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thanks, Jake. Thank you so much.

Q Now you get to tell us all about the refugees in the Friday schedule.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. Is that what you want me to talk about?

Q Jake --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. No, Jake did a great job laying out tomorrow -- NATO, EU, G7 meetings that the President will be -- will be part of.

I mean, look, what I -- what I can do is -- you guys already have all of this -- is say what happens when he leaves Brussels -- right? -- in a more broad stroke --

Q Right, just because --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- and say what happens after Brussels in a more broad -- broad stroke.

So, as you guys already know, he's going to meet with President Duda once he leaves Brussels and goes to Poland to thank him for everything the people of Poland are doing and to discuss our coordinated humanitarian response to support the many Ukrainians who have been impacted by Putin's war.

I think Jake also talked about the President -- where he will engage with U.S. troops who are now -- who are now helping to defend NATO territory yesterday. He talked about that. And he will meet with experts involved in a humanitarian response.

We talked about the speech that the President will be giving, but I won't give any more further --

Q His speech? I'm sorry, which?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: We talked about that. The President is going to be giving a speech in Poland.

Q In Poland?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, we announced that probably a day or two ago.

And so those are kind of -- (laughs) -- Michael, you got to keep up. You got to keep up. So, we talked -- I'm just going to, like I said, talk about the broader strokes of things that he's going to do tomorrow.

Clearly, we'll give more guidance on what Friday will look like. But for security purposes, we just want to keep it more broad and not go into details.

Q Can you give us an update on whether the President tested before this trip since Monday and what his most recent COVID test result was?

Q And just any general update of other people who tested positive in the White House.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, the President ha- -- was tested yesterday, as Josh just mentioned, and as part of his regular testing cadence. There s no change to the President s testing cadence during his travel because he was not a close contact.

He will be tested throughout the trip in alignment with the various entry and departure requirements for the countries he will be visiting.

For example, for context here, there ll be no testing entry requirement for Brussel -- testing requirement. There ll be testing requirement for a Warsaw exit requirement for return to the U.S.

As far as your question, so, since -- when we re talking about staff and all of those things that you just asked -- so, since July, because of our commitment to transparency, we provide updates when any White House official tests positive for COVID-19 and with White House Medical Unit deems them as having had close contact with the President, Vice President, First Lady, and -- or Second Gentleman. That will be up to the White House Medical Unit based on the criteria of the CDC.

You know, Jen, for example, shared her positive case yesterday, as she did in October, out of an abundance of transparency.

If an individual does not meet this criteria that I just laid out, meaning they are not a close contact of our four principals, it would be up to the individual. This has been our policy since July. It hasn t changed.

Q Can you give us an update on whether you re still considering any further releases of the SPR to deal with the current gas price?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don t have anything new to share on that, on any new actions. But as the President has said previously, we re going to continue to assess, and our government will take action as needed as evidenced -- as evidenced by recent Strategic Petroleum Reserve releases that we announced not too long ago, and the -- and announced International Energy Agency agreement -- those two things that we announced probably, I don t know, about a month ago -- a couple weeks ago.

Q And acknowledging that there are other things on the go, has he made any decisions on when you will name a new Fed nominee?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don t have anything to preview for you on the new Fed nominee.

Q Forgive me for having to ask.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: (Laughs.) No, it s a fair -- it s a -- not a surprising ask.

Q Does the President have any further reaction to yesterday here on the Sup- -- on Ketanji Brown Jackson?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah. So, as we noted, the President did watch some of -- some of the -- did watch some of the portions of yesterday s hearing with Judge Jackson.

And again, he couldn t be more proud of her intellect, her grace, character, and the value of her experience. The country is seeing just how qualified Judge Jackson is and how she determines cases fairly based solely on the facts and the law, which is what the American people expect in a Supreme Court justice. That s why she is endorsed by conservative judges, the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, dozens of police chiefs, sheriffs, and 83 bipartisan former State Attorney Generals. Just today, 43 former federal prosecutors in Florida endorsed Judge Jackson.

So, like we said yesterday, the President was also impressed with how she dismantled bad-faith conspiracy theories and

that have -- that have been fact checked by major media outlets and experts, like some of you all here, and moderates in both parties are now dismissing them for the fringe smears that they are.

She thoughtfully and thoroughly answered questions from senators for nearly 12 hours, as you all know, demonstrating the temperament required for a Supreme Court justice and showing the strength of her intellect and character.

Q I guess -- I just wanted to follow up really quickly. Does he have any reaction to the kind of questioning that Senator Cruz, Senator Hawley, Senator Cotton -- I mean, you know, a range of them -- did? What did he think of their questions?

Q And just to piggyback on that -- just the critical race theory as well -- you know, theory and all of that.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Let me talk more broadly about your point, Michael, about the overall attacks. Look -- so, you know, we're going to -- we're focused on the full Senate. Right? She's been working hard to earn support since day one. She has -- since the day she was -- the President named her, she's met with 45 senators, and she's going to meet with more after.

And you've heard Republicans react well to her qualifications and her neutral methodology based in the facts of law -- law and facts -- based in the law and facts. And so, I want to be really clear: Our strategy doesn't depend on Josh Hawley or any of the other senators who attacked her.

On the critical race theory, you know, she actually spoke to this yesterday as well -- Judge Jackson. And to quote her, she said, when it comes to critical race theory, "never been something I've studied or relied on." She applies the facts and the law when making decisions on the bench, not academic theory.

And I also saw PolitiFact already found an attack about base -- about -- based on this "false" after a senator claims she considered it when judging cases. In comments to students about academic subjects that may -- that they may find interesting, she mentioned critical race theory in a list of other academic topics such as administrative law, constitutional law, negotiations, and contracts.

But again, I would refer you back to what she said herself about that.

Q But I guess the question is: Did he think the questions from the senators that we mentioned about critical race theory and the other issues -- the, you know, pornography, and whatever -- did he think those questions were inappropriate, racist, whatever -- however you want to say?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, it's basically what I said, Michael. He's very proud -- he's very proud of how she handled herself yesterday.

Q That doesn't answer --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, I think -- I think it does. We -- I just told you he watched -- he watched yesterday, and I just told you his reaction. We're not going to go -- we're not going to break it down -- break it down specific to details. I just laid out how he felt and why she was chosen and her bipartisan support that she's getting.

Q Can you give us more of a preview of the humanitarian assistance that we might expect to see? He's going to go to Poland. Polish leaders have been pretty clear about their breaking point. He's going to presumably see some evidence of that. I know you're not going to get ahead of the President, but can you give us some -- should Americans expect a more open-door policy to get these -- some of these folks into the U.S.?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, look -- you know, again, he's going to announce further American contributions to respond to the growing flow of refugees and to the coordinated humanitarian response to ease the suffering of civilians inside Ukraine, but I don't have anything further to preview.

Look, we are surging humanitarian assistance to countries neighboring Ukraine who are providing them with support. We've kind of laid out what we've done in the past -- these past couple weeks.

Q And with Poland, to help them -- some kind of relief package for Poland to help them deal with --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Again, I'm not -- I mean, you even said it in your question. I'm not going to get ahead of the President, but this is something that's coming forward.

Q I just -- last time on this one, to follow up on Michael's point. You know, he's served on this panel for many years, like many of these confirmation fights. Like just generally -- I know you don't want to respond to any specific senator -- how does he think that these Republican senators have comported themselves? Not her reaction to that, but the senators themselves.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, I'm not going to get into specifics on that at all. I'm just going to lay out what I said already and how he saw her performance, which is what is the most important thing is -- how Judge Jackson performed yesterday. He's very proud of her. We feel very confident in her being the next justice on the Supreme Court. I don't have anything further to read out to you.

Q Do you have any lists of bilats or anything you can share on what meetings he might have during this trip?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Say that last part.

Q Do you -- can you share anything about what bilateral meetings he might have on this trip?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No. Jake just talked about that. We don't have anything -- at least when he was asked about Turkey -- we don't have anything else to preview on a bilat meeting. And just to reiterate what Jake said --

Q Right.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- which is, you know, at these type of events -- the NATO in particular and the EU and G7 -- you never know what might happen. But we -- I don't have anything else to preview on a bilat.

Q All right.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. All right. Thanks, guys. Appreciate you all.

Q Thank you.

2:24 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
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To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 25, 2022 1:27 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2022

Press Gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Rzeszów, Poland

1:23 P.M. CET

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hello.

MR. SULLIVAN: Hey, guys. Hello. How are you?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hello. We have Jake Sullivan here. He's going to talk a little bit about the President's trip to Poland and our announcement today -- our energy announcement -- and then also take some Q&A. And then I'll follow up with any other questions you might have.

Go ahead, Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks. So, of course, you guys heard from the President and President von der Leyen earlier today on a new U.S.-EU energy framework that accomplishes two basic purposes: one, to help the EU reduce its dependence on Russian gas; and then two, to help it reduce its dependence on gas overall. And as part of that, we're committing to make available up to 15 billion cubic meters additional LNG this year through a variety of different means.

And then the Europeans will be working on building out their infrastructure to be able to accept up to 50 billion cubic

meters -- between now and 2030, per year -- additional LNG flows from the United States.

The basic notion here is that while we're making this clean energy transition and putting in place all of the tools and infrastructure necessary to have an economy powered by clean and renewable energy, while gas is still a substantial part of the energy mix, we want to make sure that the Europeans do not have to source that gas from Russia.

And so, we'll get to work immediately on that in 2022, and then we'll build year by year between now and 2030, even as we make the far-reaching investments necessary for the clean energy transition.

There'll be a joint task force established between the White House and the presidency of the European Commission to implement this basic approach.

And then, of course, they also spoke about an agreement on an updated framework for transatlantic data flows to ensure data privacy and security, and to protect those flows which form the foundation of a \$7.1 trillion economic relationship between the U.S. and the EU.

And this agreement in principle that was reached today really puts us in a position to ensure that American technology firms -- big firms, yes, but especially small- and medium-sized firms -- will be protected as we go forward and can fully and safely operate within the context of the U.S.-EU economic -- transatlantic economic relationship.

So that's what we did this morning.

Now, we're off to Rzeszów, Poland.

Q Rzeszów.

MR. SULLIVAN: Say it again.

Q Rzeszów. I just spent three weeks there. (Laughter.)

MR. SULLIVAN: Rzeszów, Poland -- thank you -- where the President will have the opportunity to meet with his Administrator of the USAID, Samantha Power, and a range of different humanitarian experts and leaders who will give him a briefing on the humanitarian assistance efforts both into and around Ukraine.

Yesterday, the President announced that the United States is committed to provide an additional billion dollars in humanitarian assistance to help the people of Ukraine -- those who are still inside the country and those who have been displaced by the conflict. And he will be able to talk through with a range of different humanitarian leaders and experts, both from the region and from the international community, as well as the U.S. government experts who are playing a key role in this -- how the efforts are going so far and what further steps need to be taken to make sure that we're investing those dollars as wisely as possible.

He will also have the chance to visit with troops from the 82nd Airborne Division, who have been deployed to Poland to reassure our NATO Ally and to deter further aggression on the eastern flank. And he will also get a briefing from the commanders of those units who will have the chance to lay out for him the various tasks and missions that the American troops stationed at the airfield here have been undertaking and continue to undertake.

We have 10,500 troops in Poland as part of 100,000 strong U.S. force contingent across the continent as a whole. And a significant number of those forces here in Poland were FLOT forward -- brigade combat team, tactical aviation, a Stryker unit -- to ensure that we have robust deterrence and assurance in the face of Russian aggression and to fulfill the President's commitment that we'll defend every inch of NATO territory.

We'll go on from Rzeszów to Warsaw. And tomorrow, the President will meet with President Duda of Poland. He will also

have the opportunity to meet with Ukrainian refugees and with American humanitarians who are there trying to help feed and respond to the material needs of the refugee population in Warsaw.

And he will give a major address tomorrow that will speak to the stakes of this moment, the urgency of the challenge that lies ahead, what the conflict in Ukraine means for the world, and why it is so important that the free world sustain unity and resolve in the face of Russian aggression. He'll also talk about the context and history of this conflict and where he sees it going from here.

So that will be a significant speech that he delivers tomorrow afternoon, before we get on the plane to come home.

And I think that covers the waterfront for now, although I reserve the right to revise and extend my remarks as necessary. (Laughter.)

Q Jake, President Zelenskyy said he thinks Russia wants to invade other Eastern European countries. Is that an assessment that the administration shares -- that other countries in Eastern Europe are at risk?

MR. SULLIVAN: So we do believe that Russian aggression in Ukraine shows a willingness by the Russians to disregard international borders and to disregard the basic rules of the road of the international community that have been built and sustained over the course of seven decades.

So the President has been very explicit that part of the reason he's sent forces forward to the Baltic states, to Poland, to Romania and he's supported the setup of these four battle groups in the southern countries of NATO's eastern flank is because it is important in this moment to send a clear message to Russia that the United States and NATO will defend every inch of NATO territory, and to deter any thinking that Putin might have about further Russian aggression into NATO.

In addition, the fact that Russian forces have mobilized in Belarus and that Belarus has changed its constitution to allow for more flexibility of the stationing of Russian troops and capabilities on its soil, that too has a significant impact, particularly on our NATO Allies in the Baltics and in Poland.

And so the combination of Russia's brutal war in Ukraine and the change in the physical military relationship between Russia and Belarus does mean, from the President's perspective, that the United States and NATO need to show strength and resolve in terms of the forces and capabilities postured along the eastern flank.

And you will see that in living color at this stop today.

Q Jake, President Biden, at the press conference yesterday, said that if Russia uses chemical weapons in Ukraine, the United States and NATO will respond in kind, which would seem to imply using chemical weapons back. Is that what he meant by "in kind"? Or what was he trying to say there?

MS. SULLIVAN: No. No. And you heard him in another answer say we'll respond accordingly -- meaning, you know, we will select the form and nature of our response based on the nature of the action Russia takes, and we'll do so in coordination with our Allies. And we've communicated to the Russians, as the President said publicly a couple of weeks ago, that there will be a severe price if Russia uses chemical weapons.

And I won't go beyond that other than to say the United States has no intention of using chemical weapons, period, under any circumstances.

Q And just briefly following --

Q Following up on that -- on nuclear weapons: With Russia threatening to use nuclear weapons, does the President consider that a red line? And how would the U.S. respond?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, again, I will just say, with respect to any use of weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear, chemical, biological -- Russia would pay a severe price for the use of those weapons, as the President has previously said. We have spoken to our Allies. We have done contingency planning within our own government. And we have communicated directly to the Russians. And I'm not going to speak further to it here.

Q On off-ramp for Putin here, was there a consensus -- a consensus of what that may look like, what strategies to get him there? Anything you can say about those particular discussions?

MR. SULLIVAN: From my perspective, "off-ramp" is the wrong concept -- because, of course, this was a war Putin chose to wage; it's a war Putin could choose to stop. At any moment, he could pull his forces back, he could end the bombardment of cities and civilians.

Now, there is a diplomatic process underway. That process is being conducted directly between the Ukrainians and the Russians. And you have some communication between European allies, like France and Germany, as well as partners like Israel, directly with the Russians.

The United States is not directly participating in those negotiations, but we're staying in close contact with our Ukrainian counterparts and with those other countries that are talking to both sides.

The President was very clear yesterday that, ultimately, any diplomatic agreement is one that Ukraine itself will have to determine for itself, and the United States is not going to push or pressure Ukraine into any particular outcome.

The last thing I would say is that, from our perspective, our role right now is to ensure that as long as Putin keeps pushing forward, that Ukraine has tools and capabilities to be able to effectively defend itself. That's where our focus is.

Q Jake, on the liquid natural gas, on the 15 billion cubic centimeter -- or cubic meters, excuse me -- that are supposed to go this year, how much of that supply is already secured or needs to be secured? And how much of that would be coming from the U.S. versus other countries?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, I'm not sure exactly what you mean by "already secured" versus "needs to be secured," because this will play out over the course of the year. So there haven't been contracts signed for every one of those, if that's what you mean by "secured."

But we believe that we've identified the sources to be able to hit that target. And it's a combination of what the U.S. can do directly. For example, on March 16th, we approved the expansion of the number of countries that could receive gas from some of our terminals, number one.

Number two, we have already, over the course of the past couple of months, effectively engaged in a cargo diversion strategy to move cargo that's destined for other countries to go to Europe. And we will be able to continue that over the course of the year.

And then, number three, the President himself has personally engaged with some other gas suppliers, including Qatar, who have been able to step up.

So, when you put all of those pieces together, we feel quite confident that we'll hit our mark.

Q And then, on the G20, really quickly. On the G20 --

Q Jake, (inaudible) what your response would be? To Ashley's question, you said you didn't want to say what the response would be. It would -- you know, you'd respond. But was there a consensus among allies at the meetings this week as to what the response would be just among yourselves? Did you guys decide what that would be if Russia used chemical and biological weapons?

chemical and biological weapons.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I would say this was a important topic of conversation at the summit, and it continues at working levels in the military, on the diplomatic side, and among the presidents' and prime ministers' offices. We are working through contingency planning for a range of different scenarios.

It is difficult to give precision to these kinds of hypotheticals because, of course, the form of use, the location of use, the context of use all have a bearing on the specificity of the response.

But in broad terms, I believe that there is convergence around the fundamental nature of how the Alliance would respond to these issues.

Q And just a response to the latest statement from Ukraine that the bombing of the theater in Mariupol killed hundreds of civilians.

MR. SULLIVAN: We all have a very deeply human response to what happened in the bombing of that theater, which is just absolute shock and horror, particularly given the fact that it was so clearly a civilian target that the Russians were striking and that they did so with such brazen disregard for the lives of innocent people.

In terms of a more formal response or analysis of the specific number, we've just seen that statement, and we're in touch with Ukrainians, but I don't have anything further to add.

Q Jake, in the past, you guys have said that, you know, a cyberattack on border countries from Russia -- NATO Allies would have to figure out if that counts -- if that invokes Article 5. Was there discussion of that yesterday? And was there any sort of decision made on that front?

MR. SULLIVAN: There has been no invocation of Article 5 at this point. You know, if a country suffers a cyberattack and calls for a collective response from the Alliance -- and I hasten to note: The invocation of Article 5 and the application of a collective response doesn't necessarily have to be a military response; it could take a number of forms, including helping that country remediate the problem, helping them build resilience against ongoing attacks, or taking a variety of cost-imposition measures against the attacker.

But ultimately, it comes down to the country under attack, probably first invoking Article 4 -- consultations to discuss the collective response -- and then making a determination as to whether to invoke Article 5, to ask the Alliance to come together to respond as one. That has not happened yet.

Q President Biden said yesterday that Putin should be kicked out of the G20 -- or Russia, more specifically. What efforts are underway to make that a reality? Is that possible?

And there was also mention that their economy, based on the sanctions, are now below that threshold anyway. So, what is the implication of that determination on their G20 status?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, the President very clearly expressed his view that, you know, Russia should not be a member in good standing of the G20, given what they've done. He also noted that Indonesia, as the chair, may have a different view. And he offered an alternative, which was having Ukraine be able to participate in the G20 meetings this year.

So, we will be discussing with the other G20 members, including Indonesia. And the President was clear in his remarks that we want to be respectful of the views of the chair in terms of how to think about us going forward. So we'll be talking to them. We'll be talking to other partners.

And I'll just leave it at what the President said yesterday, which I thought was quite clear, straightforward, and, frankly, logical: that at this moment in time, it just can't be business as usual with Russia in the G20.

Q On China, what -- on China, what was agreed to among the Allies about, like, what the message should be to them and how you're going to coordinate that? And what's the administration's view at this moment of how -- of whether they're leaning toward aiding the Russians at this point? Or have they -- are you seeing signs that they're backing away from doing so?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I would refer you -- I rarely get to just cite paragraphs in NATO communiqués, but I would refer you to paragraph eight in the NATO statement out yesterday. And I do so because it was an unusual -- an unusually direct statement, message to China from the Alliance, stating what the Allies agreed in the room, which is, collectively, we're going to speak with one voice in saying to China that they should not provide military or other forms of assistance to Russia in the prosecution of its brutal war in Ukraine. And all of the Allies agreed to carry that message individually, as well as speaking collectively on it.

The President also had the opportunity to coordinate with both President Michel and President von der Leyen of the European Union in advance of their April 1st summit, and to talk to the 27 at the EU on this topic. And there was broad agreement about sending that very clear message to Beijing about the implications and consequences of such support. I think we're all on the same page, and you'll see that play out.

On the question of what we're seeing: It remains true today what I told you two days ago, which is that since the President's call with Xi Jinping, since my meeting with Yang Jiechi in Rome, we have not seen the Chinese move forward with the provision of military equipment to Russia. But it's something we continue to watch every day.

Q Jake, back on chemical weapons briefly: I'm not asking for a specific, but throughout this invasion, the U.S. has been very clear that we would not want to -- or that you guys would not want to take steps that would be viewed as a direct escalation or confrontation with Russia. If Russia were to use chemical weapons, would that general view and philosophy change? Would the U.S. be more willing to get into a direct military confrontation with Russia?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think that is an excellent effort at getting me to say something substantially different on this question than I've said so far.

But, really, the key point here is that we've had the opportunity to speak directly to the Russians about the use of chemical weapons -- the potential use of chemical weapons. We've had the opportunity to coordinate with our Allies. We've had the opportunity to get organized internally. We've been clear publicly that Russia would pay a severe price. And beyond that, I'm not going to speak further to the issue.

It is something that, right after the conflict began, I personally tasked the stand-up of a new tiger team that would look at a range of contingencies -- this being a prominent one of those contingencies.

And so, we feel like we have made considerable efforts to put ourselves in a position to respond effectively. But I'm not going to preview the nature of that response.

Q A question about the escalation of responses. When -- you know, is the administration concerned that they're running out of sanctions that they could put on Russia that would still have a significant impact? You know, the U.S. has already done so much in the way of sanctions. Are there other ways to go up the escalatory ladder besides military conflict that the U.S. still has?

Q And actually, to follow up on that, is there any concern that these sanctions and these tough measures could have the opposite intended -- intention and backfire, and cause the population to actually, you know, get behind Putin if they feel that they're being put upon by the U.S. and the EU and NATO?

MR. SULLIVAN: Certainly the Russian leadership is going to aggressively make the case to their public that, you know, the poor, innocent government of Russia has just been economically attacked by the West, and they will use their very considerable propaganda machine to push that line

considerable propaganda machine to push that line.

But at the end of the day, the Russian people are going to ask the more fundamental question of why this happened and how this happened. And we believe that, at the end of the day, they will be able to connect the dots. And the same will be true up and down the Russian government: that this is -- these are costs that President Putin has brought on himself and his country and his economy and his defense industrial base because of his completely unjustified and unprovoked decision to go to war in Ukraine.

And we do think the sanctions will increasingly have the effect of pressuring and constraining the Russian economy, the Russian war machine in ways that will shape their thinking as they go forward. And that will undermine their capacity to play an aggressive role in the world, as they have done over the course of the past many years.

In terms of additional steps that we can take, we believe that, of course, there are additional measures to tighten the screws on sanctions, and we will be constantly reviewing those.

This point about enforcement, though, I think is really central. Because in the period ahead, Russia's main focus, from an economic perspective, is going to be to figure out how they can get around, over, or under the sanctions that have been imposed. And blocking off those pathways is going to be vital to producing the kinds of cost-imposition effects and vital to shaping the thinking in the Kremlin. So that's really going to be our focus in the near term.

But, yes, we believe that we still retain the capacity to impose additional costs on Russia that are not strictly military costs.

Q Can you speak to the timing of the North Korean missile launch? The President obviously was here overseas making the case. Any evidence to suggest the timing was not coincidental?

MR. SULLIVAN: You know, we --

Q (Inaudible) believe otherwise?

MR. SULLIVAN: We took the somewhat unusual step of putting out a statement several days ago from the Biden administration describing these two earlier tests -- I believe one was on February 28th, and the other was on March 4th, although I might have those dates slightly off -- as being testing the capabilities of an ICBM, which North Korea itself did not advertise but our intelligence community determined and then we declassified that information.

In that statement, we warned that there would be more ICBM tests, and that's what happened here.

We see this as part of a pattern of testing and provocation from North Korea that is -- has played out over the course of the past months and will continue to play out. We think there is likely more in store, and we don't see any particular indication that this test went on this day for this reason.

Indeed, some of what is, you know, maybe driving the tempo of the testing relates to the badly failed tests that occurred just a few days ago. But most of the decision-making on their nuclear and testing program occurs within the context of the Korean Peninsula and the North Korean view of its security situation, not what's happening with President Biden's travel schedule.

Q Jake on the Iran deal, now that it seems to be on its back, what can the U.S. do and what will the U.S. do to make sure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon and to get Russia on board with that program?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I wouldn't accept the characterization "on its back." I would say that we have made substantial progress in resolving a significant number of the issues that would be necessary for us to come back into the deal on a compliance-for-compliance basis. There still are issues left. There still is work to be done. But we are still seeking a diplomatic outcome here that puts Iran's nuclear program back in a box.

Of course, if diplomacy doesn't succeed, then we will work very closely with our international partners to increase the pressure on Iran.

And I would just point out that the difference between the Biden administration's approach on Iran policy and the previous administration's approach on Iran policy is that we do have the capacity to marshal and muster the support of key allies, particularly in Europe, that were divided from the United States on the Iran issue throughout the previous administration.

Q On the sanctions, you spoke about the importance of enforcing them. How much are secondary sanctions going to play into that? And, I guess, is the administration preparing to issue secondary sanctions on third parties who might be violating the ones already in place?

MR. SULLIVAN: So we have a number of tools to ensure compliance, and one of those tools is the designation of individuals or entities in third-party jurisdictions who are not complying with U.S. sanctions or who are undertaking systematic efforts to weaken or evade them. And those tools are, at this point, well understood by companies and countries around the world. And we won't -- you know, we're prepared to use them if it becomes necessary to do so.

Q Do you expect the peacekeeping proposal to be part of the discussions with President Duda? And after yesterday's discussions, is there any openness to it from the President's side?

MR. SULLIVAN: There was not any kind of detailed discussion of that proposal yesterday. I don't know, candidly, whether President Duda will raise it. If he does, the President will listen to him. But we still are seeking to understand greater details about what exactly they have in mind, because we don't have great clarity on that. And until we get those details, there's not much more I can add.

Q What's going on with the jets? What's the update with the jets? Are the jets coming? Is there a plan for the jets? Is that plan dead in the water? Was that part of negotiations this week -- getting jets into Ukraine in some form?

MR. SULLIVAN: I've got no update on the jets for you today. Nothing has fundamentally changed from our perspective since I think maybe you or one of the rest of you asked that question two days ago. I'll leave it at that for now.

Q Any update on the anti-air systems like the S-300?

MR. SULLIVAN: Only that the United States is working actively with allies in Europe and partners even further afield to get sophisticated anti-air capabilities to the Ukrainians.

I'm not going to speak about specific countries or specific systems because that work is underway and, of course, I want to protect the efficiency and effectiveness of that work to actually get those systems where they need to be.

Q Speaking of President Zelenskyy's demands, he made some specific demands for tanks, for anti-ship missiles. What was your official answer to him?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, we are in conversation with the Ukrainians and with our allies about coastal defense and anti-ship capabilities that we could provide. There are some operational complexities associated with that, but that is a vector, an area where we are trying to make rapid progress.

The -- we heard his request for tanks, among other things. He has not -- the Ukrainians have not yet specifically come to the United States, as far as I understand, on the tanks issue; they've gone to some other countries.

So, you know, we'll stay in consultation with them on all of these different kinds of systems and try to make a determination about what we can source, what's going to be effective, and what the cost-benefit analysis of the supply of any given system is.

Q Some of these weapons are supplied overland through NATO countries. Is the administration concerned that Russia would try to bomb these convoys before they enter Ukraine -- in a NATO country?

MR. SULLIVAN: We are doing contingency planning for the possibility that Russia chooses to strike NATO territory in that context or in any other context. And the President has been about as clear as one can be about his absolute determination to respond decisively alongside the other members of our Alliance if Russia attacks NATO.

Q Jake, can you share any behind-the-scenes color, details of what the President is doing, how he is preparing for the address you mentioned on Saturday, even what he's eating? Just anything a little inter- -- like a little --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: (Inaudible.)

Q Yeah. But, I mean, interesting color. This has all been fascinating, but specifically in a color way.

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm so bad at that because I, like, only -- they -- I get out of my hermetically sealed container to execute on the policy issues and then get back in, and I'm not sure what people eat or drink.

Q But, like, has he been writing out the speech long?

MR. SULLIVAN: No, so -- so, let's see. I mean, look, first, I would just say President Biden -- and you can see this; you could see it in the press conference yesterday -- he just believes passionately in NATO, in the transatlantic relationship.

At the end of his remarks yesterday to the European Union, after some back-and-forth, he gave just a -- there's no other word for it than impassioned statement about the depth of his personal conviction for the transatlantic alliance and the transatlantic community, and the -- both its past, its present, and its future.

And so I would say he sleeps way less on these kinds of trips than maybe other trips because he's just going, going, going -- like, wants to talk to the next leader; you know, take the next briefing.

And also, we've been covering this incredibly broad range of stuff. Right? So he was monitoring the negotiations on closing out Privacy Shield at the same time that he was working through the details of how many billion cubic meters we're committing this year, at the same time as we're talking about coastal defense capabilities to Ukraine, at the same time that we're dealing with food security and wheat prices.

So, on this trip, it's been a kind of remarkable mix of having a bunch of subject-matter experts further up in the cabin here doing, like, speed dating with the President on, you know, every topic under the sun.

And I don't mean to, like, denigrate the substance of it by calling it "speed dating," but you get the -- you get the image -- like, working through all these different things. And he -- think he's probably taken every meal he's eaten so far here over a briefing. Right? Like, he's not sitting alone eating; he's eating while someone is going through some element of this trip with him.

So that's the best I can do for color today. (Laughter.) But I will try to improve upon it in the future. How about that? Okay.

Q (Inaudible) a lot of political issues. You know, the President's approval ratings have taken a dive. There's challenge with preserving democracy at home. Is the administration concerned that some of these things are undermining his ability to work with allies on these issues and, you know, marshaling support if people are concerned about the political backing that he has domestically?

MR. SULLIVAN: You know, it's interesting: We have not seen that at all. And, of course, I would say that in any event, but I actually really mean it today. (Laughter.)

They're just -- this -- the fact that the President a week ago could say, "Let's get the 30 Allies together. Let me go sit with the 27 leaders of the European Union. Let's get the G7, including Prime Minister Kishida coming over from Tokyo. Let's all get in one set of rooms on one day and have this out, and have everyone there energized, listening first and foremost to the President, and then rallying together" -- the story of the unity on this throughout has been a story of the President's personal leadership, of American leadership, and of the deep credibility that he has with these leaders. And that has been, from my perspective, unqualified.

I would just make one comment that the President said yesterday that I think is really important for you all to think about as we go forward, which is: Part of the reason that he decided that we needed to do this is because, the early weeks, unity can be carried forward by momentum and inertia and adrenaline, but this could go on for quite some time. And to sustain that unity as costs rise, as the tragedy unfolds, that's hard work. And the President wanted to get everyone together to say, "We've got to do that work."

So I'm not saying that the unity has been built and it'll just be there for good. But the rate limiter on that unity is not anything to do with the President's, you know, domestic circumstances. The rate limiter is just: This is a tough situation, and it takes an American President coming over to really try to drive this forward to keep the ball rolling and keep us all very tightly aligned and united.

So, I'll --

Q (Inaudible) on oil prices.

Q Jake, I think you may need to run.

MR. SULLIVAN: Last question.

Q The last. There was a strate- -- a lot of coordination among allies on oil -- strategic releases, things like that. Did those ideas come back up again? And should we expect some action on that?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, they came back up. They came back up in particularly the G7 meeting. That was a major topic of conversation. The question of what tools we have at our disposal to deal with global oil prices.

And without getting ahead of the administration, we are looking at various actions we could take. And I'll leave it at that for now. But this was not just about talking, it was about thinking about the steps we can take in the period ahead. But I will not steal the thunder of the administration on that issue.

So, thank you, guys. Appreciate (inaudible).

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Wow. That was great. All right, guys, hold on. It's getting super bumpy.

Q We're landing in about five minutes.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, we're at time? Okay. Oh, okay. All right. Well --

Q I'm out of questions.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Duncan, you're out of questions?

Q Can we just ask you something just about the ceasefire in Ethiopia and how --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I just don't have anything for you on that. I'm happy to check with the team, but I don't have

anything specifically on the ceasefire in Ethiopia. Clearly, that's something that we're monitoring.

All right.

Q Thank you.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: All right. Thanks, guys. See you on the ground.

1:58 P.M. CET

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against Saudi Arabia
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 25, 2022 5:53 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Houthi Attack Against Saudi Arabia

We condemn the Houthi attacks launched against Saudi Arabia's civil infrastructure earlier today. Unprovoked Houthi attacks against Saudi Aramco's oil storage facilities in Jeddah as well as attacks against civil facilities in Jizan, Najran, and Dhahran are acts of terrorism aimed to prolong the suffering of the Yemeni people. Today's attacks, just like the attacks against water treatment plants and energy infrastructure on March 19 and 20, were clearly enabled by Iran in violation of UN Security Council resolutions prohibiting the import of weapons into Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Government have endorsed multiple UN calls for ceasefires and de-escalation over the last year. The Houthis continue to reject these calls and respond with terrorist acts and military offensives, all of which extend the Yemen conflict and the consequent humanitarian crisis. It is time to bring this war to a close and relief to the Yemeni people but that can only happen if the Houthis agree to cooperate with the United Nations and its envoy working on a step-by-step process to de-escalate the conflict. The United States stands fully behind those efforts, and we will continue to fully support our partners in the defense of their territory from Houthi attacks. We call on the international community to do the same.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Director of Communications Kate Bedingfield
To: Goodander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 30, 2022 7:30 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2022

Press Briefing by Director of Communications Kate Bedingfield

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:40 P.M. EDT

MS. BED NGF E D: Hi, everyone. Good afternoon.

Q Good afternoon.

MS. BED NGF E D: Thanks for having me back.

So have a little bit 'd like to do at the top here and then --

Q Do we get to vote on who we'd prefer? (laughter.)

MS. BED NGF E D: 'm not going to take that personally. Thank you.

Q No, thought that's what you were saying.

MS. BED NGF E D: Thank you so much for -- thank you so much for that. (laughs.)

So have a little bit at the top, and then 'm, of course, happy to take your questions.

So, as the President remains focused on lowering costs for American families, we have a number of announcements today that will help households save money on utility bills.

First, the Department of Energy announced over \$3 billion from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is now available through the Weatherization Assistance Program for states and territories to retrofit households, make homes more energy efficient, and save families money.

The President's Infrastructure Law increased this program's resources ten-fold, which means more homeowners will be able to improve insulation, upgrade lighting and appliances, and electrify heating and cooling systems -- all of which save families hundreds of dollars per year while making homes more resilient to climate change and extreme temperatures.

Second, the Department of Energy is proposing new energy-saving standards for household appliances and equipment as part of a roadmap to complete 100 actions this year that would save families more than \$100 annually on their utility bills. And that's actually a very conservative estimate -- \$100 annually on their utility bills.

To give one example of the impacts, U.S. households buy over 7 million room air conditioners every year, and today we're proposing a new efficiency standard that would save consumers up to \$275 over the life of the product.

Energy also announced new codes that will make federal buildings more energy efficient, reduce operating costs, and ensure we are good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Together, these efforts can save more than \$15 billion in net costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and advance environmental justice.

From implementing his Infrastructure Law to updating important standards, these actions show the President following through on his mission to lower costs for working families and help them save money each month on their energy bills.

And then secondly, I'd like to say: Yesterday, the full Senate took its first vote on the nomination of Lisa Cook -- an important step forward toward confirming her and our other qualified nominees for the Federal Reserve.

We need to confirm Dr. Cook, along with the other three qualified nominees -- Jerome Powell for Chair, Lael Brainard for Vice Chair, and Philip Jefferson for a seat on the Board of Governors -- so that the Federal Reserve can move ahead in its work to help address inflation.

We call on senators on both sides of the aisle to support these nominees because they are eminently qualified to serve. This is important, and we hope the Senate can get it done soon so they can get to work.

So, thank you very much. And with that, AP.

Q Thanks, Kate. AP is reporting plans by the administration to end Title 42 by May 23rd. Has the Biden administration prepared to deal with the aftermath of ending Title

42 and the expected influx of migrants?

MS. BED NGF E D: So, first, what would say is that this is a decision that we have long deferred to CDC. Title 42 is a public health directive; it is not an immigration or migration enforcement measure. So the decision on when to lift Title 42 we defer to the CDC.

That being said, of course we are planning for multiple contingencies, and we have every expectation that when the CDC ultimately decides it's appropriate to lift Title 42, there will be an influx of people to the border. And so, we are doing a lot of work to plan for that contingency.

I think you saw yesterday the Department of Homeland Security did a briefing walking through some of the planning that they're doing to increase efficiency, to ensure that we have the capacity, to ensure that we are operating in a way that's -- that is treating migrants humanely, fairly.

So you heard from them yesterday on some of the planning that they're doing more broadly -- now, not specifically tied to Title 42 or an ultimate decision to lift it, but just more broadly to the work that they're doing to continue to build up our migration system and ensure that we are restoring order at the border.

Q And then secondly, if Putin has bad information, per declassified U.S. intelligence, what does that mean for the war in Ukraine and the prospects for negotiations right now?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, I certainly am not a spokesperson for the Kremlin and cannot speak to what is in Vladimir Putin's head.

What I can say is, of course, we have information that Putin felt misled by the Russian military, which has resulted in persistent tension between Putin and his military leadership.

We believe that Putin is being misinformed by his advisors about how badly the Russian military is performing and how the Russian economy is being crippled by sanctions because his senior advisors are too afraid to tell him the truth.

So it is increasingly clear that Putin's war has been a strategic blunder that has left Russia weaker over the long term and increasingly isolated on the world stage.

Q On that -- mean, in the lead up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the administration declassified information like this to sort of lay out what Putin's intentions were. You seem to be doing that again now by making it clear that he's being misled by his advisors. Can you just discuss what's the hope and the goal in going public with this now?

MS. BED NGF E D: So, again, I think what this does is paint a picture of what a strategic error Putin and Russia have made here. We saw from the outset that they, for example, made an aggressive push toward Kyiv at the beginning of the invasion. They are now publicly trying to redefine the goals of their invasion to be -- to be different than they were at the outset.

think putting forward this information simply contributes to a sense that this has been a strategic error for them. Again, 'm not going to characterize, you know, what they are thinking. 'm certainly not going to characterize how they may or may not use this information to make decisions. That's not my place. But do think that making this information public contributes to an understanding that this has been a strategic failure for Russia.

Obviously, we will continue to pursue our strategy of imposing severe costs on Russia and trying to strengthen Ukraine on the battlefield and at the negotiating table.

Q And if Putin is being misinformed like this, then who is really pulling the strings here?

MS. BED NGF E D: That's not a question that 'm able to speak to from this podium. think this is a -- again, don't speak for the Kremlin.

What can speak to is what -- the information that we see, which, again, as say, shows that he has felt misled by the Russian military, and it has resulted in this persistent tension.

Q And just lastly, how does this impact concerns about whether, you know, any deal that may be negotiated with Russia -- between Russia and Ukraine -- can be trusted?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, again, we are not negotiators in that process. We are obviously in close contact with the Ukrainians as they work through this process.

Again, our role is to do everything we can to strengthen Ukraine on the battlefield, as we've done with the security assistance -- the unprecedented amount of security assistance and weapons that we've flowed to Ukraine and also to strengthen -- strengthen their hand at the negotiating table by continuing to apply incredibly severe costs and sanctions on Russia.

Q And on the intelligence, is your -- is your expectation that releasing this information is -- are you hoping that it changes Putin's calculus or the military's calculus as they approach these things?

MS. BED NGF E D: t is -- that is not our intent. Our intent is simply to make the information available so that there is a full understanding of what kind of strategic blunder this has been for Russia and for the Russian people.

Q And is there anything more that you can share just about, you know, whether this is an assessment that you're extremely confident in? know, you know, typically, there's a range of views among analysts across the intelligence agencies about how solid information is. s there anything you can tell us about how solid this is? And what is underlying this that gives you the confidence that this is the right reading?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, can't speak more specifically to the intelligence because we obviously do not do anything to compromise sources or methods. will simply say we have made it public and allow you to draw conclusion from that.

Q Thank you.

Q So does the U.S. believe that Putin is now fully aware of the misinformation, that he now has a clear picture of Russia's military operations and how badly it is performing?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, again, would just say that we obviously have information, which we have now made public, that he felt misled by the Russian military. We believe he's being misinformed by his advisors about how badly the Russian military is performing and how the Russian economy is being crippled by sanctions because, again, his senior advisors are too afraid to tell him the truth.

Beyond that, can't characterize -- can't characterize any further than that.

Q Are there any examples that you might be able to offer us -- other than Putin not knowing initially that his military was using and losing conscripts in Ukraine -- that show how Putin was potentially being misinformed by his advisors?

MS. BED NGF E D: don't have any detail beyond what we've made public already.

Q Just fin- -- one more.

MS. BED NGF E D: Sure. Of course.

Q U.S. officials have obviously been saying since yesterday that the U.S. is not going to be fooled by Russian claims about a withdrawal from Ukraine until you all see it happen on the ground. Does President Zelenskyy share in that skepticism?

MS. BED NGF E D: 'm sorry. apologize. Ask that one more time.

Q You all have been saying that you're not going to be fooled by Russia's assessment or promises that it is going to start withdrawing and start pulling back on military attacks in Ukraine.

MS. BED NGF E D: Right. Right.

Q Wondering if President Zelenskyy -- since he spoke with President Biden -- does he share in that assessment?

MS. BED NGF E D: Right. Well, won't -- won't characterize President Zelenskyy's thinking, but will say that we continue to see evidence today of Russia attacking, advancing -- attacking in places where they had previously said they would not. So think that is self-evident.

And obviously we continue to do everything we can to flow assistance, security assistance to the -- to the Ukrainians.

Q Hey, Kate. Back to Title 42 for a minute. Back in the spring of last year, there was a very large surge of families -- record surge of children at the -- migrant children at the border that overwhelmed Border Patrol stations. t took a long time to get them moved into HHS -- into sort of temporary shelters and then, ultimately, to HHS.

Since then, there hasn't been a major overhaul of the immigration system. egislation

that the President proposed is completely stalled in Congress. You know, there have been some sort of tweaks and -- and changes around the edges, but there hasn't been a wholesale kind of rethinking or change of the asylum system at the border. The MPP program that Donald Trump put into place is back in place by a court order, but it's also at a very low level.

So what is there in place now if there is another surge in the next month or two when this is lifted? What is there in place that gives the administration confidence that -- that some different result will happen than happened a year ago?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, think if you look back to the spring -- to the time period you're referencing -- there was an effort to move those unaccompanied minors as quickly as possible out of Border Patrol custody and into facilities that were more suited for children.

And we were able to dramatically reduce those numbers -- they were in the thousands -- over the course of a couple of months through the work of DHS and others -- and HHS, should say. We were able to dramatically reduce those numbers, move those kids quickly out of Border Patrol -- Border Patrol custody and into the system.

So think, you know, if you look at what we were able to do last spring, there was -- there was an ability to move those numbers and move those children quickly into a more -- into facilities that were better suited for them.

Writ large, would, again, point to the things that the President has done to try to rebuild what was -- if you remember when we came into office -- a system that was decimated by the previous administration.

The previous administration spent four years trying to tear apart a lot of the pieces of our immigration system. And so we were, in many ways, building from, you know -- won't say scratch, certainly -- but we were building from a place where a lot of this -- these pieces had been torn down.

So what we focused on and what the President has focused on is working with the Department of Homeland Security to give clear guidance for internal enforcement; extending and newly designating TPS -- Temporary Protected Status -- for a number of countries; restarting the Central American Minors Program that the previous administration ended; putting together the Family Reunification Task Force, which we have made some progress on reunifying some of those families who were torn apart under the previous administration; of course, ending the Muslim ban and the public charge rule; and protecting DACA recipients.

So this President has taken numerous important, substantive steps. Of course, there is more work to do. There is absolutely more work to do. But we've taken serious strides forward since we took office last year.

Q Okay. And then one quick follow-up. You said again the line that the administration has used a lot, which is that the Title 42 isn't an immigration policy; it's a public health policy. Has the President, has Ron Klain, has anybody else in the senior administration tried to overrule the CDC over -- during the past year in its efforts to lift ~~Title 2~~ [Title 42] prior to now?

MS. BED NGF E D: No.

Q Okay.

MS. BED NGF E D: Yes, Ed.

Q Thank you. On COV D, can you help us understand -- you guys have laid out sort of what happens if the money runs out that you're requesting. Can you remind us: What, in the view of the White House, is the most urgent item on that list that runs the risk of not being funded?

And Republicans again today are saying the money for this is there in previously passed legislation. There's one figure they're saying -- is \$160 billion is there from the COV D relief bill. What is the White House response to that suggestion?

MS. BED NGF E D: So, firstly, this is funding that's going to be used to provide tests. It will fund additional vaccines -- for example, as we were talking about yesterday, should there come a time where a fourth shot is recommended for the broader population. It will -- it will also fund lifesaving treatments and also our ability to additionally provide vaccines around the world, which is another piece of ensuring that the virus is not able to -- to move around the globe.

So, you know, this is critically important funding. The stakes are very real and very high. You have heard the President state this repeatedly -- that this is critical in order for us to continue our progress.

The other thing I would say about this funding is that it will allow us to prepare for the eventuality -- the possibility -- shouldn't say "eventuality" -- the possibility of another variant, another wave. It will give us the funding that we need to be prepared for the future. So it is critically urgent in that way.

And I'm sorry, what was the second part of your question?

Q Well, the idea that they say the money's already there -- that there's unused funds from previously passed legislation.

MS. BED NGF E D: So, obviously, we initially proposed this as emergency funding, but we are working with the Congress -- the Congress is working to get this done. The President has been very clear that it should get done. How the -- how the mechanism of finally coming to an agreement on this works out, we'll leave that to the Congress. But the President has been very clear that we need this funding and that it's urgent.

Q And to follow up on something he said earlier -- that he may have a meeting with the family of Trevor Reed, and they're trying to make that happen: Is that happening today or at some point soon?

MS. BED NGF E D: Don't yet know if it's happening today, but I spoke to the President about this earlier. You obviously all heard from him. He is very eager to meet with the family, and we're working through when that's possible.

Kristen.

Q Thank you, Kate. I want to ask you about the call with President Zelenskyy, but just a couple more on this new information about Putin being left in the dark by his military advisors. Who authorized the release of that intelligence?

MS. BED NGF E D: That's not something I can speak to. Obviously, it was declassified and put forward into the public sphere.

Q Can you say -- did the President sign off on this?

MS. BED NGF E D: I cannot speak to that, except to say that this is information that we declassified and made public.

Q Okay. There has been so much discussion about the concerns over whether Putin would use chemical weapons, nuclear weapons, biological weapons. Does this increase the administration's concern that Putin might lash out in that way?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, as I say, I'm not going to characterize what Vladimir Putin is thinking, what the Kremlin is thinking, or how this might impact their calculus. That is not the intent of putting the information forward. What it does is underscore that this has been a strategic blunder for Russia.

But I am not going to -- I'm not going to characterize how, you know, Vladimir Putin might be thinking about this.

I will say that we are prepared for any and all contingencies. As you know, there's a lot of work going on to be prepared for contingencies. And we've also been very clear that should Russia act in that way, there will be severe consequences.

Q On the call, Kate, the readout that the White House put out says, "The leaders discussed how the United States is working around the clock to fulfill the main security assistance requests by Ukraine." We don't know what specifically the President of Ukraine asked for of President Biden, but publicly, at least, he has called for those Polish MiGs; he's called for anti-aircraft. Are -- has the President changed his decision in that space? Is he now potentially more open to providing those Polish MiGs, given that statement?

MS. BED NGF E D: We have provided -- excuse me -- we have provided an unprecedented amount of security assistance to Ukraine, including anti-air, anti-tank systems, small armaments -- things that our military have assessed are the most impactful weapons on the battlefield in Ukraine.

So, as the President is making a decision about what to send, he takes into account two things. First, the assessment of our military about what is most impactful, what is best able to help the Ukrainian armed forces turn back Russian aggression. And we've seen that the weapons that we have provided have been instrumental in helping them.

And then secondly -- and then secondly, as he has said many, many times, he is not looking for direct American military conflict with the Russian military. He has been clear that providing the planes makes this -- there are logistical complications to providing the planes. And he's not going to make decisions that is going to lead to direct conflict between the United States military and the Russian military.

a direct conflict between the United States and Russia and the Russian and the United States.

Q And yet President Zelenskyy has been clear, including when he addressed NATO: He doesn't think it's enough. He doesn't think that NATO is doing enough. He thinks that there, yes, has been a lot of assistance, but it doesn't go far enough for him to achieve the goals.

MS. BED NGF E D: Again, the scope -- the scope and scale of the assistance -- the security assistance that we have provided to the Ukrainians is unprecedented. We have worked very, very closely with them -- again, as they discussed on the call today. We've worked very closely with them to provide them with the weapons that they need.

And again, the President takes into account those two factors that I was just talking about when making decisions.

But that being said, he -- we have sent \$2 billion in security assistance to Ukraine. And we continue to supply them those -- those deliveries are happening daily. Every day, they're -- those weapons are being delivered.

So we are doing everything -- the President is making every effort to ensure that they are getting what they need.

Q Very quickly -- any reaction to former President Trump calling on Putin to release information about Hunter Biden? Are you concerned about that?

MS. BED NGF E D: So what I would say about that is: What kind of American, let alone an ex-president, thinks that this is the right time to enter into a scheme with Vladimir Putin and brag about his connections to Vladimir Putin? There is only one, and it's Donald Trump.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Kate. Earlier today, Germany said it is willing to act as a security guarantor for Ukraine as part of the peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. Is the U.S. willing to become a guarantor of Ukraine's security or considering that option?

MS. BED NGF E D: So we are in constant discussion with Ukrainians about ways that we can help ensure that they are sovereign and secure. But there's nothing specific about a security guarantee that I can speak to at this time.

Q Do you have any more information on the \$500 million in budgetary aid for Ukraine that was mentioned as part of the readout between the President's call with President Zelenskyy? Did President Zelenskyy specifically ask for this to help pay for salaries and other government functions? And is it coming out of the \$13.6 billion in Ukraine-related funding in the omnibus or is it separate from that?

MS. BED NGF E D: So it is financial assistance the Ukrainian government can use to bolster its economy and pay for budgetary expenses, such as paying salaries and maintaining government services. We don't yet have additional detail on where the money is coming from. That is being worked through. But it is a commitment that the President made today.

Q And lastly, what is the administration's current view of whether the U.S. Embassy in Moscow should remain open? And how is the administration going about evaluating whether or not to keep the embassy open?

MS. BED NGF E D: So don't have any additional news to make on that at this moment. Obviously, we will come back to you if there's development on that front, but there's nothing new that can announce from this podium at this moment.

Thank you.

Q Thanks, Kate. On the economy, the yield curve for the 10-year Treasury note has inverted. Historically, this is viewed as a sign that investors are pessimistic about the long-term view of the economy and they expect a recession is nearing. So can you tell us what the White House believes is the prospects for a recession nearing and how concerned you might be about it?

MS. BED NGF E D: Sure. So, you know, as Chairman Powell said after the last Fed meeting, "All signs are that this is a strong economy" and "the probability of a recession within the next year is not particularly elevated. Our team looks at a broad range of indicators to understand the health of the economy now and going forward. This is one, but there are many, many others.

And the other important indicators to include, as we're assessing where the economy stands, are things that, frankly, because of the President's economic plan, you know, we're able to confront from a position of strength.

So that's, for example, the fastest economic growth in nearly 40 years, a record 7.4 million jobs created, the fastest decrease in unemployment on record to 3.8 percent, and the first major economy to return to pre-pandemic levels.

So while historically this has been one indicator, it is far from the only one. And many of the other fundamentals that we look at to assess where we are economically are incredibly strong and getting stronger.

Q And then on the meeting later today between President Biden and moderate and progressive House Democrats: What should we see as a sign of this meeting? Are we -- should we expect that there's going to be some kind of consensus around a plan on the domestic side that is going to be ready to ship over to the Senate? Or can you tell us more about what they're going to discuss on the executive action front?

MS. BED NGF E D: Sure. Sure. So this is part of his continued engagement with the Hill. He's been meeting with a number of different caucuses over the course of the last month -- he and the -- and our senior team here at the White House.

We are obviously constantly in close contact with the Hill. would not -- would not view this as a decision-making meeting; this is a discussion of our shared priorities. would not anticipate a deliverable coming out of it. This is, again, a continued discussion of our strategic priorities as we try to move forward on our agenda.

Q And then just really quickly on India. Daleep Singh is there for the next couple of days meeting with officials. Is the U.S. frustrated with India's response to the -

21 days meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State. I also need to know what the U.S. response is to Russia's invasion of Ukraine? And what kind of message is Daleep and his team going to be delivering to the Indian government on that front?

MS. BED NGF E D: Sure. So, as you note, Daleep will be in New Delhi to continue our ongoing consultations with the government of India and advance a range of issues in the U.S.-India economic relationship and strategic partnership. He will meet with the government of India to deepen cooperation; to promote inclusive economic growth and prosperity, and a free and open Indo-Pacific.

He will consult closely with counterparts on the consequences of Russia's unjustified war against Ukraine and mitigating its impact on the global economy.

He will also discuss the priorities of the Biden administration, including the promotion of high-quality infrastructure through Build Back Better World and the development of an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.

Q Hi, Kate.

MS. BED NGF E D: Hi.

Q I know this was asked yesterday, but in the last 24 hours, has this White House learned anything about why there is that gap in call logs on January 6th from the Trump White House that was given over to the Select Committee?

MS. BED NGF E D: We have not -- my answer has not changed from 24 hours ago, which is that I would refer you to the Archives on that. But certainly, where we can cooperate, where we are needed to cooperate to fill in that gap, we will. But I would refer you to the Archives on that.

Q Okay. And then regarding the \$500 million to Ukraine, what is the current explanation of why the President hasn't sent over a nominee to the Senate to be the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine right now? What's the current thinking on that?

MS. BED NGF E D: That's an excellent question, and I'll have to circle back with you on it. Thanks.

Q Hey. On the pandemic: The President got his second booster shot today, but more than half of American -- adult Americans have not gotten their first booster shot, even as public health, you know, officials warn about a fall increase of BA.2 variant. I wonder: Is the White House concerned about that? Like what is the White House doing to sort of help close that gap? What's the message to Americans?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, our message to Americans, first and foremost, is to get vaccinated and get boosted. That is the best way to protect yourself from the virus and to protect against the spread of the virus.

What I would say about -- what I would say about the BA.2 is that -- you know, it is certainly more transmissible than the original Omicron strain, but there's no evidence that it's more severe than Omicron.

Our vaccines continue to work well against BA.2, particularly, again, with the high

level of protection provided by boosters.

So, we continue to both encourage people to get boosted, but would also point to all the work that we've done to make boosters available, to make vaccines available. There are 90,000 free locations nationwide where you can get -- where you can get vaccinated and boosted.

And then, lastly, would revisit something we were talking about earlier, which is that we need Congress to pass the 22 and a half billion in emergency COV D funding immediately so that we can maintain our tools to protect people and to be fully prepared for the possibility of any new variants.

Q Yeah. One more on that last part. Has the President or the White House reached out specifically to any of these legislators who have lobbed criticism that, you know, you haven't used the money that's already been allocated for pandemic -- the fight against the pandemic?

MS. BED NGF E D: don't have any specific engagements to read out, but obviously we continue to work closely with the Hill. The President has stated very clearly that there's an urgent need for this money and wants to see it -- he wants to see it done.

Q Well how, after printing trillions of dollars -- taxpayers might want to know -- is there not enough money to continue fighting the pandemic? Trillions of dollars and now --

MS. BED NGF E D: We have --

Q -- you're out of it? s all of the accounting done -- every single dollar?

MS. BED NGF E D: So, we have the resources that we need in this current moment. What we need is this funding to be able to plan for the future; to prepare for, as say, the possibility of a new variant, the possibility of a new wave. We don't want to be caught flat-footed.

We currently have, for example, all of the vaccine supply that we need to vaccinate and boost every American. But what we need to have this money for is to prepare to be ready for the future.

As we -- as we know, the -- you know, the virus can be unpredictable, and we need to be prepared. And there's an urgent need to do that.

Q Right. But can you see why taxpayers would be skeptical? mean, trillions of dollars and, all of a sudden, you need billions more.

MS. BED NGF E D: think taxpayers want to be prepared for the virus, and they want to make sure that we have the resources that we need to keep them safe. And that's what this administration is focused on.

Q And separately, why (inaudible) --

MS. BED NGF E D: Jacqui.

Q Thank you, Kate. Sorry.

Q -- hide protections in (inaudible) --

MS. BED NGF E D: Sorry.

Jacqui, yeah.

Q The President, Kate, has called -- the President has called Putin a "war criminal." He said that he believes he will "meet the legal definition" of a war criminal. And the U.S. has vowed to pursue all accountability measures, including prosecution. Sentencing for war crimes is long-term imprisonment. So how does all of that not equate to calling for regime change?

MS. BED NGF E D: The President has been incredibly clear about this. He is not advocating for a policy of regime change. He -- what he said a couple of days ago was a statement of personal moral outrage, but we do not have a formal policy of regime change.

What we are doing is continuing to impose unprecedented costs on Russia. We are ensuring that the Russian -- that Russia is paying for this choice. You know, Putin himself has said that the cost, the impact of the sanctions has been significant.

So, we are continuing to focus on our strategy of making sure that we are providing security assistance to Ukraine and imposing significant costs on Russia for these choices.

Q So when he said that he believes Putin will "meet the legal definition" of war criminal, was he not saying that he believes he will be convicted of that crime?

MS. BED NGF E D: He was not, in fact.

Q And then does the President and the national security team here believe that Ukraine can win and push Russia out of its borders? And if so, has the U.S. adjusted its strategy at all in helping Ukraine since they started to win?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, I would argue that, from the outset, that we've done everything in our power -- a tremendous, tremendous amount -- to provide Ukraine with what it needs, to provide it with the resources to turn back Russian aggression. That has been the focus of our strategy. Again, a two-pronged strategy to impose costs and provide the -- both the security assistance and the humanitarian assistance to support Ukraine.

Q Is there any reason why no one from this administration has just plainly said, "We think Ukraine can win this war"?

MS. BED NGF E D: We -- think in our actions and in the support that we've provided, we've been very clear that we're doing everything we can to stand with Ukraine and ensure that they are able to push back against Russian aggression.

Q And just one more on the southern border. Has DHS requested National Guard troops to be sent to the border? Is that something the administration is

considering?

MS. BED NGF E D: As far as I know, that is not currently under consideration, but I'm happy to check in on it and come back to you.

Yes.

Q Thanks. First, Senator Susan Collins came out in support of Judge Jackson's confirmation to the Supreme Court today. Do you have a reaction to the, kind of, confirmation that you'll have a bipartisan vote there?

And then also, you know, in her statement, she said that the process is broken and it should go back to kind of being based on qualifications, experience, and not ideology. And I'm curious what you think about that.

MS. BED NGF E D: The President is incredibly grateful to Senator Collins for her thorough and fair consideration and her support. The two of them spoke earlier in this process, and he appreciated her thoughts and her insight.

Obviously, her support speaks to the qualification of Judge Jackson to sit on the Supreme Court. She -- Judge Jackson has been working hard to earn support and, you know, as you well know, responded to Republicans' requests for in-person meetings by promising to sit down with any senator who wanted. And she has engaged very directly. She answered over 20 hours of questions.

And, you know, she has earned the support of some of the most respected retired conservative judges in the country, and the Fraternal Order of Police, and so many others in law enforcement.

So she is an incredibly quality nominee for the Supreme Court. And the President is very grateful for Senator Collins' measured, reasonable, thorough, and fair consideration, and, ultimately, support for her.

Q What did he make of the other part of the statement or the White House make of the other part of the statement that the process as a whole is broken?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, I think what we're seeing in immediate -- in the immediate case is that the process is moving forward. She's receiving fair consideration. I think she was -- the President was incredibly proud of the way she handled herself during the hearings and thought she very effectively spoke to her judicial philosophy and handled incoming criticism.

So, I won't speak to the -- whether the process writ large is broken, as we are focused narrowly in this moment on the process in front of us.

And I would say the process in front of us is working. And I think, again, you know, Senator Collins' support today -- that the President was very grateful for it.

Q Yeah. Back to the intel release. I'm wondering if this is partially just an effort to embarrass Vladimir Putin -- to, sort of, publicly shame him or something. It comes across as -- you know, you say that you can't speak for the Kremlin, but then you're saying he feels misled by his advisors. It seems like there might be something

going on here.

MS. BED NGF E D: No. No. Our aim -- again, our aim is to show that this has been a strategic blunder for Russia, that there is -- ultimately, this is going to leave them weaker; it is not going to leave them stronger. And think making this information public simply contributes to the picture that, strategically, they are having to reorganize, to refit. And that shows that, again, this was a terrible decision for them.

And at the end of the day, as we've long said -- as we've said from the outset, as we said even before they invaded -- we said that this would be a strategic mistake for them. And think that that has borne out.

Q And going back to the COV D funding -- think it was your answer to Ed -- 'm trying to read between the lines just a little bit. But you had said, "Previously, we asked for \$22 billion as emergency funding that wouldn't need any offsets. Now we would like Congress to get us this money." Are you saying that you're willing to accept offsets? That -- and also, are you willing to accept less than the \$22 billion?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, what would say is we have been very clear that we need this money now. And we're hopeful that Congress is nearing a solution. And, you know, again, the President called for this initial 22 and a half billion as emergency funding.

But at the end of the day, we need the money. t's important. t's critical for our preparedness for the next -- you know, the next phase of COV D and being prepared so that we're not caught flat-footed.

So ultimately, we are -- we are hopeful that Congress is nearing a solution on this.

Q So we should take that as you're willing to accept the offsets.

MS. BED NGF E D: You should -- no. You should take it as what said, which is that we're hopeful that Congress is reaching a solution on this and Congress will determine, ultimately, where we net out on this.

Q Thank you very much, Kate. Going back to her question: Who the White House believe is winning this war?

MS. BED NGF E D: think that -- the White House believes that Ukraine has been -- has fought valiantly, has been incredibly brave and resolved in the face of atro- -- of atrocious, brutal invasion from Russia.

think what you've seen in the actions from this White House is that we have provided weapons, we have provided assistance, we have been there every step of the way and will continue to be. And we've put enormous, enormous economic pressure on Russia in order to -- in order to hopefully drive this conflict to a solution.

So, you know, think -- again, don't know that have to say it -- think that our actions show and the support that we provided shows that -- that we believe that Ukraine has been incredibly, incredibly brave, incredibly strong, and we're going to

continue to support them as they move forward.

Q And just one --

Q Kate -- did you -- do you want another one?

Q Yeah, do you mind? Because President Zelenskyy just tweeted also that President Biden and him talk about a new package of sanctions. Could -- do you have anything more specific on that?

MS. BED NGF E D: So don't have anything that can preview in this moment. But certainly, we are continuing to look at options to -- to expand and deepen our sanctions. And anticipate that we would probably have more for you on that in the coming days.

Q Okay. Thank you, Kate. Two quick ones, hopefully. Could you give us any steer on the additional capabilities bit of that readout in -- from the Zelenskyy call? Is there -- is there a shift in thinking, perhaps, that Ukraine needs a different category of weapons -- not just enough to hold the Russians back, but actually to push them back and out?

MS. BED NGF E D: So -- so an example of one of the -- one of those additional capabilities -- something that we talked about a little bit last week while we were in Europe -- you know, shore -- ship-to-shore capability, anti-ship capability -- that's just one example.

You know, beyond that, I'm not going to go into further detail on what's being discussed, except to say that we're doing everything we can to ensure that Ukraine has what it needs on the battlefield.

Q Thank you. And the other one is: Today, Boris Johnson said -- very black and white -- he said sanctions -- Western sanctions, not just British or G7 sanctions -- should stay in place until the Russian troops are all gone. That was a lot more black-and-white than anything that's come out of the White House. Did you -- does the White House share that kind of maximalist goal with sanctions? Are they going to stay there until the last Russian troops are gone?

MS. BED NGF E D: That's not something that I'm going to be able to pre-state in this moment. I will let -- I will let Boris Johnson and the UK government speak for themselves.

Yes.

Q Yeah. Thanks, Kate. There have been some reports recently that some Democratic senators on the Hill have expressed concerns about Eric Garcetti's nomination to be Ambassador to India. Does the White House still have confidence in him and its ability to get him confirmed?

MS. BED NGF E D: We do. We do have -- the President has confidence in Mayor Garcetti. He believes he will be an excellent representative in India.

would remind you that his nomination advanced unanimously with bipartisan support in

committee, and we're continuing to engage with senators and working to earn bipartisan support for his nomination and believe he should receive a vote in the Senate expeditiously.

Q Yeah. And earlier this month, President Zelenskyy signed a decree to combine Ukraine's national TV channels into one platform, saying he wants to create a unified information policy. Ukraine also announced it was banning 11 political parties with ties to Russia. Is the White House concerned at all about these moves by the Ukrainians?

MS. BED NGF E D: So this is the first that I'm hearing of it. I will look into it. I'm happy to talk to our national security team and get back to you. Thanks.

Q Kate --

MS. BED NGF E D: Yeah, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen -- (laughter) -- excuse me, Kate.

Q Oops.

MS. BED NGF E D: High praise.

Q Red hair. (laughter.) You had mentioned that the administration encourages boosters. You talked about the work you've done on that. But given that COVID cases are down and that the pace of boosters has been sluggish, will there be an actual public campaign by the President or the administration -- more of an outward effort -- to get people to get their boosters?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, I think we'll -- we will continue to do the work we've been doing. And today, we launched a new website, COVID.gov, which gives people what they need to track transmission in their community, to find a test-to-treat location -- so, an opportunity, a location where you can go; you can get a test; and if you're positive, you can get an antiviral.

So this website is part of our effort -- our continued and ongoing effort to make sure that people have what they need to deal with COVID as we move into potentially the next phase of this -- of this disease.

You know, from the outset, we have said and continue to believe -- because the science shows -- that getting vaccinated, getting boosted is the best thing that you can do in order to protect yourself from the virus. So, that has been a big piece of our public messaging. That's been a big piece of our message to the country. And it will continue to be.

Q The President today described this new moment where he said COVID "no longer controls our lives." How critical is it that Americans get boosted to stay in this new moment right now?

MS. BED NGF E D: It's -- it's important. And our message has consistently been that it is important to -- it's important to get boosted. The science shows it is the best way to prevent the spread of the virus and to -- and to protect you and your loved

ones and your family and your friends from getting sick.

So, our message will always be: it is important to go out and get boosted. We have -- we are doing everything in our power, we have done everything in our power to make sure that boosters are free and available to everybody in the country.

Yes.

Q Thank you. Regarding the President's budget proposal, which was released earlier this week, Senator Manchin is already saying that he can't support this so-called "Billionaires Tax," because it would tax unrealized gains on certain assets. I wanted to hear your response to that.

And I'm also wondering if he sticks with that -- you know, if it -- given his opposition, does that mean this -- his proposal is DOA?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, what I would say is that the President's budget is a classic Joe Biden budget. It is focused on security, it is focused on our -- on security in our communities, security abroad. And it was designed in order to help ensure that we have the money in reserve to pay for and bring down the deficit, even after Congress sends us -- whatever they ultimately send us on the proposals that he very much wants to see passed to lower prescription drug costs, to lower the cost of childcare, to tackle the climate crisis. So the key priorities in this budget are those and ensuring that the wealthiest pay their fair share.

Obviously, I think Senator Manchin and President Biden share a belief that the rich should pay their fair share.

And we'll allow the process of negotiation to work itself out. We're not -- I'm obviously not going to negotiate from the podium, but I do think that Senator Manchin and President Biden share that fundamental belief that the rich should pay their fair share -- the wealthiest, I should say, should pay their fair share. And so, we'll continue to work with him and to work with Congress to move these forward.

Q Twenty-one states have filed a lawsuit against the government because of the mask mandates on transportation. I wonder if the White House is prepared through the CDC to issue some new guidance to lift these mask mandates.

MS. BED NGF E D: So I don't have any news to make on this at this moment. I will say these are conversations that are underway. And certainly, when we have news to make on this, we'll come back to you.

Q Thank you, Kate. When I asked Jake Sullivan the question of why no one in the administration had said definitively whether or not the White House thinks that Ukraine can win this war, he referred me to the Pentagon. And moments ago, when the same question was asked to you, you said, you know, "I don't know -- I don't know -- I have to say it." But the President has said, "I don't care what Putin thinks." So why isn't the administration being more definitive on this question? Is it for fear that this might provoke Moscow? Is it that you don't have a clear definition of what victory might look like over there?

MS. BED NGF E D: I think what is important here, as I said in my previous answer --

think what's important here is our actions. think we have -- we have provided the security assistance. We've provided the weapons to Ukraine. We continue to support Ukraine. We continue to do everything in our power to ensure that they have what they need.

So, think if there's -- don't think there should be any question about whether this White House and this President is doing everything in his power to support Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression.

Q But towards what end?

Q Thank you, Kate. have two questions, one on ran and one on electric vehicle. So on ran, today, Secretary Blinken announced new sanctions against ran over the ballistic missile activities. Will this endanger the nuclear talks?

MS. BED NGF E D: Sorry, the second part of the -- 'm sorry, the second part?

Q So, will this endanger the nuclear -- the nuclear talk?

MS. BED NGF E D: No, not at all. n fact, these sanctions are not connected to the ran deal. They demonstrate, in fact, what we have always said, which is that we will continue to hold ran accountable for its missile proliferation and support to proxy networks, as we work diplomatically to place strict limits on its nuclear program.

So that will be true whether we are back in the nuclear deal or not. And the sanctions that we're applying today will remain in place whether or not we're back in the nuclear deal.

But as you know, it is our firm view that getting out of the deal was a disaster. And second, that these other problems -- missiles and proxies -- are better addressed without ran at the nuclear breakout threshold.

So, ultimately, we are able to hold ran accountable on issues like the missile program, while continuing to work toward a potential deal to limit their nuclear program.

Q Second question, on the electric vehicles. So, yesterday, you announced investment in electric vehicles. And this week, actually a Chinese company called SEMCORP, which is Shanghai Energy New Materials Technology, just announced a new electric vehicle battery investment in Ohio which will create around 1,200 jobs.

We know pushing cutting-edge technology and preserving supply chain is Biden administration's priority. But would you also worry about national security aspects and future supply chain concern over a Chinese investment on those items?

MS. BED NGF E D: Well, as you say, a significant economic priority -- a significant plank of the Biden economic agenda is bringing our supply chains to America, making more in America, manufacturing in America. The President has been very focused on taking steps to ensure that we're doing that.

And we're seeing investment. You know, you'll all remember the investment that ntel announced a couple of months ago. You know, these are investments that are happening

in part because President Biden is creating an environment where companies feel like they will get the support and they will therefore bring their jobs here.

On the national security question, I would only say, of course, we would always review and undertake all of the necessary steps. But I don't have anything beyond that to say.

Q Thanks, Kate.

MS. BED NGF E D: Oh, okay. Thank you all. Appreciate it.

3:26 P.M. EDT

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by Press Secretary Jen Psaki on President Biden's Meeting with Joey and Paula Reed
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 30, 2022 9:08 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2022

Statement by Press Secretary Jen Psaki on President Biden's Meeting with Joey and Paula Reed

President Biden met today with Joey and Paula Reed, the parents of Trevor Reed, who is wrongfully detained in Russia. During their meeting, the President reiterated his commitment to continue to work to secure the release of Trevor, Paul Whelan, and other Americans wrongfully held in Russia and elsewhere, and to provide all possible assistance until they and others are free and returned home to their families who are advocating so passionately for their release. This is the President's second interaction with the Reeds. On March 8, President Biden spoke to the Reeds by phone while he was in Texas.

The President's national security team will remain in regular contact with the Reeds, the Whelan family, and other families of Americans held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad. We are grateful for their partnership and feedback. We will continue to work to ensure we are communicating and sharing information in a way useful to these families.

Previously, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with the Reed family in a virtual group meeting and then privately in December. He expressed our commitment to bringing Trevor home. We understand the pain felt by all of Trevor's families and friends enduring the nightmare of his absence, which we are committed to bringing to an end.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Diplomacy in the Middle East Region
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 1, 2022 7:05 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2022

Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Diplomacy in the Middle East Region

As we approach the Holy Month of Ramadan this weekend, we welcome the proactive diplomacy underway with our friends and partners across the Middle East region. These efforts are central to President Biden's agenda of forging a more secure and integrated Middle East region through a combination of deterrence against adversaries and diplomacy wherever possible to reduce tensions and de-escalate ongoing conflicts.

This approach was manifest this week.

On Monday, Secretary of State Blinken attended a historic meeting in Israel together with the Foreign Ministers of Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, and UAE. This group of countries agreed to form permanent working groups with an aim to improve security and livelihoods across the region. We now aim to further expand this circle of like-minded states. Today's conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement between the UAE and Israel exemplifies the new opportunities that are emerging in the region and upon which our administration is working to facilitate and strengthen.

Secretary Blinken also visited Ramallah, where he reaffirmed President Biden's commitment to doing all that we can to ensure Israelis and Palestinians share equal measures of freedom, dignity, security and prosperity. Later in the week, King Abdullah II hosted the first-ever visit by an Israeli head of state, President Isaac Herzog, to Jordan. We are grateful for the visionary role of these leaders and for the important role that King Abdullah II plays as custodian over the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, particularly over the upcoming Holy Days.

We also stand by our friends who face threats from terrorists, as seen over the past week in Israel. President Biden spoke with Prime Minister Bennett on Wednesday and offered all appropriate assistance in the wake of these barbarous attacks against innocent civilian. Our entire administration stand behind our Israeli allies as they work to confront threats to their citizens.

Ending the war in Yemen has been a consistent focus of our administration over the past year. Today, after months of relentless UN-led diplomacy backed by the United States and our partners, the UN's Special Envoy to Yemen announced a 60-day truce under which military operations will cease and restrictions on the flow of goods and people into and out of Yemen will ease. President Biden welcomed this initiative and commended the leadership of Saudi Arabia and Oman in helping to finalize it. We are hopeful that this initiative will establish a new foundation for political talks and a lasting settlement to end the suffering of the Yemeni people once and for all.

Even as we work to end the war in Yemen, there can be no doubt about President Biden's commitment to supporting the defense of our partners, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Earlier this week, the Treasury Department announced significant new sanction designations against Iran's missile procurement network pursuant to Executive Order 13382, which targets weapons of mass destruction proliferators and their supporters. We will continue to use all appropriate authorities to hold Iran and its proxy groups accountable for threats against our friends and partners.

As this past week has shown, diplomacy is forging opportunities to secure a more peaceful and prosperous region even as we work to deter and counter threats against our partners and interests. The United States will stand with its friends – and we are hopeful that this upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan will bring comfort and peace to peoples across the Middle East region.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 4, 2022 8:00 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:06 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. We have a return guest: Jake Sullivan, our National Security Advisor, who will give some brief remarks, take some questions. And then we will do a briefing from there.

With that, I'll turn it over to Jake.

MR. SULLIVAN: Hi, everyone. I hope you guys are doing well.

With apologies to Jen and to you, my remarks are not going to be so brief because I have a number of points I want to get through before opening it to questions.

First, you heard the President today condemn in powerful terms the atrocities committed by Russian forces retreating from Bucha and other towns in Ukraine. The images that we see are tragic, they're shocking, but unfortunately, they're not surprising.

We released information even before Russia's invasion showing that Russia would engage in acts of brutality against civilians, included it targeted killings of dissidents and others they deemed a threat to their occupation. And as the horrific images that have emerged from Bucha have shown, that's exactly what they have done.

We had already concluded that Russia committed war crimes in Ukraine, and the information from Bucha appears to show

further evidence of war crimes. And as the President said, we will work with the world to ensure there is full accountability for these crimes. We are also working intensively with our European allies on further sanctions to raise the pressure and raise the cost on Putin and on Russia.

Today, I'd like to take a step back and talk about where we are and where we think we are going.

Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine more than a month ago. When Russia started this war, its initial aims were to seize the capital of Kyiv, replace the Zelenskyy government, and take control of much -- if not all -- of Ukraine. Russia believed that it could accomplish these objectives swiftly and efficiently.

But Russia did not account for the strength of the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian people, or the amount or effectiveness of military assistance provided by the United States and its allies and partners.

The Ukrainian people, backed resolutely by the United States and other nations, have held firm. Kyiv and other cities still stand.

The Ukrainian military has performed exceptionally well. And many Ukrainian civilians have joined local militias in addition to using nonviolent means to resist.

Vladimir Putin also believed that the West would not hold together in support of Ukraine. Russia was surprised that President Biden and the United States were so effective in rallying the world to prepare for and respond to the invasion.

And after President Biden reinforced and reinvigorated Western unity at a series of summits in Brussels just 11 days ago, the Russians have now realized that the West will not break.

At this juncture, we believe that Russia is revising its war aims. Russia is repositioning its forces to concentrate its offensive operations in eastern and parts of southern Ukraine, rather than target most of the territory. All indications are that Russia will seek to surround and overwhelm Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine.

We anticipate that Russian commanders are now executing their redeployment from northern Ukraine to the region around the Donbas in eastern Ukraine.

Russian forces are already well on their way of retreating from Kyiv to Belarus as Russia likely prepares to deploy dozens of additional battalion tactical groups, constituting tens of thousands of soldiers, to the frontline in Ukraine's east.

We assess Russia will focus on defeating the Ukrainian forces in the broader Luhansk and Donetsk provinces, which encompasses significantly more territory than Russian proxies already controlled before the new invasion began in late February.

Russia could then use any tactical successes it achieves to propagate a narrative of progress and mask or un- -- or try to discount or downplay prior military failures.

In order to protect any territory it seizes in the east, we expect that Russia could potentially extend its force proje- -- projection and presence even deeper into Ukraine, beyond Luhansk and Donetsk provinces. At least that is their intention and their plan.

In the south, we also expect that Russian military forces will do what they can to try to hold the city of Kherson, to enable their control of the waterflow to Crimea, and try to block Mykolaiv so that Ukrainian forces cannot proceed to retake Kherson.

In the north, Russia will likely keep pressure on Kharkiv.

During this renewed ground offensive in eastern Ukraine, Moscow will likely continue to launch air and missile strikes across the rest of the country to cause military and economic damage -- and, frankly, to cause terror, including against cities like Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Lviv.

Russia's goal, in the end, is to weaken Ukraine as much as possible.

Russia still has forces available to outnumber Ukraine's, and Russia is now concentrating its military power on fewer lines of attack.

But this does not mean that Russia will succeed in the east. So far, Russia's military has struggled to achieve its war aims, while Ukraine's military has done an extraordinary and courageous job demonstrating its will to fight and putting its considerable capabilities to use.

The next stage of this conflict may very well be protracted. We should be under no illusions that Russia will adjust its tactics, which have included and will likely continue to include wanton and brazen attacks on civilian targets.

And while Moscow may be interested now in using military pressure to find a political settlement, if this offensive in the east proves to gain some traction, Russia could regenerate forces for additional goals, including trying to gain control of yet more territory within Ukraine.

Now, as the images from Bucha so powerfully reinforce, now is not the time for complacency. The Ukrainians are defending their homeland courageously, and the United States will continue to back them with military assistance, humanitarian aid, and economic support.

We know that military assistance is having a critical impact on this conflict. Ukrainians are effectively defending themselves with U.S.-produced air defense systems and anti-tank systems, such as Stingers and Javelins, as well as radar systems that give the Ukrainians early warning and target data, and multiple other types of arms and munitions.

The administration is working around the clock to fulfill Ukraine's main security assistance requests -- delivering weapons from U.S. stocks where they are available and facilitating the delivery of weapons by Allies where Allied systems better suit Ukraine's needs. This is happening at what the Pentagon has described as an "unprecedented pace."

Last Friday, we announced an additional \$300 million in security assistance, bringing the U.S. commitment to \$1.65 billion in weapons and ammunition since Russia's invasion and \$2.3 billion since the beginning of the administration.

The latest package includes laser-guided rocket systems, Puma unmanned aerial systems, armored High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles, and more.

Material is arriving every day, including today, from the United States and our Allies and partners. And we will have further announcements of additional military assistance in the coming days.

We are working with the Ukrainians, as I said, to identify solutions to their priority requests. In some cases, that means sourcing systems from other countries because the U.S. either doesn't have the system or doesn't have a version that could effectively be integrated into the fight. Sorts of systems like this include longer-range anti-aircraft systems, artillery systems, and coastal defense systems.

So, let's take coastal defense systems as an example. President Biden went to Brussels to talk to key Allies 11 days ago about how to get coastal defense systems to Ukraine, because there is not, at the moment, a good U.S. option.

Last week, the UK announced at the close of its donor conference that coastal defense systems would be provided to the Ukrainians. It is a good example how, working with Allies and partners, we are successfully responding to Ukraine's requests.

We expect additional new capabilities to be delivered in the near future. We can't always advertise what is being delivered out of deference to our Allies and partners or for operational sensitivities, but we are moving with speed and efficiency to deliver.

Let me close with this: Even as Russia acknowledges the failure of its initial plans and shifts its goals, three elements of this war remain constant.

First, Russia will continue to use its military to try to conquer and occupy sovereign Ukrainian territory.

Second, the Ukrainian military and people will continue to effectively and bravely defend their homeland.

And third, the United States will stand by them for as long as it takes.

Russia has tried to subjugate the whole of Ukraine, and it has failed. Now it will attempt to bring parts of the country under its rule. It may succeed in taking some territory through sheer force and brutality.

But no matter what happens over the coming weeks, it is clear that Russia will never be welcomed by the Ukrainian people. Instead, its gains will be temporary, as the brave Ukrainian people resist Russian occupation and carry on their fight for an independent, sovereign nation that they so richly deserve.

And with that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

Yeah.

Q Jake, can I ask you about the President's call for a war crimes trial for Vladimir Putin? What are the mechanics of how the President sees that playing out? Would it be at the International Criminal Court or at some other tribunal?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, we have to consult with our allies and partners on what makes most sense as a mechanism moving forward. Obviously, the ICC is one venue where war crimes have been tried in the past, but there have been other examples in other conflicts of other mechanisms being set up.

So, there is work to be done to work out the specifics of that. And between now and then, every day, what we are focused on is continuing to apply pressure to the Russian economy and provide weapons to the Ukrainian people to be able to defend themselves.

Q Other --

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q Sorry, forgive me. Other forums for this might include something that the U.N. General -- the U.N. Security Council might adopt. Is that what you're suggesting -- that you would go to the Security Council?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, obviously, with Russia as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, it would be difficult to imagine that they would not attempt to exercise their veto to block something.

But there have been creative solutions to the question of accountability in the past, and I'm not going to prejudge what solution would be applied here or what forum or venue would be applied here.

What I will say is what the President said this morning: There has to be accountability for these war crimes. That accountability has to be felt at every level of the Russian system, and the United States will work with the international community to ensure that accountability is applied at the appropriate time.

Yes.

Q The President was careful to say he does not see this as genocide. Many Ukrainians believe that it is because their nation, their people are being attacked. Where is the line, in your view? And how have you counseled the President between “genocide” and “war crimes”?

MR. SULLIVAN: So this is something we, of course, continue to monitor every day. Based on what we have seen so far, we have seen atrocities, we have seen war crimes. We have not yet seen a level of systematic deprivation of life of the Ukrainian people to rise to the level of genocide. But, again, that s something we will continue to monitor.

There is not a mechanical formula for this. There is a process that we have run just recently at the State Department to ultimately determine that the killing -- the mass killing of Rohingya in Burma constituted genocide. That was a lengthy process based on an amassing of evidence over a considerable -- a considerable period of time and involving, frankly, mass death, the mass incarceration of a significant portion of the Rohingya population.

And we will look to a series of indicators along those lines to ultimately make a determination in Ukraine. But as the President said today, we have not arrived at that conclusion yet.

Yes.

Q Thanks. I just have three quick questions. When you say the next stage will be “protracted,” do you mean years? I mean, Russia has been in Crimea and Donbas since 2014. What -- what s “protracted”?

MR. SULLIVAN: So we can t predict, but I would just say that, so far, this conflict has lasted a little more than five weeks. And yet, in that time, we ve seen an enormous amount of killing and death and, also, an enormous amount of bravery and success on the part of the Ukrainian forces.

What I m saying when I say “protracted” is that it may not be just a matter of a few more weeks before all is said and done. That first, quote, unquote, “phase” of the conflict, of -- the Russians put it, was measured in weeks.

This next phase could be measured in months or longer.

Q In the beginning, the consensus seemed to be: Russia was unstoppable; we just had to make the price as high as possible for them.

Then the new thinking is: Maybe Ukraine can actually win. Do you agree with that? And what would winning look like?

MR. SULLIVAN: So we believe that our job is to support the Ukrainians. They will set the military objectives. They will set the objectives at the bargaining table. And I am quite certain they are going to set those objectives at success, and we are going to give them every tool we can to help them achieve that success.

But we are not going to define the outcome of this for the Ukrainians. That is up for them to define and us to support them in. That s what we re going to do. And we do have confidence in the bravery, skill, and capacity of the Ukrainian armed forces and the resilience of the Ukrainian people.

Q I just have one -- one quick thing on chemical weapons. The President and other allies have promised consequences without saying what they would be. The last time Russia used chemical weapons, there were sanctions but not very stiff ones. Are you ready to define consequences?

MR. SULLIVAN: So I m going to say the same thing I ve said from this podium that the President has said from a podium down the hall in this same building, which is that Russia will pay a severe price. We have communicated to them directly.

We have coordinated with our allies and partners. And I'm not going to go further in terms of the specifics here today.

Q Jake, two questions.

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q The administration initially did not call this "war crimes," and eventually, though, they did after they -- what they saw on the ground. Do you think that's going to be the case with calling it a genocide?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, so, first, it's not just that we sit around and debate terms and then, ultimately, decide to apply a term based against static circumstances. We watch as things unfold. We gather evidence. We continue to develop facts. And as we gathered evidence and as we got the facts together, we ultimately came to the conclusion that war crimes were committed.

And, in fact, I would say, on this front, President Biden was a leader. He went out and said Putin is a war criminal. And many of you raised your eyebrows at that; many people out in the public raised their eyebrows at that. And now you see the scenes coming out of Bucha today.

And so, he's not going to hesitate to call a spade a spade, to call it like he sees it, and neither is the U.S. government.

So as the facts develop, could we see ourselves reaching a different conclusion on that question? Of course we could. But it's going to be based on evidence and facts as we gather it along the way.

Q And two more quick ones for you. On the sanctions that the President was talking about today, should we expect those this week, or what's the timing?

MR. SULLIVAN: You can expect further sanctions announcements this week. And we are coordinating with our allies and partners on what the exact parameters of that will be. But, yes, this week, we will have additional economic pressure elements to announce.

Q And my last question, quickly. You keep using the word "retreat" instead of "reposition." How much is that in part due to the spring conditions, the muddy conditions that are on the ground in Ukraine?

MR. SULLIVAN: The reason I use the phrase "retreat" is just kind of quite simple common sense. It's not some fancy technical military term. It's a term that all of us understand, which is, if you run pell-mell for an objective and you get stopped, and then you start to get beaten back, and then you withdraw, you pull out -- that's what I would call a retreat.

That's what happened to the Russians in Kyiv: They attacked Kyiv. They failed. They started to get beaten backwards by the Russian -- by the Ukrainian military. And they ultimately retreated back across the border into Belarus.

Now, with those forces, as I said in my opening comments, they are not intending to stand pat. They are going to reposition those forces to go after a different objective -- a scaled-down objective, but nonetheless a dangerous and disturbing objective, which is to conquer an occupied territory in eastern Ukraine.

And now it's our job to help the Ukrainian people have the tools they need to be able to stymie that objective. That is what we're intent on doing at this time.

Q Jake, I know you're not willing to call it a genocide, but does the U.S. government have information that you can -- that you can use to independently corroborate Ukraine's allegations about atrocities in Bucha?

MR. SULLIVAN: So we have -- obviously got access to a lot of the information that you all have. We also have information that the Ukrainians have provided us directly. And we will also work with fact finders -- independent fact finders as we go

forward to get to a level of documentation that allows us to help build very strong dossiers of evidence for war crimes prosecutions. And that is what we intend to do.

Now, on the question of the genocide determination: Obviously, we will continue on a daily basis to have consultations with the Ukrainians to reach determinations. And if at some point we reach the judgment that there, in fact, has been a level of atrocity, a level of killing, a level of intentional activity that rises to meet our definition of genocide, we'll call it for what it is.

We have never hesitated to call out the Russians for what they have done in Ukraine, and we will not start now.

Q And sorry -- sorry, one quick question on France, Jake. They are -- they have suggested that, you know, a hefty EU-wide tariff should be imposed, as opposed to a blanket ban on Russian energy imports into the EU. Does the U.S. support that? And will that be part of what you're planning to do next in terms of sanctions?

MR. SULLIVAN: We are having conversations, as I stand here at this podium, with senior officials in the main European capitals, as well as in Brussels, on the full range of sanctions options, including sanctions options or pressure options that relate to energy.

I'm not going to negotiate that out at this podium. We want to make sure that we're able to pull together a consensus along with the rest of the European Union.

Q Jake, the Kremlin is denying the images out of Bucha, saying that they don't show any kind of apparent execution. What is the U.S. doing to try and expose Russia's actions to its own citizens? I mean, what can we do to sort of fight this information war?

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, first, I would note that the Kremlin is working overtime to close down the information space inside of Russia, which is not exactly the action of a strong and confident government that feels really good about the story that it would be telling if it were allowing independent news sources to come in.

Second, we are, of course, supporting, through a variety of means, the provision of information about these atrocities and about the entire effort by the Russians to unjustly and unlawfully invade a sovereign neighboring country not just to the Russian people, but to people everywhere. We will continue to do that.

Q And just to be clear: Is it your sense that the atrocities that we're seeing in Bucha are based on orders coming from Putin or his senior military officials? Or is there a chance here that this is sort of Russian forces acting on their own? And is there even a distinction?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't want to get into the specific intelligence related to Bucha at this point. But what I will say, as I said at the outset, is that even before the invasion happened, we shared information with the public, with the press, including from this podium, that Russia was intending as a matter of policy -- not as a matter of one guy in a unit in a suburb of Kyiv, but as a matter of policy in this war -- to kill dissidents, to kill those who caused problems for the occupation, and to impose a reign of terror across occupied territories within Ukraine. That is what we are seeing play out.

So, no, we do not believe that this is just a random accident or the rogue act of a particular individual. We believe that this was part of the plan. We declared it from this podium as part of the plan, and now we are seeing it play out in real life, in living color, in these terrible, tragic images we are seeing come from Bucha.

Yeah.

Q Thanks. So, I know you don't want to talk about possible venues for a war trial -- war crimes trial, but can you talk a little bit about the evidence-gathering aspect of it? That's going to be crucial to combatting disinformation and what Russians will say -- that "Ukrainian rebels are fighting us. That was legitimate warfare what happened." That could be a tactic they're taking.

So can you walk us through the evidence-gathering? Who's doing it? Are there people on the ground gathering evidence? How long does that take to, sort of, build a case? And what does that look like?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I will directly answer your question, but I also think it is important for our team at the State Department, which will take the lead on this, including our Global War Crimes Coordinator, to give you a fully elaborate answer to this question, in technical detail, so that everybody understands exactly how this process works.

But with that being said, there are four main sources of information that we will develop in an effort to help build the case for war crimes.

The first is the information we and our allies and partners gather, including through intelligence sources. And we, actually, within our intelligence community, had previously stood up a team to be able to document and analyze war crimes and worked closely with the State Department in doing so. And we're also coordinating with key allies and partners who have their own capacities.

The second is what the Ukrainians themselves will do on the ground to develop this case, to document the forensics of these tragic and senseless killings in this particular instance and in other instances across Ukraine.

The third is international organizations, including the United Nations, but others as well -- prominent international non-governmental organizations with real credibility and expertise in this area.

And then the fourth is all of you. Because part of building this case is relying upon the global independent media, who has images, interviews, documentation. And when you put all of those four sources together, you can build, we believe, a package that can stand up to the relentless disinformation we are likely to see and have already started seeing from Russia, and that, ultimately, the truth will withstand the assault on the truth that we can expect to come from Moscow.

Q On former President Trump, he's having Save America rallies where he's decrying the Biden administration, decrying the response that you all in the White House have been giving to this war in Ukraine. He said if he was in here in office, he would do it better; it wouldn't happen under him. What is your response to the former President, Donald J. Trump, saying these things about the current administration?

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't -- I don't have a response to the former President. We are focused on getting the job done, getting the support to the Ukrainian people that they need, applying unprecedented pressure to the Russian economy, and building a form of Western unity that no one could reasonably have expected and that we have sustained through the early weeks of the war and will sustain for the period ahead.

And I'll leave the commentary on what the former President said to others.

Q Thank you very much. Thanks, Jake. To follow up on what you said about Ukraine setting terms for any potential resolution, President Zelenskyy said on "Face the Nation" that with regard to any potential peace agreement, the important thing in this agreement are security guarantees. But he also said the U.S. has not received -- has not provided any yet. Is the U.S. considering that? And what would that look like?

MR. SULLIVAN: So we are in regular contact -- and by "regular," I mean near daily contact. I personally am in near daily contact with my counterpart in the Ukrainian government. And we are talking constantly about how we can support a negotiated solution that defends Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And we have told them that we are prepared to do our part to support that, including by ensuring that Ukraine has the means to defend itself in the future.

I'm not going to get into the specifics of what those negotiations are because I believe it's very important that they have a protected space to be able to be carried out. But you can rest assured that the United States is actively working in consultation with Ukrainians to support their efforts at the peace table.

Q And then, a question on the sanctions. You just said that you're under no illusions that Russia will adjust its target. So what function will an additional sanctions package have when you announce it?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I would say two things about sanctions. One is that sanctions are intended to impose costs so that Russia cannot carry on these grotesque acts without paying a severe price for it. The other is to have an effect on Russia's behavior over time.

But as President Biden has made clear repeatedly, we don't expect that that shift in behavior will be caused by sanctions overnight or in a week. It will take time to grind down the elements of Russian power within the Russian economy, to hit their industrial base hard, to hit the sources of revenue that have propped up this war and have propped up the klepto- -- kleptocracy in Russia. That's going to take some time to play out.

But there's no better time than now to be working at that so that the costs end up setting in and that ends up sharpening Russia's choices.

So, sanctions are not alone going to solve any of these problems, but they are a critical tool in ultimately producing a better outcome to this conflict than would otherwise be produced.

Q Have the revelations about Bucha prompted the administration and its allies to reconsider what kind of military assistance it's providing to Ukraine? Are tanks now part of, you know, potential transfers that could be provided to the Ukrainian military?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I'm not going to get into certain specific systems because, as I said at the outset, there are operational sensitivities and the sensitivities of our allies and partners for why we wouldn't speak about a particular capability like tanks.

But I will say this: Even before Bucha, the United States was working with Ukrainians on every item on its priority list and how we could go ahead and ensure that that could be provided to them. The only capability that we have discussed with them where there has been a difference in perspective that has been played out in living color and in this podium many times over has been the question of direct facilitation from a U.S. airbase in Germany into contested airspace over Ukraine -- the MiG-29s.

Otherwise, before Bucha, we were working with them on a wide range of capabilities, including some capabilities that people here were writing we weren't prepared to provide. That wasn't right.

Now, it's hard for me to correct the record in every case because, for very good reasons, some of these systems we cannot advertise, we cannot talk to you all about it.

But what I want to make clear, as I said at the outset, is the extent and depth of effort to acquire and transfer a variety of advanced weapons capabilities is extraordinary, it is unprecedented, and it has been ongoing from well before the terrible images came out this week.

Yeah.

Q Jake, on the International Criminal Court: Is one of the reasons why the U.S. is considering alternate venues is because the U.S. is not a signatory? And does that undercut the U.S. push to hold Putin accountable with a war crimes trial of some kind when the U.S. is not a signatory of the International Criminal Court?

MR. SULLIVAN: The U.S. has in the past been able to collaborate with the International Criminal Court in other contexts, despite not being a signatory. But there's a variety of reasons one might consider alternative venues as well, beyond the specific relationship between the U.S. and the ICC.

Most importantly, this is not a decision the United States is going to make by itself. We're not going to make the call out of Washington for the appropriate venue for accountability; that is going to be done in consultation with allies and with partners around the world. And I don't want to prejudge those conversations that are ongoing.

And what I can communicate is the very real, sustained, and committed proposition that the United States has that we are going to ensure that there is accountability.

Yeah. I'll just take one more. Yeah.

Q Thanks, Jake. The U.S. had rejected Poland's plan for a peacekeeping force to protect civilians. Is that something that's being reconsidered, given what we've seen of these atrocities? And is there any talk among the Allies to do some sort of force to help protect the civilian population?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, I don't quite accept the premise of the question. There -- there had been various peacekeeping proposals floated; none of them have ever been given full shape or been kind of formally put forward and suggested should actually be implemented.

And so, we continue to consult with our Allies and partners, including Poland, on what makes sense going forward. We have not yet seen a proposal that actually has been fleshed out that could be operationalized.

The one thing that the United States has made clear throughout this is that it is not our intention to send U.S. soldiers to fight Russian soldiers in Ukraine. But in terms of the supply of capabilities, in terms of other steps to support the Ukrainians and to do our best to protect civilians in Ukraine, we continue to look at every possible option, including in consultation with our partners on that.

And I'll -- I'll leave it at that. Thank you, guys.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you, Jake, so much for joining us.

Q Thank you. Come again, please.

MS. PSAKI: He will, I'm sure. He's probably our most frequent guest. I don't know if you get -- I probably owe him something for that.

Okay, a couple of items for all of you at the top. Today, Vice President Harris and administration officials announced the Biden-Harris Action Plan for Building Better School Infrastructure.

By leveraging funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the American Rescue Plan, this action plan will activate the entire federal government to support students' health and learning, from upgraded HVAC systems to electric school buses, from on-site solar energy installations to safe routes to school.

I also wanted to note, in light of the President's event on trucking, a couple of details or facts for all of you. 2021 was the best year for trucking growth -- jobs growth since 1994. And December 2021 through February of 2022 was the best three-month stretch for long-distance truck hiring since the 1990s.

Thanks to the efforts of the Department of Transportation, we doubled the issuance of Commercial Driver's License issuances in January and February of 2022, compared to the prior January and February of 2021.

And over 100 employers -- including Domino's, Frito-Lay, and UPS -- launched registered apprenticeship programs in the past 90 days. This could result in more than ten thousand -- 10,000 additional apprentices -- apprenticeships nationwide, which, of course, get more people -- more truckers trained, more trucks on the road, more goods moving around and onto shelves across the country.

shelves across the country.

I also wanted to note -- I think you all saw this, but just to confirm for all of you: Tomorrow, the President and Vice President will be joined by former President Obama to highlight how the Affordable Care Act continues to lower healthcare costs for American families. This will be the first time former President Obama returns to the White House since leaving office.

Since we've taken office -- since we've entered -- the President -- since President Biden has entered office, we've taken big steps to reduce healthcare costs and expand access to healthcare for the American people.

And how President Biden and former President Obama both see the Affordable Care Act is an example -- a shining example of how government can work for the American people. Not only did it ensure that millions of people had access to affordable healthcare, but it has been an opportunity to build on that and make changes and make improvements over the course of time, which, of course, is what they will talk about tomorrow.

But even since the President took office, through the American Rescue Plan, we lowered premiums for 9 million Americans -- the biggest expansion of affordable healthcare since the ACA. We've made affordable health coverage more accessible during the pandemic through the opening of the special enrollment period, which enabled nearly 3 million Americans to have access -- to newly sign up for coverage under the ACA.

And President Biden has overseen the most successful open enrollment period in history last year, with a historic 14.5 million Americans signing up for the -- for ACA coverage and another million people signing up for the basic healthcare program.

So, tomorrow, they'll announce more steps.

I'll also note, as they did every week when President -- former President Obama was president and President Biden was vice president -- that's a mouthful -- they will have lunch tomorrow as well, as they used to do on a weekly basis.

I would note they continue to talk regularly. They are real friends, not just Washington friends, and so I'm sure they will talk about events in the world as well as their families and personal lives.

So, I'll try to get around the room as best as I can. But, Chris, why don't you kick us off?

Q So, one question on Title 42. Some Republican attorneys general are suing the administration over the plan to lift it. What is the administration's response? And is the administration concerned that this would end up blocking the push to lift the order?

MS. PSAKI: Well, on the lawsuit itself, I'd of course refer you to the Department of Justice; they would be overseeing any steps there.

But broadly speaking, I think it's important to note for any critics in any lawsuits that Title 42 is a public health directive; it's not an immigration/migration enforcement measure. And the decision on when to lift Title 42 was made by the CDC.

And our objective from here -- and this is why we have the implementation period over the next several weeks -- continues to be to ensure we are increasing our resources, surging personnel and resources to the border, improving border processing, implementing COVID-19 mitigation measures, and continuing to work with other countries in the Western Hemisphere to manage migration and address root causes.

But this is, again, a healthcare measure -- a health measure determination and not one on immigration policy.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Let me ask you the question I was going to ask Jake, which is that: As part of this new effort to ramp up sanctions, is the administration going to be ramping up pressure on China and India to abide by existing sanctions? And what does that look like? I know Daleep Singh was just in India.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Are you going to intensify some criticism of them and others who haven't done so?

MS. PSAKI: Well -- well, certainly our expectation and our public and private message is -- will continue to be that every country should abide by the sanctions that we have announced and that we are implementing around the world.

As you noted -- so let me start with India, if that's okay. As you noted, Daleep Singh, our Deputy National Security Advisor, was just there. I would note that, you know, just given some of the reporting, energy payments are not sanctioned; that's a decision made by each individual country. And we've been very clear that each country is going to make their own choices, even as we have made the decision and other countries have made the decision to ban energy imports.

What -- what Daleep did make clear to his counterparts during this visit was that we don't believe it's in India's interest to accelerate or increase imports of Russian energy and other commodities.

Right now, just to give everybody the full scope of it, India's imports of Russian energy represent only 1 to 2 percent of their total energy imports.

So, while he also -- he explained both the mechanisms of our sanctions and reiterated that any country or entity should be abiding by those, we also made clear that we'd be happy to be a partner in reducing their reliance or even their small percentage of -- of reliance on that.

As it relates to China -- I know that Jake spoke to this the last time he was here -- our assessment hasn't changed on that front, but we continue to convey the same expectations of abiding by sanctions.

Q And then, on COVID funding, there are reports that the Republicans and Democrats in the Senate are nearing a deal on a \$10 billion package that doesn't include global aid. Is a package of that size, and that doesn't include global vaccine assistance, something that President Biden could sign into law?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that we are encouraged by the strong progress that Congress is making in finalizing a deal -- not yet final, but finalizing a deal -- to fund some of our most very urgent COVID response needs.

I would remind everyone that what we had requested was \$22.5 billion, not \$10 billion, in order to achieve a number of objectives -- including securing enough booster shots for the general population; purchasing more monoclonal antibodies and Evusheld for the immune- -- immunocompromised; maintaining our testing capacity; getting shots in arms abroad, to go to your question; and funding for variant-specific vaccines if needed.

So, this does not -- will, obviously, not meet all of those -- all of those needs -- dire needs in this country. And certainly, our objective would continue to be -- to be to press for funding for international -- support for international -- for ensuring we continue to be the arsenal of vaccines in the world, regardless of what this final package looks like.

I'd note that the reason that's so important is not just because of the need to have vaccine doses, it's because we need to -- a lot of -- there are countries around the world who are refusing our vaccine doses -- doses because they don't have the mechanisms, the know-how, and the capacity to be able to distribute those doses. So that funding that we've been requesting and we'll continue to press for would be accounting for that as well.

I -- can I note one more last thing? Sorry, I've got a lot on this. Is -- I would also note that as you're watching Congress

and the Senate, there are a wide number of Republicans who have called for funding for and called for ensuring that we continue to be the arsenal of vaccine distribution around the world -- they don't use that exact phrase, but basically that's the basics -- including Senator Graham, who said, "I support the effort" -- just in June of last year -- "of the Biden Administration to donate vaccines to at-risk populations throughout the world."

Senator Portman said that -- that he is "pleased" that legislation -- this is last summer -- that has passed the committee at the time would help ensure that -- that domestic supply is part of our -- what we're doing in domestic supply -- excess domestic supply is part of our global vaccination strategy.

Senator McConnell said it would be "terribly unfortunate" if a supplemental COVID-19 funding package did not include international vaccines.

So I'm not going to prejudge where all they -- they will all be on this or future legislation. I would just note that if we want to continue to be providing to the world, we need money. And that's a case we will continue to make.

Go ahead.

Q Ukraine's Prosecutor General just suggested that there's more gruesome evidence of the aftermath of Russia's occupation around Kyiv, saying that the worst situation may, in fact, be in Borodyanka. I apologize if I don't pronounce that correctly.

But do you have a sense of how widespread this may be in the Kyiv region? I mean, I know Jake just said that you're going to continue to see these kinds of brazen attacks, but what more can you tell us about some of these other areas that we may be hearing about?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a new or additional assessment. This is something we will continue to gather information on, and Jake, obviously, outlined a number of ways we will do that -- both by intel gathering, working with our partners and allies around the world.

But I would also note, Mary -- to go back to your earlier question -- that the fact that we're seeing these horrific images from Bucha around the world -- you know, now around the world, thanks to all of your broadcasts and many global broadcasters -- I mean, we have access. There's access to this area. There's not access to a lot of the areas around Mariupol and other areas of Ukraine where we have not even begun to see the impact of the atrocities and the impact of what, as Jake said, President Putin and the Russians made clear they were intending to do from the outset of the war.

So, while I don't have additional assessment, I would just note that, you know, we should brace ourselves for what we may see as we gain greater access and learn more about what atrocities they have implemented.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N. says that tomorrow she's going to go to New York and seek Russia's suspension from Human Rights Council.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is that at the direction of the President?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. The President does not believe -- he believes it's ludicrous for Russia to be a member of the Human Rights Council. And certainly, the ambassador spoke to this today and while she was on her overseas trip, and she will continue to make the case in her role when she returns to New York.

Q Why not seek to permanently expel them?

MS. PSAKI: From the Human Rights Council?

I would point -- I would point you to our U.N. ambassador on what specific steps, but obviously removing them would be the next appropriate step in the process.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. So, President Biden is talking about putting Putin on a wartime trial. Does he expect Putin to turn himself in to stand trial? Or does he think somebody's going to have to go into Russia and arrest him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, without getting into the mechanisms -- which, I know, were the good questions everybody was asking our National Security Advisor -- there is precedent in the past of how this process can work.

We're not going to prejudge what the process would work or -- or what steps would be taken through -- through an international legal process.

So, that's not quite where we're at right now, Peter, and I can't give you a sense of the mechanisms of -- of, if convicted, what would happen.

Q Okay.

A question about college sports. In some places like the Ivy League, now there are biological males competing against women. Does the White House think that is fair?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would note that we're not the governing body for the NCAA or any other system out there that -- I believe you're probably referring to the case over -- in swimming in the NCAA.

We understand how important sports are to student athletes across the country. But the NCAA obviously makes -- puts these policies in place.

What I would say, Peter, if we look at this broadly, is that we celebrated International Transgender Day of Visibility last week with a slate of new actions to ensure we are continuing -- we continue to protect the dignity and identity of all Americans.

And at a moment where we're looking at and we're seeing increased mental health issues related to young people, especially LGBTQ+ young people, we're providing additional funding and resources to address this issue.

And we hope all leaders can focus on those important issues and the impact on many of these young people who are impacted across the country.

Q And then, what about this new law in Florida? At what age does the White House think that students should be taught about sexual orientation and gender identity?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first of all, Peter, we have spoken to the "Don't Say Gay" bill in the past -- I believe is what you're referring to --

Q Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- and made clear that as we look at this -- this law, what we think it's a reflection of is politicians in Florida propagating misinformed, hateful policies that do absolutely nothing to address the real issues.

The Department of Education is well positioned and ready to evaluate what to do next, and when -- and its implementation -- whether its implementation violates federal civil rights law.

But I would note that parents across the country are looking to, you know, national, state, and district leaders to support our nation's students, to ensure that kids are treated equally in schools. And that is certainly not -- this is not a reflection of that.

Q And so, just the last one. So if you guys oppose this law that bans classroom instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity in K through 3, does the White House support that kind of classroom instruction before kindergarten?

MS. PSAKI: Do you have examples of schools in Florida that are teaching kindergarteners about sex education?

Q I'm just asking for the President's opinion about this law.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think that's a -- I think that's a relevant question, because I think this is a politically charged, harsh law that is putting parents and LGBTQ+ kids in a very difficult, heartbreaking circumstance. And so, I actually think that's a pretty relevant question.

Go ahead.

Q On the Ukraine atrocities, Jake referenced some of the images that all our news organizations have been gathering. Is the administration able to gather other and document other cases that you have assembled that we may not be aware of, in terms of this collection of data on war crimes, rapes, murders -- things like that -- that we have not yet seen? Is there more data that --

MS. PSAKI: On the ground, you mean?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: So, I'm sure you've seen, Kelly, that the EU announced their intention to send a team there, which obviously hasn't happened yet. But that was an announcement made earlier today.

Certainly, through intel gathering, we likely do have access to different types of information. We have declassified a range of information over the course of time, which I would expect we continue to do -- we will continue to do.

Right now, I can't give you an assessment of what we may know that you don't know. But I would just say and reiterate what Jake said, which is we're going to use every tool at our disposal we can -- some of that is through intel channels; some of that is, of course, working with our counterparts around the world -- to gather as much data and information as we can.

It is difficult -- to go back to an earlier question -- given that we need access, or even our European friends and partners need access, to gather. But -- but it is vital, it is important, and we are going to do everything we can to support those efforts from here.

Q And if the Russians are able to take some territory in the east and have greater stability of their control there, would it ever be the U.S. position that that could be a stable outcome? Or is maintaining the current map of Ukrainian sovereignty what the West would want?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, it's going to be up to the Ukrainians and Ukrainian leaders to determine what the diplomatic path forward looks like here -- what discussions, what negotiations they are comfortable with.

What our objective is and what tool we can -- we feel we can most be effective at, I should say, is supporting them and strengthening their hand in these negotiations. And that includes not just the economic support, the military support. I

would note, over the course of the last couple of days, the Department of Defense announced an additional package beyond what was announced just a few weeks ago. So we're going to continue to do that.

But in terms of the negotiations and what they would be comfortable with, we're here to support them, and we're not going to predetermine that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Just last week, you said that the U.S. is sending protective gear to Ukraine --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- to help shield Ukrainians from chemical weapons use. Have those deliveries been made, or have they started? Is there any timeline specifically for those deliveries? Because Jake did mention that deliveries have started.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I can check for you a status of that. We try to do it in an expedited manner. And we still have means of getting equipment of -- a range of equipment to people who need it on the ground. And I can check if that equipment has been delivered, or is in process -- I guess you're asking.

Yeah.

Q And I have a quick question on Elon Musk and him picking up a 9 percent stake in Twitter, which makes him the largest shareholder in the company. Obviously, the White House uses Twitter quite extensively, and Musk has been very critical of President Biden. I'm wondering if there is perhaps any recalibration of the use of the platform or to what extent, you know, the White House is using Twitter, going forward.

MS. PSAKI: That's a decision of a private sector leader. I don't have any specific comment on it. But I expect we will continue to use Twitter, as you all will as well, I would expect.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I was wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on President Biden and former President Obama and their relationship and how often and how they communicate. And you had mentioned that they are real friends and not just Washington friends. But given that they only live a few miles apart, why is this the first time that the former President has been invited to the White House?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, I have known them both for some time. And I have watched -- I watched their friendship grow over the course of the period of time when the President was vice president and when the former President was president.

And why I noted that at the top is because I think people who didn't have the seat I had may just think that it's like inviting any former President to the White House. And it certainly is not that. They talk on the phone; they do that on a regular basis. I'm not going to give you the number of times they've had conversations, but I would note they consult on a range of issues, but also about their families and things happening in their personal lives. And, you know, it's not a relationship of obligation. It's one where they developed a deep and close friendship through the course of their time serving together, and that has continued.

And tomorrow is, of course, exactly the right time to have the former President come here, given this is one of the proudest accomplishments that they worked on together, they shared together. And it is emblematic of their shared view and belief that government can work for people, and it can work for the American people. And this is an example of building on a success from more than 10 years ago and making it better over time.

So -- and I suspect that former President Obama will be back when there is a portrait unveiling and perhaps for other -- other engagements here as well in the future.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Can you tell us how the President or if he -- the President has engaged with lawmakers in the last couple of days on the COVID funding deal? And has he talked to any Republicans on this?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to give you an outline or a detail of people he's spoken to. I will note that it's rare that I am in the Oval Office on any given day where he doesn't just pick up the phone and call a member of Congress, often a Republican -- at least when I'm in there -- to talk to them about a range of priorities.

This is clearly a huge focus for the President because of the dire need we have at this moment to get this funding through and the fact that we are already at a point where we have had to halt, delay a range of programs and purchases that we feel are imperative.

I would note that on the global side, you know, we are -- we already need to stop plans to expand the global vaccination initiative to more countries. We'll also have to immediately scale back our global efforts to provide lifesaving tools -- this is a little bit of what I mentioned earlier -- like oxygen systems, antiviral pills -- things that can cut death rates by 90 percent for the unvaccinated.

And I would also note that, even as we're very encouraged by the progress, we're going to need more -- because our objective here is going to continue to be -- to be ahead of the process and be ahead in planning to make sure we can have funding for antivirals, the vaccines needed for people for many months to come.

Q And just to be clear: So, he has been talking on this specific issue (inaudible) --

MS. PSAKI: He's been engaged with a range of members about a range of issues. This is a huge priority. I'm just not going to get into the details of what those calls look like.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I just wanted to clarify what I was asking Jake there, because it sounded like, at the end, he was leaving open the possibility of U.S. boots on the ground to protect civilians in Ukraine or to protect the supply chain.

MS. PSAKI: I don't think that was his intention.

Q Okay. Because he did say, in terms of the supply chain or civilians, that you're discussing all possibilities with allies.

MS. PSAKI: We -- nothing has changed about the President's view about boots on the ground.

Go ahead.

Q So, the jobs report came out on Friday. Inflation is at 7.9 percent. It shows average hourly wages went up 5.6 percent. I wonder what the level of concern is for the President and the White House that people will stop spending because the stuff they want is more expensive and that leads us to a recession.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say on the latter part of your question that what we know is that the economy is strong, our recovery has been strong. And that continues to be -- while we, of course, are monitoring progress and where we have concern -- including rising costs and, obviously, the need to continue to address inflation -- that continues to be our assessment, which is -- which is even as there are challenges we need to continue to address, it means that we have a strong basis that we are building from.

I would remind you also that the unemployment rate is 3.6 percent. And the President created more jobs last year than any president in American history. So those fundamentals are also backed up by data.

And obviously, what we're trying to do -- as you know from following this closely, there are a couple of areas that are impacting rising costs more than others -- right? -- including the price of gas, including the price of automobiles and the impacts on the car industry of the lack of -- the chip shortages.

So, what we're also trying to do is take steps to address each area where we see rising costs. And obviously, the President's announcement on Thursday to do a historic release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, where we've seen already a small reduction in the price of gas and the price of oil come down by several dollars, is an effort to bring down costs that are impacting people's checkbook, pocketbooks -- checkbook, et cetera.

Q But you're not concerned about if consumers stop spending?

MS. PSAKI: We, of course, continue to assess, but I don't have any projection of that at this point in time.

Q Well, one thing on the wealth tax. Elon Musk tweeted out last week that Tesla and SpaceX would "have died" if such attacks existed in 2008, after the Great Recession. With the push for EVs and space exploration, what's the White House level of concern that that a wealth tax could stifle innovation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that, you know, right now, America's teachers and firefighters pay a higher tax rate than billionaires. I don't even think Elon Musk probably thinks that's fair. I don't know who thinks that's fair. It's not fair, and that should not be the case.

And so, what this proposal does and why the President supports it, in his view, is it fixes that. And this would close an unfair tax loophole and promote economic growth by encouraging productivity, enhancing investments.

And, really, what it does -- to get into the nitty gritty of it -- is, you know, right now, the super wealthy -- billionaires -- I think everyone considers them super wealthy -- are able to access the value of their assets, even if they never sell them, in order to finance lavish consumption.

And right now, billionaires with unrealized gains borrow against their assets during li- -- their life at ultra-low interest rates. And when -- when they die, they get a step-up in basis and no tax is paid on the appreciation of their asset. In other words, their income is never taxed.

That's not fair. And I think what the President is trying to do and what many senators and others support is closing that. Why that should impact a lack of innovation, I think there should be more explanation on. This is trying to make the system more fair.

Go ahead. Oh, sorry, Weijia. I'll come back to you. Go ahead, in the middle.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. It seemed U.S. senators have written President Biden, urging him to designate Cameroon for TPS. Is that something he's willing to do?

MS. PSAKI: That's -- an assessment is made by a process led by the Department of Homeland Security, so I don't have any prediction of that at this point in time.

Q And then on his approval rating: When he came into office last year, he was around 60 percent and even more, and now he's around 40 percent and sometimes less. Who does he blame now: Putin, Trump, you -- the communication team?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, does he blame me? Oh, I don't know. (Laughter.) I hope not.

Look, I think that the President recognizes that the country is still grappling with a number of challenges that impact people and their everyday lives, whether that is a continuing fight with a pandemic that has been going on for several years or the fact that costs are going up. Some of those are a result of the actions of President Putin -- yes, as it relates to gas prices -- but others are related to impacts of COVID-19 and impacts on the supply chain.

So, what our focus is and his focus continues to be: on solutions to address these challenges, and keeping our heads down and trying to continue to deliver for the American people.

Go ahead, Weijia.

Q Thanks, Jen. Shifting to Russian billionaires because, today, the DOJ announced the seizure of that --

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Yeah.

Q -- huge, \$90 million yacht. Is there any evidence that zoning in on Putin's close allies in this way -- seizing their assets -- is having an impact on his calculations? And if not, what is the end goal here to try to apply pressure to Putin himself?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's not the only approach we're taking -- right, Weijia? -- but it is one of the steps that we have -- our national security team determined from the beginning would hopefully be effective on putting necessary pressure on. That includes significant consequences we have implemented on the Russian economy, but it also includes going after people who are in the inner circle and are close, where their actions have warranted that, including Russian oligarchs.

But it is not our -- our expectation is not that one component is going to lead to a direct change. These are just a range of pressure points, and we're going to use all of them that we possibly can.

Q What is the hope that this particular action will take? What -- because we're seeing so many images of yachts around the world being seized, other assets being seized.

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, it's one of several actions we're taking. And I think if you look at the totality of it and the pool of the actions, the Russian economy has been on a downward spiral. There are businesses -- private sector businesses around the world have pulled their -- their business and their investments out of Russia. They're isolated from the world. The oligarchs are isolated from the world. All of these are meant to be consequences and meant to, of course, impact the calculation over the longer term.

Q And then just one quick one --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on the President's announcement last week about the strategic supply of oil.

MS. PSAKI: Yep.

Q So, you know, the crude prices came down -- we saw that almost right away -- but how long do you expect that Band-Aid will hold if OPEC does not also agree to ramp up production, which it has not so far?

MS. PSAKI: Well, here's how you should look at it. It was intentionally done as a million barrels a day over the course of six months because we knew there needed to be, kind of, a gap filled for that period of time, where our expectation and hope is that there could be greater production by the oil companies over that course of time.

There are also steps -- as you've seen, this as a coordinated release around the world, and there was an announcement last

Friday about that as well -- by other countries to help fill the gap that we see from Russia and from the fact that their oil is not contributing as much as it had historically onto the global marketplace.

And obviously, oil prices are global -- I mean, it's a global marketplace. So, we're already seeing, as you said, a reduction, but this is meant to be a six-month effort to kind of bridge the gap in many ways for that period of time and ramp up production in a range of ways.

Yes, you referenced OPEC Plus, but also other countries last Friday announced their plans and their intentions to release more oil to help meet the supply needs on the market. That's what we're intending to do here, and we're going to continue to look at many ways to achieve that objective.

Go ahead.

Q Iran, over the weekend, said that a deal was close. We heard something different from U.S. officials only days before that. So, what is the current assessment of that deal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our assessment is that the onus for concluding this deal is squarely on Iran. Together with our European allies, the United States has negotiated the roadmap for a mutual return to compliance through the Vienna talks. The President will reenter the deal if it's in our national security interests. And both ourselves and our allies are prepared to conclude a strong agreement if Iran is prepared to do the same.

What we've seen, however, is that Iran has raised a number of issues that has nothing to do with the mutual compliance under the nuclear deal. And that is where our focus and our objective is. So, we would encourage Iran to focus on the deal negotiated in Vienna, rather than seeking to open issues outside the Vienna context or casting blame, of course, on others for a pause in the talks.

Q Is the White House making a -- any push this week -- last-minute push -- to get another Republican or two to support Judge Jackson?

And secondly, if you could reflect on what Senator Graham said about if Republicans were in control, that she wouldn't get a hearing.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me say on the first part that our view continues to be that Judge Jackson's credentials, her record warrant bipartisan support. We've seen some of that to date. But certainly, we're going to continue to work the phones up until the last moment here. But I can't make a prediction for you on what the end result of that will be.

I would say on Senator Graham's comments, I think the best questions are probably posed to Senator Graham. I would remind you all that he has previously voted for Judge Jackson when her record and her credentials were exactly the same as they are today. So, it seems like there's more questions that could be posed to him.

Go ahead.

Q As a follow-up on the Senate Supreme Court confirmation hearing: Republicans have said that they wanted to -- that this would be a respectful and fair process, and it's been very contentious.

Given Senator Graham's comments, what do you think is the nature of the Supreme Court as we look ahead for the future, not just this Supreme Court nominee but for future nominations, given the contentious comments from Senator Graham?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think that our view continues to be that qualified nominees, those who meet every objective bar of qualification of backgrounds should be considered and treated with fairness as they go through the process. That's how President Biden is going to continue to -- to operate. And that's how we would expect every member of the Senate to continue to operate.

So, obviously, his comments are disappointing, but our focus needs to continue to be on supporting Judge Jackson and her path to the Supreme Court.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask two questions -- one about refugees and one about the Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q On refugees, the 100,000 number that the President put out when you all were in Europe --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- can you talk about how you arrived at that number and what preparations are being made at this point to accept those refugees? I haven't seen the State Department really put out a lot of detail yet.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, I expect we'll have more soon. And I think the understandable questions are kind of the prioritization and how the process will work and what the models will be -- all very good questions. And we're just working through the final pieces of the policy process at this point in time.

In terms of the number, it doesn't mean we will -- we will reach that number. As you know, while there have been a startling number of refugees -- individuals who have been kicked out of their homes because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine -- the vast majority of them want to stay in neighboring countries. And that continues to be our expectation.

But this is just an effort for us to play a role, beyond the historic amount of humanitarian assistance and support we're providing to neighboring countries, to ensure that we can find a pathway for those who want to come to the United States to come here too.

But we're still finalizing the policy details, and hopefully we'll have more soon on that for you.

Go ahead.

Q I wanted to ask one more on the Supreme Court.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q President Biden was asked last week about Justice Clarence Thomas. I believe he said something -- or he said it was up to the Justice Department or the January 6th Committee on whether Justice Clarence Thomas would recuse himself from any of those cases -- those being the January 6th cases.

Judicial ethics mean that the Supreme Court Justice generally makes his own decision on recusals. Does the President still agree with the view of the Justice Department or January 6th Committee should decide? Has he taken a position at this point on whether Justice Thomas should recuse himself?

MS. PSAKI: That's a decision up to the Supreme Court. We don't have any additional position from here.

Go ahead.

Q They were friends from the time they were on Foreign Relations Committee together.

So in terms of -- Japan has the largest number of U.S. troops. Is there some way that they could be involved, as a country that also went through war, with this current situation in Russia? And do you know if they've been included in some of

that also went through what, with this current situation in Russia? And do you know if they've been included in some of these discussions going forward?

MS. PSAKI: I know that they have been included and a part of the conversations, including during President Biden's recent trip to Europe, and that our partnership and friendship with Japan continues as we discuss how to help support Ukraine through the invasion -- Russia's invasion.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, I believe you're running out of time. Maybe just a couple more?

MS. PSAKI: Okay, we're going to do one or two more.

Go ahead.

Q Amid the Ukraine crisis, we know the United States and Russia are still working together on Afghanistan issues. Actually, last Thursday, March 31st, there was a meeting in China where the U.S., China, and Russia delegations went over this issue. Can you describe the working relations between U.S. and Russia on this meeting? And what's China's role on it? Do you worry China might take advantage of the tension between the U.S. and Russia right now?

MS. PSAKI: China -- and just to make sure I'm unpacking your question: What you're asking about -- you're asking about a meeting on Afghanistan between Russian, U.S., and Afg- -- I'm sorry, Chinese officials?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the State Department. I'm happy to get more details on it and see. I would note that Russia and China are both members of the P5+1. And obviously, we're continuing to pursue a diplomatic deal there as well. So, there are other examples of us working, even as we are horrified by the atrocities in Ukraine.

Okay, last one.

Q Thank you, Jen. Moments ago, you said that it was "ludicrous" that Russia would be allowed to sit on the U.N. Human Rights Council. I'm wondering if the President wants to see China remain on that Human Rights Council as well, given that his administration has already made a determination that China is engaged in genocide against the Uyghur people.

MS. PSAKI: Well, our focus right now on the international stage on this question is on Russia, given the invasion of Ukraine and given what we're seeing -- the photos from Bucha, others that we may see in the future.

Obviously, we will continue to press publicly and privately where we have concerns about human rights violations, including as it relates to China.

Thanks so much, everyone.

4:14 P.M. EDT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2022

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:15 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. Okay, a couple of items for you at the top.

On his first day in office, President Biden directed the Department of Education to pause federal student loan repayments through September of that year. He has since extended it twice, today being the third extension. Millions of Americans were struggling, of course, at that time to stay afloat. Because of the pause in repayments, 41 million Americans were able to breathe a little easier during some of the toughest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, as America -- America is stronger than we were a year ago and we will be stronger a year from now than we are today. However, as our administration recognized in recently extending the COVID-19 national emergency, we are still recovering from the pandemic and the unprecedented economic disruption it caused -- which, of course, is the root reason for this extension.

In order to enable Americans to continue to get back on their feet after two of the hardest years this nation has ever faced, we have announced, earlier today, of course, the plan to -- the extension of the pause on federal student loan repayments through August 31st of this year. That additional time will assist borrowers in achieving greater financial security and support the Department of Education's efforts to continue improving student loan programs.

Also would note -- one note on the COVID funding bill. We have made clear for months about our funding needs. And at every step of the way, we've provided the details that Republicans have asked for, even when they've asked for -- has

changed in real time.

I have a little prop here. I'm just going to call him "Vanna" over here. Thank you. This is Kevin Munoz.

This is 385 pages of information we have given to Capitol Hill and briefed them on how COVID funding has been spent, what we need, what the needs are. These are the kind of details we have provided and constantly briefed members on the Hill to make clear to them what the impact will be if we do not get this funding. You can have access to this for a prop if you would like it as well. We'll make copies for you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Okay. But unfortunately, as we've gone through before, going back to January -- while we've worked, going back to January, with members of Congress -- Democrats and Republicans -- on the funding needs, we've hosted dozens of briefings, we've held more than three dozen conference calls, we've shared more than a dozen funding tables -- all available 385 pages.

And we've also given Congress a full accounting of every dollar that's been spent on the COVID medical response and a full accounting of the entire American Rescue Plan, which, as you all know, goes well beyond the direct medical needs.

We've also provided all the specifics of planned additional funding: how it will be deployed against the additional purchase of monoclonals and pills and vaccine -- vaccines.

And unfortunately, even after Senate leadership agreed upon a -- on a pared down bipartisan bill, Senate Republicans decided to move the goalposts yet again and force amendment votes on something completely independent of our COVID response needs.

And at this point, we -- the question we have is whether Republicans are acting in good faith to provide the resources we need to save American lives or if they are just playing politics.

The virus is not waiting for Republicans in Congress to get their act together. We know BA.2 is here. We know that it is more transmissible. We know that it is leading to increased cases, and we know we're already seeing an impact on our resources.

The program that reimbursed doctors -- doctors, pharmacists, and other providers for vaccinating the uninsured had to end yesterday due to a lack of funds.

America's supply of monoclonal antibodies that are effective at keeping people out of the hospital will run out as soon as late May.

And our test-manufacturing capacity will begin ramping down at the end of June.

So we're going to continue to work closely with Congress to drive to a solution, because the President knows that we can't afford inaction in this moment. It's going to require politicians stopping -- to stop skirting their responsibility to the American people. COVID is not over, and we have an obligation to protect our country, the American people, and make sure we're taking steps to prepare.

Finally, last thing: Last night, as you may have all seen, we announced the authorization of an additional \$100 million in security assistance -- the Department of Defense announced -- to Ukraine through presidential drawdown authority. This package will meet Ukraine's urgent need for additional Javelin anti-armor systems, which we've been providing to Ukraine and they have been using effectively to defend their country.

The Javelins have been one of the most effective weapons the Ukrainians have been -- have deployed in combating Russian

tanks and Russian armored vehicles. They were critical in the defense of Kyiv and other areas, and we want to ensure we continue to get them in the Ukrainians' hands.

We also continue to work with our allies and partners to provide Ukraine with additional capabilities and expect to have more to announce in the coming days.

Kevin has been out here before, so I have already embarrassed him in the past, and I will keep it short. But Kevin, as many of you know, is our COVID spokesperson. Kevin only recently turned 26, which means he can barely rent a car. (Laughter.) But he is -- he can now.

MR. MUNOZ: I can now. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: But he -- he has become an expert. He is stalwart. He works 20 hours a day. And he is indispensable. And so, I'm very grateful to Kevin and happy he's out here to provide the prop but also to provide all of you with many, many answers on a daily basis.

Okay, with that, Zeke.

Q Thanks, Jen. You just mentioned that COVID isn't over. We just saw the President give remarks to a very large crowd indoors. I was hoping you'd speak a little bit to how the President views, sort of, what -- when it is safer to be going to such large gatherings. Is that the sort of thing he's trying to model for the rest of the American public? That the risks for most people from COVID now are lesser than they were a year or two ago before vaccines and treatments? Is that sort of behavior now -- it's not something that should be stigmatized or -- and should be embraced?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I think what the President is doing is he is following CDC protocols and models, and that's exactly what we would recommend the rest of the country do.

That includes getting vaccinated; getting boosted; getting an extra booster if you are eligible, as the President did just last week; and obviously taking any steps or precautions that the CDC recommends to keep yourself safe.

And obviously, in Washington, D.C., we remain in a yellow zone, and the President follows those protocols as needed.

Q And just an update: He said -- did he say when the last -- the last time the President tested for COVID?

MS. PSAKI: I suspected you would ask this. I've asked this question, and I will get you an answer to that as quickly as possible.

As you know, he is tested on -- he has a regular testing cadence -- is usually tested a couple times a week. We will venture to get to that as soon as possible after the briefing.

Q Thank you. And on a different topic, the U.S. today sanctioned a number of Russians, including Vladimir Putin's daughters, as well as some other senior officials.

I was hoping you'd might be able to speak a little bit about sort of the -- the administration's thinking about when are family members of Russian oligarchs and Russian government officials, sort of, fair game for sanctions and how you've weighed and (inaudible) distinction between minors and adults, in this case, with, sort of, you know, collective punishment or trying to prevent them from harboring assets with, you know, people who are not necessarily involved in the decision-making in Ukraine but have, sort of, maybe benefited from that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen a pattern over time of President Putin and Russian oligarchs stash assets and resources in the bank accounts and -- of their family members. And so, this was an effort to get at those assets, and that's why these individuals were sanctioned.

Q And so there's no -- but why the distinction, then, between minors and adults?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we look at where assets may be stored and stashed and make a decision and an assessment on what's appropriate.

Go ahead.

Q The New York Times has a verified video that appears to show a group of Ukrainian soldiers killing captured Russian troops outside a village just west of Kyiv. Has the White House seen these videos? Do you have a response? Is this something you're investigating?

MS. PSAKI: I have seen the video; I don't have any confirmation or validation of the video or the report.

Q And so far, the administration -- or the U.S. has spent about \$2 billion since the beginning of this invasion. Obviously, you know, you've said the U.S. is committed to doing everything it can to help Ukraine in this fight. But if General Milley is correct in what he said yesterday -- that this really could go on for several years -- are these numbers sustainable over the long term? Can you keep up at this pace?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first -- just to reiterate what General Milley said and the President has also been clear -- that there are tough days ahead for the Ukrainian people. There's a likely scenario where there -- this could go on for some time. And even as they have moved their forces and they've retreated from Kyiv -- they retreated from the north and the west, and they're consolidating forces in the east and in the Donbas.

And we've warned that we're entering a new phase of the conflict that could last for some time. It doesn't mean it will look exactly the same or the needs or the resources will be exactly the same. And that is something we will continue to assess in our conversations with the Ukrainians, as well as with our allies and partners around the world.

And right now, just to note, obviously, our focus is on amping up and providing a range of military assistance of -- the \$100 million for Javelins is a good example of that -- as they are in an active fight every single day against the Russian military. Also, humanitarian and economic assistance. And there will be different needs that will come about over the course of time.

And that's something we are, of course, committed to continuing to support: their recovery from this, their continued fight from this. But I can't make an assessment about sustaining because, obviously, this war and the needs will change over the course of time.

Q And if this is a really protracted, prolonged conflict, given what the Treasury Secretary said today -- sort of warning of the enormous economic repercussions of this war for the whole world -- what does this mean for the economy in the U.S. for the next year or two? Can you just give us sort of a big picture of what Americans should be bracing for?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as we've made decisions about putting sanctions in place, we've continued to do that through the prism of maximizing the impact on Russia, on the Russian economy while minimizing the impact on the West and the United States.

Obviously, there are areas where there has been an impact, including on the price of gas. And you saw the Federal Reserve convey today the impact of the Russian invasion on inflation. And we know that to be the case.

But what we're trying to do is mitigate those impacts. And obviously, not just the announcement of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve -- release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, but the announcement by the IEA -- IEA today is the largest release that they have ever done in history.

And all of these are part of our collective effort to impact -- to mitigate the impacts on the American people over the course of time. Even the length of time of the release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve -- meant to be a stopgap measure or kind of a bridge measure, to get to the point where oil companies could produce more -- is intended to have a mitigation impact over the course of time.

So, I -- what we're doing is anticipating and trying to step -- take steps to reduce the impact on the American people over time.

Q Following up on that IEA question: Do you have a detail or figure of how much oil has been released of the 180 million barrels to date?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to get that for you. I'm sure that our team may have that, but I don't have that in front of me.

Q And can I ask -- President Biden today told union members, "Amazon, here we come." Was he endorsing the efforts of union -- of workers to unionize Amazon facilities?

MS. PSAKI: What he was not doing is sending a message that he or the U.S. government would be directly involved in any of these efforts or take any direct action.

What he was conveying is that -- is his longtime support for collective bargaining, for the rights of workers to organize, and their decision to do exactly that in this case -- something that he has long supported broadly over the course of his career.

Go ahead.

Q Just back to the issue of the sanctions that are being imposed on Putin's children and, obviously, sanctions against him as well. Does the U.S. have a rough estimate, at this moment in time, of how much of his assets are tied up versus what he still might have access to?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an assessment to offer from here on that.

Q Okay.

MS. PSAKI: But we know that -- we've seen attempts and efforts to stash assets in the accounts and resources of his children.

Q A senior administration official, earlier today, was raising the question of Putin's endgame -- that, at some point, he would presumably recognize that this war has been a failure for him.

Given some of the scenes that we're seeing in places like Bucha and Mariupol, does the U.S. believe that he is any closer to realizing that reality today versus a week ago, a month ago?

MS. PSAKI: Well, remember, the scenes we're seeing in Bucha are from events and atrocities that didn't happen yesterday. They happened some time ago. Right? And there will be more of those -- which our Secretary of State and our National Security Advisor have also predicted, unfortunately -- because there are a lot of areas of the country where Russia has invaded and committed atrocities -- no doubt -- which we have not yet had visual access to.

I would say that I can't make an assessment for you from here on what is in President Putin's mind.

What we do know is that because of the impact of the economic sanctions, including the ones we have taken today, and steps we've taken over the course of time, we have seen an unquestionable, significant impact on Russia's economy.

And that has led to this question now, as a result of the decision around whether or not they would be able to make a bond

payment earlier this week, that they will have to decide whether they are going to spend down dollars and resources they have to avoid default or whether they're going to spend that money -- continue to spend that money in funding the war. And that is a part of our objective -- is to force them into a place where they are making that decision.

But we've seen Russia's economy collapse by 15 percent, wiping out the gains made in the last 15 years. Inflation is spiking up to 15 percent. Russia is set to lose its status as a major economy. And our objective is to implement those consequences to make it much more difficult for President Putin to fund the war -- and we're seeing the direct impacts of that already -- and to make it clear that this was a strategic blunder. And we're already seeing those impacts on the economy.

How that impacts him and -- you know, that -- that is not something I can predict in terms of getting into his mind.

Q What is the administration's current assessment of what Putin's endgame is? And does the administration believe that that may have shifted since the beginning of the invasion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we -- I would say that, one, while they have moved their troops around and repositioned, we have not made -- and they haven't made many airstrikes in the last 24 hours, according to Department of Defense and their briefing, which you may have seen, or their backgrounder -- we also know that, you know, their goal remains weakening Ukraine as much as possible. And we should be under no illusion that that objective hasn't changed, even as their tactics have changed.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The President today, as he was talking about his vow to stand by Ukrainians, added a line: "And, by the way, if I've got to go to war, I'm going with you guys." Can you clarify what that meant? Is --

MS. PSAKI: He has no intention of sending boots -- troops to the ground or fighting a war between -- with the U.S. forces against Russia.

That was a reflection of his long love for labor unions, and members of labor unions, and the building and trades workers who were there, and people that he would always love to be in the foxhole with -- not an indication of a change in U.S. policy.

Q Got it.

He also referred to that heated exchange we saw that involved Secretary Austin. And he said, with regard to Ukrainian troops, "We've trained them and we've given them the weapons." Can you clarify what he meant by "We have trained them"? What training was he talking about?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there was some, some time ago -- training. And we have provided them, obviously, a range of weapons over time.

What point he was making is one Secretary Austin made yesterday: Without the extensive military assistance that we have been providing the Ukrainians -- the security assistance -- over the course of the last several weeks and even months before that -- \$1.6 billion worth, maybe a little higher now after the \$100 million last night -- they would not have been able to effectively fight back as they have.

And how it has basically worked is: They have requested a range of assistance. We go through and see what we are able to provide. We often work with partners and allies to provide assistance we don't have access to here. And then we expedite the delivery of that over the course of time, whether that is Javelin, Stingers, or a range of materials that are -- the U.S. military has determined they're not only trained on but has been effective in fighting this war.

Q Aside from the physical resources, what training was he talking about? What was the latest training the U.S. troops

have done?

MS. PSAKI: There's not new training to report out to you. What he was really emphasizing and the important part here is what Secretary Austin was also talking about, is the military equipment that has been provided that has allowed them to fight this war.

Go --

Q All right. And one more --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- on sanctions. You said a couple times now that, you know, the U.S. sanctioned Putin's daughters because there's reason to believe Putin has stashed his wealth with them. Does that mean that the U.S. has some information about where the billionaire daughters are stashing their wealth?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more to provide to you from here. We make assessments about where to implement financial sanctions to get close to not only the assets of President Putin, but those around him. And we have seen a long pattern of using relatives and family members to stash wealth.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. First, on immigration: Our team in Texas is that saying that you guys are starting to give smartphones to border crossers, hoping that they'll use the phones to check in or to be tracked. I -- which part of that is supposed to deter people from crossing illegally into the states?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you of all people -- since you've asked me a range of questions on this topic over time -- would recognize that we need to take steps to ensure that we know where individuals are and we can track -- and we can check in with them.

The alternatives to detention programs -- is what we utilize -- has three unique forms of technology to monitor participants enrolled in the program:

Telephonic, which is one of them, which uses a participant's voice to create a biometric voice print during the enrollment process. And when the participant has a check-in call, their voice is compared to the voice print.

SmartLink, which is another option, enables participant monitoring via smartphone or tablet using facial-matching technology to establish identity.

And Global Positioning System monitoring is of a participant's location and movement history, using satellite technology through an ankle bracelet. This is all part of our effort, as individuals come into the United States and individuals who are entering who will proceed to immigration proceedings, to monitor and track where they are.

Q With the telephonic, though, any concern by folks around here that these migrants will take the phones and just toss them? And then --

MS. PSAKI: Do you have a record of people throwing phones away?

Q I'm just asking if that's a concern.

MS. PSAKI: Our concern is ensuring that individuals who irregularly migrate to the United States proceed through our process of, you know, of course, being monitored, but also participating in -- in hearings to determine whether or not they

will be able to stay.

I would note that nearly 80 percent of non-citizens released at the border from DHS custody under prosecut- -- prosecutorial discretion have either received a notice to appear or are still within their window to report.

So, actually, the vast, vast majority of people are appearing. In part, we have these monitors and monitoring systems in order to do that effectively.

Q Okay. On another topic, was it common for President Biden to do favors for Hunter Biden's international business partners like writing college recommendations for their kids?

MS. PSAKI: I have -- I've seen the report. I have no confirmation or comments on a report about whether or not the President, when he was a private citizen, wrote a college recommendation letter for an individual.

Q A college recommendation letter, though, from, at the time, a former Vice President would be a big deal. So, do we know what the President might have gotten in return for doing a favor like that?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I have no confirmation of any recommendation letter the President wrote when he was a private citizen -- by the way, not serving in public office. That's even in the report.

Q But he's the President now, and you're his spokesperson.

MS. PSAKI: Correct. And he was not the President at the time of this report.

Q So, there's evidence that the President, at one point, was officemates with Hunter and his brother Jim here in D.C.

MS. PSAKI: That's not accurate.

Q That is not accurate? So, when Hunter Biden is emailing a landlord, "Please have keys made available for new officemates -- Joe Biden, Jill Biden, Jim Biden," that -- you're disputing it?

MS. PSAKI: They were not officemates, no.

Q They were not officemates. Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Great.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. On student loans, briefly -- and you were sort of asked about this yesterday, but I just wanted to come back to it. So, as people plan for the future, should borrowers expect that after August 31st, they'll have to repay their loans? Or is there another -- is there a chance that it could be further extended after August 31st?

MS. PSAKI: We'll continue to assess. And what we look at -- while, of course, the economy is in a better state than it is -- than it was a year ago, and it's -- we have a strong recovery, we also understand that there are a range of impacts that are still longer lasting because of the pandemic, including the impacts on costs and inflation.

And this is part of the President's effort to help alleviate that, as was fix -- as was the "family glitch" announcement of yesterday.

So, we'll make an evaluation. The Department of Education will look at that and a range of factors as we get closer to that timeline.

Q And has the President, at this point, ruled out a possible executive-level cancellation on a widescale of student debt?

MS. PSAKI: He has not ruled out, but I don't have any update on that. And I would note that, again, he would encourage Congress to send him a bill cancelling \$10,000 in student debt, something that he talked about looking forward to signing on the campaign trail.

Q And just really briefly, on the G20 --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Secretary Yellen said today that they may not -- that the U.S. might not attend meetings if Russians are there. Is that -- is she implying that these would just be individual meetings, or would it be a kind of broader-scale boycott of the G20 in Bali?

MS. PSAKI: She -- I think they have later clarified she was referencing at the ministerial level and, more specific, meetings. I would point you to them of the more specifics.

The President has also said -- he said on the trip that he did not think Russia should be a part of the G20, you know, meeting. And I would note it's seven months away, which is a lifetime in our -- in our lives. But it wasn't an indication of plans for us to boycott or not attend. It was just, "It shouldn't be business as usual," which is something the President has also said.

Q Jen, is it a priority of the President to try to identify the Russian units that carried out the atrocities in Bucha? Is that something that the U.S. may be able to do? And is it something the President wants to have happen?

MS. PSAKI: We will continue to assist in every way possible with these efforts to track down data, additional information, and contribute to the international effort to do exactly that.

Q May I ask, if I can, a couple of other questions that made news today? A judge has just issued the first outright acquittal of a defendant charged in the January 6th Capitol riot. This was a New Mexico man, Matthew Martin. He was acquitted on some misdemeanor charges by the judge. This man had claimed that he thought police allowed him into an entrance near the Capitol Rotunda. Does the White House have any view now that that case has been adjudicated?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any specific comment on that case. We continue to support the efforts of the January 6th commission and all of the members in trying to get to the bottom of what happened that day to prevent it from happening in the future.

Q Let me go back to one last question as it relates to what's happening in Russia. The U.S. still doesn't have an ambassador to India, but it appears increasingly clear that Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti doesn't have the votes right now to be confirmed. How does the lack of an ambassador to India impact our ability -- America's ability to pressure India not to work with Russia in providing any aid or assistance?

MS. PSAKI: Well, while our preference is always to have a confirmed ambassador on the ground -- it's an incredibly important diplomatic position -- we also engage with countries through a range of channels.

And obviously, our Deputy National Security Advisor was just in India recently in the last few weeks conveying clearly what the consequences of violating sanctions would be and what the mechanisms are; and also making clear that we do not think India should accelerate or increase imports of Russian energy and other commodities, even as obviously those decisions are made by individual countries; and also making clear that we stand ready to support India as -- in any efforts to diversify its imports and serve as a reliable supplier, even as they're only importing about 1 to 2 percent of their oil from India.

So, we have a range of ways to communicate and engage. And obviously, sending our Deputy National Security Advisor is an example of that. But clearly our preference would be to have a confirmed ambassador.

Q Does the President still support that nomination?

MS. PSAKI: He does.

Q The Russian ruble has been on the rise. Viktor Orbán in Hungary said today that he'd be happy to pay for Russian gas in rubles and that he's happy to buy more Russian gas. Is there anything the U.S. can do about this? Are you engaging Hungary on this point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would -- I would first say, in terms of the ruble, the reason -- it's important to note that the Russian Central Bank is making extreme policy decisions to artificially prop up the ruble. So it's not actually on the rise. It is being artificially propped up by limitations that they are putting in place, including barring banks from selling dollars to customers; Russian brokerages are not allowing foreign clients to sell securities; exporters are being forced to sell 80 percent of their dollar revenues and buy rubles. So, they are essentially manipulating it on their end.

As it relates to Hungary -- I mean, slightly a different question, but our -- you know, obviously, there was the recent election, as you noted, of Viktor Orbán. I would note that our -- Hungary is a NATO Ally, continues to be. We continue to cooperate on a range of bilateral and shared global interests, including on NATO defense and on humanitarian assistance. They're currently hosting forces from an Army Stryker infantry troop as part of a NATO battle group. We regularly conduct joint training exercises with them, and we will continue to work to strengthen our partnership with Hungary.

Obviously, reliance on the ruble is a decision individual countries will make, and we've obviously made our views clear on that front.

Q So you have engaged Hungary on this question?

MS. PSAKI: That is not what I conveyed. I just conveyed they're a NATO Ally.

Go ahead.

Q Can we go back to the sanctions? As they were announced this morning, the Sberbank and the Alfa Bank sanctions, I believe, exclude energy. They're full blocking sanctions excluding energy. Similarly, the SOE sanctions coming tomorrow also will not affect the energy sector.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you speak to that balancing act? Is that because you're worried about the domestic impact here in the U.S. on the price of natural gas, price of gasoline? Or is that because the Europeans asked you to sort of carve that out? Why -- or why is that still sort of a bridge too far for the U.S. on these sanctions? They're not really full blocking sanctions if they're excluding energy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I mean, I would say they're quite extensive, given Sberbank is the largest bank in Russia and Alfa Bank is the largest private bank in Russia. So, in total, we've now fully blocked more than two thirds of Russia's banking sector.

These conversations and discussions, obviously, are done in coordination with our European allies and partners. And we continue to assess how we can maximize the impact while minimizing the impact on other economies, including, of course, the global -- the global oil marketplace.

And we've taken steps, of course, banning oil imports. A number of countries, including Poland, in Europe have announced their intention to take steps but that's up to individual countries to make. But it's part coordination, assessment with other

their intention to take steps, but that's up to individual countries to make. But it's part coordination, assessment with other countries and our allies about the impacts. But I would still say it's quite a significant step, given they're the largest bank in Russia.

Q So is it accurate then to say that this was done because of the Europeans saying, "Hey, you know, this would be too (inaudible)?"

MS. PSAKI: No, this is -- but we do update them and brief them on the steps we take and why. And we look at the impacts on -- on how things will impact the United States, how they will impact a range of our allies as we make decisions about sanctions.

Q And very quickly on the central bank actions propping up the ruble -- do you have any sense of how long they're able to keep that up?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an assessment from here at this point in time on that.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. On immigration: With the lifting of Section 42, there are a lot of Democrats, particularly Democratic senators, up for reelection who worry that you don't have a plan to either stop the spring surge of undocumented immigrants or handle it. What do you say to those Democrats?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that Title 42 is not an immigration measure, it's a public health measure and one that Congress has given the CDC authority to make a decision about. And we respect that and think that's -- that's absolutely right. That's why the President proposed an immigration bill in his first day in office. And we would certainly welcome efforts of anybody to work with us on that.

But as we're implementing this over the course of the next five weeks, if I'm doing my math correctly, we've also surged resources from the Department of Homeland Security. And we will continue to take additional steps to implement and make clear that this is not the time to come, that there are -- there will still be significant measures put in place for anyone who tries to irregularly migrate to the United States.

Q Do you feel that you -- I mean, what's your goal, and what do you expect -- what impact do you expect to have on the spring surge with those kinds of measures?

MS. PSAKI: I would really point you to the Department of Homeland Security to make any projections of that, because we have not made any projections of what it will mean in terms of the ending of Title 42 either.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks. I know that you've talked about the stringent measures you've taken to keep the President safe from COVID that go beyond the CDC guidelines, but that's such a visual contrast between that and the President showing up maskless in front of people at some of these events. So how do you make sure that you keep that protection bubble around him? I'm sure you feel like you're asked to explain this ad nauseum. But --

MS. PSAKI: No, it's okay.

Q -- the bubble is looking pretty porous lately. So how do you keep that, sort of, enforced?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that we continue to take measures that go beyond what the CDC protocols are. That includes ensuring that everybody who's going to see the

...measures that go beyond what the CDC protocols and requirements are to ensure that every day, those going to see the President in a meeting is tested in advance -- or if you're traveling with the President, you're tested in advance.

When possible, we take steps to socially distance in circumstances, which certainly the Oval Office and other meeting spaces in the White House allow for.

If an individual in the White House is a close contact, they are asked to or required to, I guess you could say, wear a mask for 10 days after that exposure. And they are also tested regularly following.

So, I would say we take additional measures that go beyond what the CDC protocols and requirements are to ensure that we're doing everything we can to keep principals safe -- the President, the Vice President, and others, of course, in the building.

Q Was everyone tested before the East Room event tomorrow -- everyone who was there?

MS. PSAKI: It's not at public events. I'm talking about at meetings. But again, I can check on the protocols for public events. Sure.

Q Have you changed any protocol surrounding him in recent days as more people are -- in the administration contract this virus?

MS. PSAKI: We've continued to implement stringent and strict protocols.

I would note that even as we're looking at, with BA.2 -- a very transmissible variant, as we all know, and our public health officials have told us. We've seen an increase in cases -- right? -- in the country, in the region, among the press corps, and certainly in the White House. And -- but it is not, at this point, what we saw during Omicron.

And what -- the steps we have taken here, including policy put in place to ensure that "return to work" was part of our policies in the federal government, are meant to ensure that can continue to be the case. And even while we have individuals who are out with COVID, everyone here is required to be tested, highly recommended to be boosted. People who are out because of that -- the vast, vast majority have mild cases and are continuing to work from home.

And obviously, we are continuing to implement the "return to work" policy and feel we have the measures necessary to do that.

Q So what's the clearest version of the message that you're trying to send to Americans about living with this virus, even as infection rates rise -- I mean, that it's not the end of the world if you get it if you're boosted? I mean, is that the message you send through the President, who's maskless in front of hundreds of people -- that this isn't the end, that we have to live this way? Is that the clear version of the message?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our recommend- -- well, the message we're sending is to follow the CDC protocols and guidance for where you live. The President does that. He did an event in Washington, D.C., today where it does not require mask wearing. There are other parts of the country, as you know, where he's traveled and he has worn a mask where that has been the recommendation.

Our protocols also here -- and we would certainly project this to the American people -- are that getting vaccinated and getting boosted -- and if you are immunocompromised or you're over certain age, getting your next booster -- is certainly a way to help protect yourself. That's something the President has done and every member of the senior staff and White House staff has done and will continue to do, although some of us are teasing the people who are over 50 that were not old enough yet. But that's a si- -- that's a sidebar. When we are, we will be doing that as well.

So, it is -- it is to follow the protocols and to recognize that the statistics show you are significantly more likely to be hospitalized and even to die if you are not vaccinated, if you are not boosted.

And, yes, we are living with COVID-19. We are continuing to fight it. And our biggest message right now is that we need the resources from Congress to continue to have the -- to ensure we have programs for the uninsured, that we can provide treatments for immunocompromised, that we can make sure that we have testing mechanisms and booster mechanisms. And we're going to -- we're at serious risk of those programs not being able to continue. Some haven't, obviously.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Jen, just to follow up on something you said to Mara on the Title 42 question. You said that the administration will be taking additional steps to make clear this is not the time to come. That was, of course, a pretty explicit message from the President and others last year: "Do not come." Is that still the message on May 24th?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q Okay. And then, a follow-up to that: As the U.S. moves to end Title 42 in May, are there discussions now or is there any update you can give us on ending the testing requirement for reentry into the U.S. for people traveling here?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on that at this point in time. That's something we will continue to evaluate.

Q Thank you so much. I have a follow-up on sanctions and energy.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The European Union said yesterday that they are paying Russia, every day, a little more than \$1 billion for gas and oil. How long can this go on, in the President's view, without undermining the collective effort to punish Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that we continue to believe that it's up to individual countries to make assessments about what additional measures they will be put in place. While we are focused on continuing unity with our NATO Allies and partners and our European partners, it does not mean that it is always identical, and different countries have to make their own assessments.

What we've also tried to do is take steps to ensure there are other options to reduce dependence, even if it's a small percentage. And if there's a varying, as you all know, degree of reliance for these countries you're referencing on Russian oil. And some of them have taken steps to convey they want to reduce or end their dependence or import of Russian oil, and that's something certainly we'd support and play any constructive role in helping -- to helping expedite.

Q Jen, a follow-up --

MS. PSAKI: I'll come around to you in a second. Go ahead.

Q To follow up on the question about Hungary, are there any plans to engage with them about this particular topic of paying in rubles at any level in the coming days or weeks?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check with the State Department to see if there's any plans for engagement about it.

Go ahead.

Q Okay, Jen. Again, an American Catho- --

Q Thank you. You talked about the increasing picture of Russia's economy. Over the years, public reporting has shown that white supremacists and other domestic extremists have developed an affinity for Russia. Is there any concern that as the Russian economy continues to degrade, that Russia might try and inspire domestic extremists, domestic terrorists to

commit acts of violence on American soil in retaliation?

MS. PSAKI: It's an interesting and scary question. I don't have any prediction or assessment of that, nor have I heard a prediction or assessment of that from our national security experts or the Department of Homeland Security. I'm happy to check with them and see if there's anything on that front.

Q Jen, again --

Q Yeah. Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Okay. All right, Jen. So, an American Catholic nun has been abducted -- it happened Monday night -- by gunmen in Burkina Faso, in Western Africa. Her name is Sister Suellen Tennyson. She was doing missionary work there. Is the White House aware of that, by any chance -- her abduction?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check with our national security team and the State Department. Obviously, they would have purview over any steps to bring Sister -- tell me her name again.

Q Sister Suellen Tennyson. And she was working in Burkina Faso, in Western Africa.

MS. PSAKI: Sister Tennyson back, who clearly was doing incredible work -- humanitarian work, it sounds like -- on behalf of the people in Burkina Faso.

I will check with the State Department and see if there's any updates on this specific case.

Q Thank you very much.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, okay. All right. Okay, go ahead, Patsy. Go ahead.

Q Okay. Thank you, Jen. I want to follow up on what you said yesterday about the lack of global COVID funding. And you explained it essentially means that the U.S. cannot turn the doses that you already have into shots in arms. And I believe that the U.S. has already purchased 1.2 billion doses that it's pledged. And out of that, there is about 680 million that haven't been delivered.

So, my question, then, is: What will happen to those doses? I know, like, possibly you already have funding for delivery -- the cold chain storage, training people, and so on. But what happens to the rest of it when you are unable to turn those vaccines into vaccinations?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not quite there yet. And our hope is that we will be able to turn them -- vaccines into vaccinations.

But as you know, it's not just an issue of vaccine doses. It's the know-how, it's the capacity, it's the tools and mechanisms to be able to store, deliver, implement getting shots into arms in a number of these countries, which is why a number of countries haven't even been able to accept the doses that we've been able to offer -- because of that know-how. And that is part of the program that is so essential to fund through USAID and other of our international bodies to do exactly that.

But we're not quite at that point. We're going to continue to press for international funding, just like we are going to continue to press for domestic funding, because we feel it's important and imperative that we continue to be the arsenal of vaccines around the world.

Q Can you give us a sense on how you want to do that? Is the goal to push for a separate package on global COVID funding?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to get ahead of where we are. Obviously, it was disappointing, to say the least, that the package did not move forward despite an agreement on that yesterday afternoon.

But what I'm here to convey is that this funding, domestically and internationally, is imperative, it's urgent, and we're going to continue to press for all of it.

Q And I have one more question on Daleep Singh's visit to India --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- which was also partly to go on a listening tour for the Build Back Better World that was actually scheduled to be formally launched early this year.

So if you can give us an update on that. Why has it not launched yet? And at this point, do you feel that it is -- with the projects -- with the listening tours, with the pilot projects that are being planned, is it robust enough to be introduced to the world as a viable alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative?

MS. PSAKI: As you know, the President has used his own time to talk about Build Back Better World and how important it is to our efforts to rebuild infrastructure without the strings attached around the world. And that speaks to our commitment to it. And obviously, our Nat- -- Deputy National Security Advisor taking a trip himself, having a discussion about it is a reflection of our commitment to that and our efforts.

Go ahead.

Q Can I ask you a follow-up question on COVID-19?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q The WHO Director-General is in D.C. --

Q Earlier this morning at the Monitor Breakfast, NEC Director Brian Deese mentioned a classified briefing that took place earlier today between lawmakers, Jake Sullivan, and others about, quote, "escalating vulnerabilities" around semiconductors. Can you tell us more about this meeting? And was it an effort to get Congress to hurry up on the reconciliation of the two related bills?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can't speak to the specifics of a classified briefing. What I can tell you is that we can -- remain committed to supporting efforts to get you USICA passed, which includes significant funding for chips manufacturing and production, which, as we know, is a big hindrance to our ability to manufacture a range of -- a range of items in the United States, including cars and others, that rely on chips. And this bill has a great deal of funding for it.

So, I think it was a reminder -- and more details that I can't get into from here on -- on how important addressing that shortage and being able to produce them at home are, moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, as the administration sort of collects this evidence for potential war crimes trials against Russian officials, does the U.S., does the administration have a preferred venue for where that type of trial might take place? That -- there are obviously a few avenues available to the international community.

MS. PSAKI: There are. And there -- there's a lot of precedent and -- that has used different venues. So at this point, that determination has not been made.

What we are doing -- and I think I would point you first to our Attorney General's comments earlier today about the role of the Department of Justice in this effort moving forward. But we have supported a range of efforts, including the efforts by the Ukrainian Special Prosecutor to gather information and the work of the war crimes unit under the Ukrainian Prosecutor General -- sorry, Prosecutor General, not Special Prosecutor -- and a team of international prosecutors who are working with them.

We also -- in the last few weeks, we helped establish investigations for the U.N. Human Rights Council and the OSCE of possible violations by Russia. And we welcome the investigation opened by the ICC Prosecutor.

So there has been different ways that war crimes -- unfortunately, there are past instances and examples -- have been investigated and tried in the past. And we're going to support all of these efforts, but there hasn't been a determination yet about what mechanism it will take.

Q Has this effort changed at all the thinking of the administration as it relates to the relationship between the U.S. and the ICC?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are not a member of the ICC, as you know. That hasn't changed. We have supported and contributed data and information to ICC investigations in the past. There was -- we supported the U.N. Security Council's referral of Libya to the ICC back in 2011. And if you look back to 2004, we also provided data and information to the ICC investigation of Darfur.

So, there is past precedent, even as we have not been members of the ICC.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. A couple of follow ups. When the President said that the U.S. was training Ukrainians, was he talking about training that had occurred during his administration?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any other additional details. What he was really making a point about is what Secretary Austin said yesterday, which is that without the extensive and robust military assistance we have provided, the Ukrainians would not have been able to as effectively fight and push back on the Russian invasion.

Q And then he said, "Amazon, here we come." You said that he was generally expressing his support for the right to unionize. Moments later, though, news broke that the SEC was beginning an investigation of Amazon. Was that a coincidence?

MS. PSAKI: No relation. SEC is an independent agency.

Q Gotcha. Was he aware that there was an investigation?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I'm aware of.

Q And then, one final one. This administration has sent everything from medical supplies to laser-guided rockets to the Ukrainians right now. While this administration is making them more lethal, is the thought that we are bolstering their

defensive capabilities? Or is the administration confident that we are bolstering their offensive capability to, in fact, you know, expel Russia from their borders?

MS. PSAKI: Well, their country is being invaded, so it's all defensive. They're defending their sovereign country and the territorial integrity of Ukraine using these weapons systems that the Department of Defense has long categorized as defensive systems.

You wouldn't go invade another country with a lot of these systems -- the vast majority of these systems. That's not how you would go about it. And obviously, that is not what they're doing. They're trying to protect their own people, their own cities, their own innocent civilians who are being invaded by a foreign power.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Let me do one more in the back because I never get to the Huffington Post, and I -- today is the day. (Laughter.)

Q Thanks, Jen. There was a recent report that the President had expressed some frustration that the former President had not been charged. Without getting into the details of that, there are lots of people being charged with obstructing an official proceeding, meaning the January 6th certification.

Well, the former President was doing that openly and his administration was doing it. Why wouldn't you charge him? And why hasn't the President come out and said that if that's the case?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I -- first, I've never heard the President say those words -- or say that phrase that was reported. And I know Ron Klain said something similarly, so I don't know -- we each spend a lot of time with him.

But I would say that the President, from the beginning, has felt strongly that the Justice Department and the Attorney General must operate independently, and any decisions about prosecution need to be made independently. And that is the strength of our system, even as the former guy ignored that and former-President Nixon ignored it as well.

The President does not want to be in that category of how you approach the separation of the White House and the Department of Justice. And -- and he thinks that will even strengthen our systems as they've been weakened over the last few years.

Okay, thanks so much. All right.

(Cross-talk by reporters.)

All right, everybody. See you tomorrow.

4:02 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In-townPool. #10: Gaggle quick recap (more TK)
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 31, 2021 3:33 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Zolan Kanno-Youngs (b) (6)
Date: March 31, 2021 at 3:30:19 PM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-townPool. #10: Gaggle quick recap (more TK)

Deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre spoke for about 15 minute on Air Force One before someone else appeared to inform her at roughly 3:15 PM that the plane was beginning its descent.

Ms. Jean-Pierre answered questions on the president s infrastructure plan, the border, the Derek Chauvin trial and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan s meeting with officials from Japan and the Republic of Korea this Friday in Annapolis, MD.

Ms. Jean Pierre also broke some news: President Biden will "convene his first full cabinet meeting just a day after rolling out his American Jobs Plan, which will be a key topic of discussion."

"The focus of the meeting will be working together to continue implementing and communicating about the American rescue plan and how it continues to deliver for working families, discussing the role Cabinet members will play in advocating for the American Job plan, and ensuring we accelerate our federal COVID-19 response, and that Americans don t let their guards down," Ms. Jean Pierre said.

The cabinet meeting will be held in the East Room to follow social distancing protocols.

Ms. Jean Pierre also previewed Mr. Biden s infrastructure plan. She broke the investment into four parts. "The first is how we move investments in our roads, bridges, rail and other elements of our transportation infrastructure," she said.

Another focus is on broadband, water, powering, housing and buildings. The third is investing in home and community-based care for older Americans and those with disabilities. Fourth is investing in manufacturing.

MORE TK

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Zolan Kanno-Youngs
The New York Times
Cell/WhatsApp/Signal: (b) (6)
@KannoYoungs

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In-Town Poo [WASHINGTON] #13: Gagge Q&A Part 3
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 31, 2021 4:37 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Zolan Kanno-Youngs
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 4:25 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-Town Pool [WASHINGTON] #13: Gaggle Q&A Part 3

Q: NSC meeting with Japan/Korea?

Karine Jean-Pierre: It will take place at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

"National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan will welcome his counterparts from Japan and from the Republic of Korea for a trilateral dialogue at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. This trilateral meeting, which follows the visits of Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Japan and the Republic of Korea provides an opportunity for our nations to consult on a wide range of regional issues, and foreign policy priorities, including maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and combating climate change."

"This meeting with Japan, Republic of Korea is the first national secretary advisor level multilateral lateral dialogue of the Biden administration, reflecting the importance we place on broadening and deepening our cooperation on key issues and advancing our shared prosperity across a free and open Indo Pacific."

Q: Is the Korea review done?

"We are in the final stages of our intensive multi stakeholder North Korea policy review. This has been a thorough interagency review of US policy towards North Korea, including evaluation of all available options to address the increasing threat posed by North Korea to its neighbors and the border in the international community. This process has integrated a diverse set of voices from throughout the government and incorporated inputs from, think tanks and outside experts, we have consulted many former government officials involved in North Korea policy, including several from the previous administration. So we look forward to discussing our review with the national security advisors of South Korea and Japan trilateral dialogue in Annapolis."

[Laughs].

Q: Would potus be open for some of this to be deficit spending? Is that something he's open to if Dems want?

"Well he believes this should be paid for, which is why he included this in his plan."

At this point it appears someone warns that the plane is landing.

-30-

--

Zolan Kanno-Youngs
The New York Times
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Pool report #3: CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 9, 2021 12:39 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Rob Crilly
Sent: Friday, April 9, 2021 12:33 PM
To: Wranglers ; Kikukawa, Michael EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool report #3: CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience

From White House

On Monday afternoon, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and NEC Director Brian Deese, joined by Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, will host a virtual CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience. They will discuss the American Jobs Plan and steps to strengthen the resilience of American supply chains for semiconductors and other key areas. Participating in the summit:

Alphabet (Google)
AT&T
Cummins, Inc.
Dell Technologies
Ford Motor Company
General Motors
Global Foundries
HP
Intel Corporation
Medtronic
Micron
Northrop Grumman
NXP
PACCAR
Piston Group
Samsung
SkyWater Technology
Stellantis
Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC)

--
Rob Crilly
White House correspondent
office: (b) (6)
cell: (b) (6)
@robcrilly

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WEEK A LEAD GUIDANCE FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 12 - APRIL 16
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apr 11, 2021 7:46 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2021

**WEEK AHEAD GUIDANCE FOR
THE WEEK OF APRIL 12 – APRIL 16**

Monday, April 12, 2021

The President will briefly join the virtual CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience to discuss the American Jobs Plan and steps to strengthen the resilience of American supply chains for semiconductors and other key areas. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, National Economic Council Director Brian Deese, and the Secretary of Commerce will also attend.

The President and the Vice President will meet with a bipartisan group of Members of Congress to discuss the American Jobs Plan and the need for a bold, once-in-a-generation investment in America to put millions of people to work.

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

The President will pay his respects in a Congressional Tribute for U.S. Capitol Police Officer William Evans as he lies in honor in the Capitol Rotunda.

The President and the Vice President will meet with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Thursday, April 15, 2021

The President will meet with members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

Friday, April 16, 2021

The President will host H.E. Suga Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan, at The White House for an Official Working Visit and the President's first in-person bilateral meeting with a foreign leader, reflecting the importance of our bilateral relationship with Japan and our friendship and partnership with the Japanese people.

The President will participate in a press conference with H.E. Suga Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan.

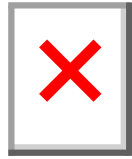
The President will travel to Wilmington, Delaware, where he will remain over the weekend.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 11, 2021 8:17 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2021

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2021**

In the morning, the President will receive the President's Daily Brief in the Oval Office. This meeting will be closed press.

At noon, the President will briefly join the virtual CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience to discuss the American Jobs Plan and steps to strengthen the resilience of American supply chains for semiconductors and other key areas in the Roosevelt Room. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, National Economic Council Director Brian Deese, and the Secretary of Commerce will also attend. This event will have a pool spray at the top.

In the afternoon, the President and the Vice President will meet with a bipartisan group of Members of Congress to discuss the American Jobs Plan in the Oval Office. They will discuss the need for a bold, once-in-a-generation investment in America to put millions of people to work. This meeting will have a pool spray at the top.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg

Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT

TV Corr & Crew: NBC

Print: Yahoo

Radio: BBC

EDT

10:00 AM In-Town Pool Call Time

10:00 AM THE PRESIDENT receives the President's Daily Brief

Oval Office

Closed Press

12:00 PM THE PRESIDENT briefly joins the virtual CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience; National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, National Economic Council Director Brian Deese, and the Secretary of Commerce also attend

Roosevelt Room

Restricted In-House Pool Spray (Final Gather 11:45 AM – Brady Press Briefing Room)

1:45 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE VICE PRESIDENT meet with a bipartisan group of Members of Congress to discuss the American Jobs Plan

Oval Office

Restricted In-House Pool Spray (Final Gather 1:30 PM – Brady Press Briefing Room)

Briefing Schedule

11:00 AM Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and public health officials

12:15 PM Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In-town pool report 1 - Checking in
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 12, 2021 10:14 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Brittany Shepherd
Sent: Monday, April 12, 2021 10:10 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report 1 - Checking in

Salutations from an pleasantly overcast morning at the White House. No changes so far to the daily guidance. Feel free to ping me with questions along the way.

Here's what we have on deck so far:

11:00 AM Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and public health officials

12:00 PM THE PRESIDENT briefly joins the virtual CEO Summit on Semiconductor and Supply Chain Resilience; National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, National Economic Council Director Brian Deese, and the Secretary of Commerce also attend

12:15 PM Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki

1:45 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE VICE PRESIDENT meet with a bipartisan group of Members of Congress to discuss the American Jobs Plan

Cheers, B

--

BRITTANY SHEPHERD

White House Correspondent, *Yahoo! News*

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In town poo report 4 - summit gather
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apri 12, 2021 1:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Brittany Shepherd
Sent: Monday, April 12, 2021 1:00 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town pool report 4 - summit gather

FYI, pool is now gathering for the president's brief remarks ahead of the virtual CEO summit. According to the daily guidance, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, National Economic Council Director Brian Deese, and the Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo will also be in attendance.

--

BRITTANY SHEPHERD

White House Correspondent, *Yahoo! News*

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Brittany Shepherd
White House Correspondent
Yahoo! News
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In-town pool report #5- PM Suga Arriva and bi atera meeting attendees
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apri 16, 2021 2:45 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Ryan Brooks
Sent: Friday, April 16, 2021 2:03 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #5- PM Suga Arrival and bilateral meeting attendees

Your pooler watched PM Suga arrive at the West Wing at 1:32pm.

The White House told the pool the Official Working Visit began at 1:50pm and passed along the names of the expanded bilateral meeting participants:

United States

The President

1. T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
2. T.H. Janet Yellen, Secretary of the Treasury
3. T.H. Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense
4. T.H. Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce
5. T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
6. T.H. Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, National Security Council
7. T.H. Edgard Kagan, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for East Asia and Oceania, National Security Council
8. T.H. Melanie Nakagawa, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Climate and Energy, National Security Council

Japan

His Excellency SUGA Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan

1. Mr. SAKAI Manabu, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary
2. Mr. ADACHI Masashi, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister
3. Mr. KITAMURA Shigeru, Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat
4. His Excellency TOMITA Koji, Ambassador of Japan to the United States
5. Mr. IZUMI Hiroto, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister
6. Mr. MORI Takeo, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
7. Mr. SUZUKI Hiroshi, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
8. Mr. ICHIKAWA Keiichi, Director General for North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Trave Poo report #1 - JBA arriva
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 19, 2021 9:04 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Groppe, Maureen
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 8:49 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool report #1 - JBA arrival

Marine One landed at JBA at about 8:43 am for today's trip to the Coast Guard Academy.

Biden was greeted by Colonel Kimberly Welter, Vice Wing Commander, 89th Airlift Wing.

He didn't talk to the pool before boarding AF1.

Karine Jean-Pierre will gaggle during the approximately hour-long flight to Rhode Island's Quonset Point Air National Guard. The gaggle will be live-streamed.

Traveling with the President to Connecticut:

Jen O'Malley Dillon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
Karine Jean-Pierre, Principal Deputy Press Secretary
Ryan Montoya, Director of Scheduling & Advance
Meghan Hays, Director of Message Planning
Carlyn Reichel, Senior Director for Speechwriting
Ashley Williams, Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations
Stephen Goepfert, Personal Aide
Travis Dredd, Trip Director

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH in town poo report #4 - 2 min warning and color
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 21, 2021 1:26 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Emily Goodin
Date: May 21, 2021 at 1:12:52 PM EDT
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH in town pool report #4 - 2 min warning and color

President Moon arrived at the Medal of Honor ceremony at 12:59 pm and took a seat in the second row. He read his binder for a bit and then chatted with people around him.

Vice President Harris and Doug Emhoff arrived at 1:01 pm and took seats in the first row.

Jill Biden arrived at 1:09 pm. She hugged and kissed Harris on the cheek. She also hugged Emhoff. FLOTUS, wearing a brown dress with white flowers and a dark cardigan, is seated in front row across the aisle from Harris.

Senator Joni Ernst said she's known the Puckett family for years.

"I've known Ralph - sorry Colonel Puckett - since the early 90s. He is an incredible mentor for me," she told the pool, adding she was so happy to be here with his family.

Ernst also went and hugged Harris when the Vice President arrived. She introduced some of the Puckett family to the VP and SGOTUS.

The piano was playing Lee Greenwood's Proud to be an American.

Also here: Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Jake Sullivan, Mike Donilon

(Hat tip to TV pooler Peter Doocy and AP's Darlene Superville for their help).

Emily Goodin
Senior U.S. Political Reporter, DailyMail.com
M: (b) (6)
T: ><https://twitter.com/emilylgoodin><

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Foreign Pool Report #2-Medal of Honor ceremony
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 21, 2021 1:27 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Esther Oh
Date: May 21, 2021 at 1:15:22 PM EDT
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign Pool Report #2-Medal of Honor ceremony

Pool was ushered into the East Room at 12:43.

At 12:59, South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and Director of National Security Suh Hoon entered the room. Both men were not wearing masks. Suh and Chung chatted briefly with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Jake Sullivan, smiling and laughing throughout their conversation. They also shook hands and spoke with VP Harris and SGOTUS.

Wearing a dark navy suit and a light blue tie, President Moon Jae-in entered the room at 1:12. He shook hands with the VP before POTUS walked in.

Esther Oh
NHK Japan Broadcasting
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH pool report #5 - ceremony attendees
To: Goodander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 21, 2021 1:30 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Emily Goodin
Date: May 21, 2021 at 1:16:46 PM EDT
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH pool report #5 - ceremony attendees

President Moon had walked out and came back in the room to be formally introduced. Now he is in the front row next to VP Harris.

POTUS came in at 1:14 pm with Colonel Puckett.

Ceremony has started.

In attendance, per the White House:

Attending the Medal of Honor ceremony:

Administration and Military Officials:

- Vice President Kamala Harris
- Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff
- Secretary Lloyd Austin
- Ron Klain, Chief of Staff
- Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
- John Whitley, Acting Secretary of the Army
- General John Hyten, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
- General James McConville, Chief of Staff of Army
- Michael Grinston, Sergeant Major of the Army
- Thomas Solhjem, Army Chaplain

Members of Congress:

- Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO-06)
- Rep. Drew Ferguson (R-GA-03)
- Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA)

Republic of Korea Officials:

- His Excellency Chung Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Dr. Suh Hoon, Director of National Security

Puckett Family:

- Jean Puckett, Wife
- Thomas Puckett, Son
- Martha Wilcoxson, Daughter
- Ralph Whitman, Partner of Thomas Puckett
- Anthony Wilcoxson, Son-in-Law
- Lauren Raney, Granddaughter
- Dixon Raney, Grandson
- Martha Kinnett, Granddaughter
- Jack Kinnett, Grandson
- Jean DeLoach, Granddaughter

- Sarah Burnett, Granddaughter

Emily Goodin

Senior U.S. Political Reporter, DailyMail.com

M: (b) (6)

T: >https://Twitter.com/emilylgoodin<

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH pool report #7 - Biden/Moon bilat
To: Goodander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 21, 2021 4:11 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Emily Goodin
Sent: Friday, May 21, 2021 3:59 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH pool report #7 - Biden/Moon bilat

Pool entered the State Dining Room at 3:54 pm for the bilat between President Biden and South Korean President Moon.

Attendees were seated around a large table and not wearing masks.

Biden said the two nations were long allies and “on a personal note I wanted to thank the president for being beside me when I awarded” the Medal of Honor.

“And I also want to point out that our history of shared sacrifice,” which he said was critical to maintaining peace and stability in the region.

He said staff kept coming in to say they were over time but “I was enjoying” their talk.

More TK ...

Attendees joining President Biden and His Excellency Moon Jae-in at the restricted bilateral meeting in the Oval Office:

UNITED STATES DELEGATION:

- Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
- Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
- Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, National Security Council
- Edgard Kagan, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for East Asia and Oceania, National Security Council

REPUBLIC OF KOREA DELEGATION:

- His Excellency Chung Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Dr. Suh Hoon, Director of National Security
- His Excellency Lee Soo Hyuck, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the United States
- Ambassador Kim Hyung Zhin, Deputy National Security Advisor

Emily Goodin

Senior U.S. Political Reporter, DailyMail.com

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH poo report #11 - 2 min warning to presser
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: May 21, 2021 5:54 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Emily Goodin
Sent: Friday, May 21, 2021 5:52 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH pool report #11 - 2 min warning to presser

We have a two minute warning to the President Biden and President Moon press conference.

It's taking place in the State Dining Room and being broadcast on White House live so pool will only send color.

The room has seats for about 35 officials. Chairs are not socially distanced and no face masks.

Press are behind those officials, behind a rope line. There are about 25 journalists - print, TV, stills - on the American side with less than a dozen South Korea journalists also here.

There are two podiums with two American and two South Korean flags behind them. A glass of water sits to the side of each podium.

Spotted: GM International President Steven Kiefer, Jake Sullivan, Anthony Blinken, Lloyd Austin, Anita Dunn, Jen Psaki, Kate Bedingfield

Emily Goodin

Senior U.S. Political Reporter, DailyMail.com

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 6, 2021 9:18 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2021

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2021**

In the morning, the President will receive the President's Daily Brief. This meeting will be closed press.

In the afternoon, the President will host H.E. Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for a Working Visit in the Oval Office. The President and the Secretary General will discuss the June 14 NATO Summit in Brussels and the many issues on the NATO agenda, including reinforcing transatlantic security in the face of challenges from Russia and China. This meeting will be closed press.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: NBC
Print: TIME
Radio: AP

EDT

9:50 AM THE PRESIDENT receives the President's Daily Brief
Closed Press

12:00 PM In-Town Pool Call Time

4:30 PM THE PRESIDENT will host H.E. Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for a Working Visit
Oval Office
Closed Press

Briefing Schedule

12:30 PM Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: UPDATED: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 6, 2021 9:52 PM (UTC-04:00)



UPDATED:

In-Town Pool

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TV Corr & Crew: ABC
Print: USA Today
Radio: BBC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2021

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2021**

In the morning, the President will receive the President's Daily Brief. This meeting will be closed press.

In the afternoon, the President will host H.E. Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for a Working Visit in the Oval Office. The President and the Secretary General will discuss the June 14 NATO Summit in Brussels and the many issues on the NATO agenda, including reinforcing transatlantic security in the face of challenges from Russia and China. This meeting will be closed press.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: NBC
Print: TIME
Radio: AP

EDT

9:50 AM THE PRESIDENT receives the President's Daily Brief
Closed Press

12:00 PM In-Town Pool Call Time

4:30 PM THE PRESIDENT meets with H.E. Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Oval Office
Closed Press

Briefing Schedule

12:30 PM Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In town poo report #1
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 7, 2021 10:18 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Groppe, Maureen
Sent: Monday, June 7, 2021 10:09 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town pool report #1

Good morning from an already hot & steamy White House complex.

As a reminder, the press briefing is at 12:30 p.m. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan is briefing with Jen Psaki.

At 4:30 p.m., Biden is meeting in the Oval with NATO Secretary General H. E. Jens Stoltenberg. The meeting is closed press.

Will update if the schedule changes.

Maureen Groppe
White House Correspondent



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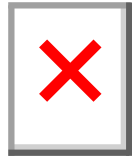
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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington, DC 20500-0003 · USA

From: White House Press Office
Subject: COMPREHENSIVE TRIP GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 8, 2021 8:09 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2021

**COMPREHENSIVE TRIP GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021**

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

In the morning, the President and the First Lady will travel to Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom for the first overseas travel by President Biden. This trip will highlight America's commitment to rallying the world's democracies, coming together to shape the rules of the road for the 21st century, defend our values, and tackle the world's biggest challenges. The departure from the Ellipse will be covered by the in-town pool. The departure from Joint Base Andrews and the arrival at Royal Air Force Mildenhall will be covered by the travel pool.

In the evening, the President and the First Lady will greet U.S. Air Force personnel and their families stationed in the United Kingdom and deliver remarks at Royal Air Force Mildenhall. RAF Mildenhall is home to the 100th Air Refueling Wing, the only permanent U.S. Air Force air refueling wing in the European theater. These remarks will be pooled press.

Then, the President and the First Lady will travel to St. Ives, Cornwall, United Kingdom, where they will remain overnight. The departure from Royal Air Force Mildenhall, the arrival at Cornwall Airport Newquay, and the arrival in St. Ives will be pooled press.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: CNN

Print: Washington Blade
Radio: FOX

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: NBC
Print: New York Times
Radio: VOA

EDT

6:00 AM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time
Joint Base Andrews Visitor Control Center Overhang

7:40 AM In-Town Pool Call Time

8:10 AM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart the White House en route Joint Base Andrews
The Ellipse
In-House Pool Coverage (Final Gather 7:50 AM – Stakeout Location)

8:30 AM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart Joint Base Andrews en route Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom
Joint Base Andrews
Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

BST

8:00 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY arrive at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom
Royal Air Force Mildenhall
Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

8:45 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY deliver remarks to US Air Force personnel and their families stationed at Royal Air Force Mildenhall
Royal Air Force Mildenhall
Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

9:30 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart Royal Air Force Mildenhall en route Cornwall Airport Newquay
Royal Air Force Mildenhall
Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

10:55 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY arrive at Cornwall Airport Newquay
Cornwall Airport Newquay
Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

11:20 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart Cornwall Airport Newquay
Cornwall Airport Newquay
Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

11:40 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY arrive in St. Ives

St. Ives, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

Briefing Schedule

Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will gaggle aboard Air Force One en route Royal Air Force Mildenhall

Thursday, June 10, 2021

The President will meet with The Right Honorable Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to affirm the enduring strength of the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom.

Friday, June 11, 2021

The President will attend the G7 Summit in Cornwall. There, he will reinforce our commitment to multilateralism, work to advance key U.S. policy priorities on public health, economic recovery, and inclusive growth, and demonstrate solidarity and shared values among major democracies.

Saturday, June 12, 2021

The President will attend the G7 Summit in Cornwall.

Sunday, June 13, 2021

The President will attend the final day of the G7 Summit in Cornwall.

The President and the First Lady will meet with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle.

The President will travel to Brussels, Belgium.

Monday, June 14, 2021

The President will participate in the NATO Summit. The President will affirm the United States' commitment to NATO, Transatlantic security, and collective defense. NATO leaders will discuss how to orient the Alliance to future threats and ensure effective burden sharing.

The President will also meet with His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, to discuss the full range of bilateral and regional issues.

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

The President will meet with His Majesty King Philippe, King of the Belgians, and His Excellency Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium.

The President will participate in the U.S.–EU Summit, which will underscore our commitment to a strong Transatlantic partnership based on shared interests and values. The leaders will discuss a common agenda to ensure global health security, stimulate global economic recovery, tackle climate change, enhance digital and trade cooperation, strengthen democracy, and address mutual foreign policy concerns.

The President will travel to Geneva, Switzerland.

The President Biden will meet with His Excellency Guy Parmelin, President of the Swiss Confederation.

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

The President will hold a bilateral summit with His Excellency Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation.

The President will return to Washington, DC.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Poo Report #1
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 9, 2021 8:22 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Chris Johnson (b) (6)
Date: June 9, 2021 at 8:14:33 AM EDT
To: "Kikukawa, Michael EOP/WHO" (b) (6), Wranglers
(b) (6) Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool Report #1

POTUS emerged from the motorcade at the Ellipse at 8:07 and immediately headed to board Air Force One.

No gaggle with reporters. DJ Judd of CNN shouted to no avail a question to POTUS on whether he still he could get a bipartisan deal on infrastructure.

POTUS, wearing a dark suit, was accompanied by FLOTUS, who was wearing a dark pantsuit.

Twitter video: <https://twitter.com/chrisjohnson82/status/1402599216724258818?s=21>

Marine One lifted at 8:12. Handing things off to out of town pooler.

From the White House:

Traveling to Joint Base Andrews with the President and the First Lady:

Jen O'Malley Dillon, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff

Bruce Reed, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff

Mike Donilon, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor to the President

Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor

Anthony Bernal, Assistant to the President & Advisor to the First Lady

Stephen Goepfert, Special Assistant to the President & Personal Aide to the President

Jordan Montoya, Director of Advance and Trip Director

--

Chris Johnson

Washington Blade

White House Reporter

Follow me on Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/chrisjohnson82>

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Poo Report No 2
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 9, 2021 3:21 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: David Sanger
Sent: Wednesday, June 9, 2021 2:43 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool Report No 2

After a gaggle with Jake Sullivan and Jen Psaki - you should have transcript - AF 1 is wheels down at RAF Base Mildenhall at 7:41 pm BST.

David Sanger
New York Times
--

[REDACTED]

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Trave poo report #8
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 10, 2021 11:39 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Anita Kumar
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2021 11:18 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #8

Carbis Bay,
June 10, 2021

Pool is holding in vans outside the bilat.

The White House passes on this information:

The President is participating in a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and members of the United Kingdom delegation. Meeting participants are as follows:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

T.H. Yael Lempert, Chargé d’Affaires, U.S. Embassy

T.H. Jeffrey Zients, Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response and Counselor to the President

T.H. Daleep Singh, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor, and Deputy National Economic Council Director

T.H. Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council

Rebecca Neff, Director for European Affairs

U.K. Manifest

T.R.H. Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

T.R.H. Dominic Raab, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

H.E. Karen Pierce, Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United States

Lord David Frost, Minister of State

Sir Stephen Lovegrove, National Security Advisor

Mr. Will Gelling, Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Professor John Bew, Foreign Policy Special Advisor

Mr. Jack Doyle, Director of Communications

Anita Kumar
White House Correspondent
& Associate Editor

POLITICO

(b) (6)

Cell/Signal/WhatsApp: (b) (6)

Twitter: @anitakumar01

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Trave poo report #13
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 10, 2021 2:02 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Anita Kumar
Sent: Thursday, June 10, 2021 1:57 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #13

St Ives
June 10, 2021

POTUS wore a dark blue suit and a blue and white striped tie.

Pfizer CEO and Chairman Albert Bourla stood a few feet away to his right.

POTUS wrapped up remarks at 6:42 pm. He and Bourla shook hands before Bourla began speaking. POTUS stood to his left.

POTUS turned and smiled at a question from NBC's Mike Memoli about his upcoming meeting with Vladimir Putin but did not stop or answer. He also didn't answer a subsequent question from Bloomberg's Jennifer Jacobs on Northern Ireland.

Pool spotted Jeff Zients standing and watching the speech alongside the pool. In total, about three dozen people were standing and watching from the lawn.

As POTUS spoke, aides Kate Bedingfield, Jen Psaki and Jake Sullivan appeared on one of the villa's balconies to watch.

Anita Kumar
White House Correspondent
& Associate Editor

POLITICO

(b) (6)

Cell/Signal/WhatsApp (b) (6)

Twitter: @anitakumar01

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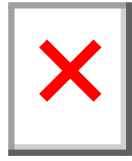
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: COMPREHENSIVE TRIP GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 13 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 12, 2021 8:03 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 13, 2021

**COMPREHENSIVE TRIP GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
SUNDAY, JUNE 13 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021**

Sunday, June 13, 2021

In the morning, the President will attend G7 Summit Session 5 at Carbis Bay. This event will have a pool spray by the limited travel pool at the top.

Later, the President will attend G7 Summit Session 6 at Carbis Bay. This event will be closed press.

In the afternoon, the President will hold a press conference at Cornwall Airport Newquay. This event will be covered by the travel pool.

After, the President and the First Lady will depart Cornwall, United Kingdom en route London, United Kingdom. The departure from Cornwall Airport Newquay and the arrival at Heathrow Airport will be covered by the travel pool.

Then, the President and the First Lady will participate in an Inspection of the Guard of Honor with Her Majesty The Queen at Windsor Castle. The arrival ceremony will be covered by the supplemental pool.

The President and the First Lady will then meet with Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle. This meeting will be closed press.

After, the President will depart London en route Brussels, Belgium. The departure from Heathrow Airport and the arrival at Brussels Airport will be covered by the travel pool.

Later, the President will participate in an arrival ceremony at Brussels Airport. The arrival ceremony will be covered by the travel pool.

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg

Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT

TV Corr & Crew: NBC

Print: AFP

Radio: NPR

Supplemental Travel Pool

Wires: AP

Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT

TV Corr & Crew: NBC

Radio: ABC

BST

6:30 AM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:45 AM THE PRESIDENT attends G7 Summit Session 5

Carbis Bay, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Limited Out-of-Town Travel Pool Spray at the Top

11:25 AM THE PRESIDENT attends G7 Summit Session 6

Carbis Bay, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Closed Press

1:35 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart St. Ives, Cornwall, United Kingdom en route Cornwall Airport Newquay

St. Ives, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

2:40 PM THE PRESIDENT holds a press conference

Cornwall Airport Newquay

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

3:25 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart Cornwall, United Kingdom en route London, United Kingdom

Cornwall Airport Newquay

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

4:25 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY arrive in London, United Kingdom

Heathrow Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

4:35 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart London, United Kingdom en route Windsor, United Kingdom

Heathrow Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

5:15 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY participate in an Inspection of the Guard of Honor with Her

Majesty The Queen

Windsor Castle, Windsor, Berkshire, United Kingdom

Supplemental Pool Coverage

5:30 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY meet with Her Majesty The Queen

Windsor Castle, Windsor, Berkshire, United Kingdom

Closed Press

6:10 PM THE PRESIDENT and THE FIRST LADY depart Windsor, United Kingdom en route London, United Kingdom

Windsor Castle, Windsor, Berkshire, United Kingdom

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

6:50 PM THE PRESIDENT departs London, United Kingdom en route Brussels, Belgium

Heathrow Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

CEST

9:05 PM THE PRESIDENT arrives in Brussels, Belgium

Brussels Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

9:15 PM THE PRESIDENT participates in an arrival ceremony

Brussels Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool Coverage

Briefing Schedule

Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will gaggle aboard Air Force One en route Brussels Airport

Monday, June 14, 2021

The President will participate in the NATO Summit. The President will affirm the United States' commitment to NATO, Transatlantic security, and collective defense. NATO leaders will discuss how to orient the Alliance to future threats and ensure effective burden sharing.

The President will also meet with His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, to discuss the full range of bilateral and regional issues.

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

The President will meet with His Majesty King Philippe, King of the Belgians, and His Excellency Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium.

The President will participate in the U.S.–EU Summit, which will underscore our commitment to a strong Transatlantic partnership based on shared interests and values. The leaders will discuss a common agenda to ensure global health security, stimulate global economic recovery, tackle climate change, enhance digital and trade cooperation, strengthen democracy, and address mutual foreign policy concerns.

The President will travel to Geneva, Switzerland.

The President will meet with His Excellency Guy Parmelin, President of the Swiss Confederation.

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

The President will hold a bilateral summit with His Excellency Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation.

The President will hold a press conference.

The President will return to Washington, DC.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #7 - Marine One
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 13, 2021 8:44 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Jerome CARTILLIER
Sent: Sunday, June 13, 2021 8:32 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #7 - Marine One

After a short drive to Tregenna Castle, POTUS and FLOTUS boarded Marine One.
Pool heloing.

Per WH
Flying with the President and the First Lady on Marine One:
Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
Jen O'Malley Dillon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Stephen Goepfert, Personal Aide to the President
Jordan Montoya, Director of Advance and Trip Director for the First Lady

Jerome Cartillier
AFP White House Correspondent
Cell (b) (6)
@jcartillier

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #19 - Back at Heathrow Airport/ POTUS comments about the Queen
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 13, 2021 2:11 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Jerome CARTILLIER
Sent: Sunday, June 13, 2021 1:48 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #19 - Back at Heathrow Airport/ POTUS comments about the Queen

Marine One landed at Heathrow at 6:20pm.
Per WH, POTUS and FLOTUS greeted by:
The Honorable Yael Lempert, Chargé d’Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in London
Fergus Williams, CEO of Walking With The Wounded
Edward Parker, Co-Founder and former CEO of Walking With The Wounded
British Armed Forces veterans

After talking on the tarmac for a few minutes and taking pictures with the greeters, POTUS came to talk to the pool about the Queen.

“She was very gracious”
“She reminded me of my mother”
POTUS said the Queen asked him about world leaders, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. He said she also asked what life in the White House was like.
“I said, this is..., we could fit the White House in the courtyard”, POTUS added, referring to the Windsor Castle.
Asked if he had invited her to the White House, he answered “yes”.

Wheels up soon.
Next stop: Brussels.

Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will gaggle aboard Air Force One.

Jerome Cartillier
AFP White House Correspondent
Cell (b) (6)
@jcartillier

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #20 - Arrival in Brussels
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 13, 2021 3:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Jerome CARTILLIER <(b) (6)>
Date: June 13, 2021 at 2:50:41 PM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6) >
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #20 - Arrival in Brussels

At 8:49pm, Air Force One landed in Brussels, the second leg of POTUS eight-day overseas trip.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan gagged during the flight.
The WH said they would send out highlights as soon as possible.

Jerome Cartillier
AFP White House Correspondent
Cell (b) (6)
@jcartillier

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #23 - Cell signals jammed at G7?
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 13, 2021 3:47 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Jerome CARTILLIER (b) (6)
Date: June 13, 2021 at 3:29:42 PM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #23 - Cell signals jammed at G7?

Jake Sullivan was asked during the gaggle about cell signals being jammed during some of the G7 summit meetings. On arrival, the WH sent the following:

From a White House official:

We were told that some of the G7 Summit sessions were going to be conducted in a more secure format. As the host country, the United Kingdom would oversee the communications networks at the Summit.

Jerome Cartillier
AFP White House Correspondent
Cell : (b) (6)
@jcartillier

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #13 — pool spray of Erdogan bilat (no news)
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 14, 2021 1:26 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Eli Stokols (b) (6)
Date: June 14, 2021 at 7:21:31 PM GMT 2
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #13 — pool spray of Erdogan bilat (no news)

Pool finally went in at 6:16 p.m. after a wait of 112 minutes so the spray that was scheduled for the top of the bilat turned out to be at the bottom. By the time we entered, Turkey had already put out some video of the meeting.

POTUS and President Erdogan, who we're told ended up having an initial discussion without any aides before moving to an expanded bilat with aides, were seated on opposite sides of a long rectangular table in front of their respective flags, now flanked by aides. Everyone in facemasks.

Blinken, Austin and Sullivan at the table with Biden, who said "we had a very good meeting" as wranglers shouted at us to leave the room.

When a reporter called out to POTUS "we couldn't hear you, sir," he responded: "I didn't say anything."

We were in there less than two minutes. No news. Pool moving out of the bilat building.

Eli Stokols
LA Times, Washington Bureau
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #15 — US-Turkey expanded bilateral attendees
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 14, 2021 2:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Eli Stokols (b) (6)
Date: June 14, 2021 at 7:47:07 PM GMT -2
To: Wranglers <(b) (6)>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #15 — US-Turkey expanded bilateral attendees

From the White House:

In attendance at the Turkey bilateral meeting, along with the President:

- Secretary of State Antony Blinken
- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III
- Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
- Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council
- David Satterfield, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey
- Kevin Boyd, Director for Europe and Eurasia, National Security Council

- President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan
- Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Hulusi Akar, Minister of National Defense
- Ömer Çelik, Spokesperson of the AK Party
- Murat Mercan, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States
- Fahrettin Altun, Director of Communications of the Presidency
- İbrahim Kalin, Chief Advisor and Presidential Spokesperson

Eli Stokols
LA Times, Washington Bureau
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #17 — Biden presser starts
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 14, 2021 4:22 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Eli Stokols (b) (6)
Date: June 14, 2021 at 9:28:55 PM GMT 2
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #17 — Biden presser starts

POTUS took the stage at 9:28 p.m. local time.

Jen Psaki and Kate Bedingfield also just came in and took seats up front. Jake Sullivan too.

By the way, there are teleprompters set up for him here. He didn't have them yesterday during his G-7 presser at the Newquay airport.

Remarks are open press.

Eli Stokols
LA Times, Washington Bureau
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Poo Report #4 EU-US summit
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 15, 2021 7:54 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: David Sanger (b) (6) >
Date: June 15, 2021 at 1:45:08 PM GMT 2
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool Report #4 EU-US summit

Note: No mention of Boeing-Airbus during spray.

Around 1:12 we went into the central meeting room for the EU -US Summit. POTUS was greeted by the same two top European officials that he saw downstairs. POTUS flanked by NSA Jake Sullivan, Trade Rep Katherine Tai and SecState Tony Blinken on right, and Gina Raimondo, the commerce secretary, and Mark Libby, charge d'affairs in US mission to EU on left.

Biden did a familiar talk about American revival. A very rough other transcript of POTUS below - check with transcript since parts are clearly off. Apologies for time stamps:

Now you've bought

Unknown 1:20
positions.

Unknown 1:22
And with the seven, and I apologize.

Unknown 1:31
Closing

Unknown 1:39
Brussels, eu 2017, and

Unknown 1:46
also the first summit.

Unknown 1:51
When I brought the

Unknown 1:59
Americans back in, which is why we're here in full force.

Unknown 2:05
Happy to have with me today, members of my Cabinet briefing who suffers from this problem having worked with me for years.

Unknown 2:16
And also for Representative, Ambassador, chi, who has made some real progress.

Unknown 2:26
Sacred commerce, theater, I'm Linda Firstrate come here and one of the bravest people that we've worked with,

Unknown 2:37
is our sacred courage.

Unknown 2:40
And now, one of the things that we, you and I return will come as no shock to you. Europe is, is our natural partner.

Unknown 2:53
And the reason is we re committed to the same democratic borders, and are they are increasingly under attack.

Unknown 3:03
And I ve said before and I apologize.

Unknown 3:13
I apologize.

Unknown 3:20
We

Unknown 3:23
know there s a lot that, that is, is happening I used to always, my friends would kid me in the United States and they re always told the Irish poets

Unknown 3:47
contest poets.

Unknown 3:59
Paul s changed, changed terrible beauty has been born.

Unknown 4:04
I think all has changed in the last 1012 years. And it s not because of any one person I think we re in the midst of the terrible beauty happened in the morning great shift in technology and a shift in production in the world. It s called a great anxiety into our country s uncertainty of the world and many of our colleagues and what s going to be replaced by new technologies

Unknown 4:42
that come along at the same time that it also generates uncertainty generated politically like that, by the individual, and also hearing some folks who were less than.

Unknown 4:54
How can I say it sounded more like charlatans, trying to take advantage and confirm, when we see an error, we see in the States and around the world. Only populism. So it seems to me that the best answer to deal with this these changes is that to have a circumstance where our economies grow, and they grow together, and they grow still based on the value set to design this in the first place.

Unknown 5:31
And I think we do share just the same basic values of human dignity human rights and my colleagues and family very close to my dad, a transition where in the city we lived in coal was dying, is no longer relevant, you know, he was not my grandfather was a coal miner mining in northeastern Pennsylvania cold died, my dad was a salesperson, and the economy collapsed, and we moved to another part of the job into in Delaware, just across the border, and my family.

Unknown 6:20
I would hear him off off expression.

Unknown 6:24

He says no jobs about a lot more than a paycheck. It s about your dignity. It s about respect and to place the

Unknown 6:35

child and say how are you going to Dr.

Unknown 6:38

Lena, I think we sometimes forget that.

Unknown 6:43

It s about being more current and never been able to hold your hand.

Unknown 6:48

And so I think we have an enormous opportunity. If we think in terms of his changes, particularly in terms of global warming. We get them in terms of jobs, the kind of jobs that we re going to have to create preserving the environment or jobs that can pay well, that are going to be working class, blue collar workers to be seen as thirds of the game was made.

Unknown 7:19

And, but we have to always accommodate those changes and provide.

Unknown 7:25

And so I think we have a lot to deal with from COVID-19 to

Unknown 7:35

whether or not we re in a position that we can generate the kind of strengthening of transatlantic trade technological cooperation. They re certainly a different set of priorities, with the same object. How do like minded countries sharing the same values, work together to improve living standards

Unknown 8:02

for the rest of the world. And we can capacity to do that. Take an awful lot of hard work and determination to change. One of the reasons I m optimistic is because of our younger generation in Europe as well as the United States immigration, and this one is the best educated in American history.

Unknown 8:28

It s also the least credited most open, and the most the most committed. And I think that we have reason to believe that we provide the policies that are consistent and provide

Unknown 8:45

education plays a gigantic part. I think we have to pick up very very brave. I think we need to do some really very good.

And with that I should ask my mother was asked to hush up this discretion.

David Sanger

New York Times

--



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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Travel pool report #21
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 16, 2021 2:12 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Anita Kumar (b) (6)
Date: June 16, 2021 at 8:03:45 PM GMT 2
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #21

Geneva
June 16, 2021

Motorcade is rolling to the airport at 7:58 pm.

The back drop of the press conference was of Lake Geneva and absolutely beautiful. But it was extremely hot and the sun was shining brightly in the faces of the audience. Some of the White House aides who were seated to Biden's front left had to move back to avoid the sun.

List of attendees in the expanded bilateral meeting:

U.S. Delegation

The President
T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
T.H. Victoria Nuland, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
T.H. John Sullivan, U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation
T.H. Eric Green, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia
Mr. Stergos Kaloudis, Director for Russia, National Security Council

Russia Delegation

H.E. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation
H.E. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
H.E. Dmitry Peskov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Executive Office of the President and Press Secretary
H.E. Yury Ushakov, Aide to the President of the Russian Federation
Mr. Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and First Deputy Minister of Defense
H.E. Anatoly Antonov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States
Mr. Sergey Prozhogin, Deputy Director of the Department of North America of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Anita Kumar
White House Correspondent
& Associate Editor

POLITICO

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Cell/Signal/WhatsApp: (b) (6)

Twitter: @anitakumar01

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In town poo report #17 -- participants
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 25, 2021 5:07 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Morgan Chalfant
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 5:01 PM
To: Wranglers ; Perez, Angela D. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town pool report #17 -- participants

From the White House --

Participants at the President's meeting with Afghani leaders:

US

The President
T.H. Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense
T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
T.H. Brian McKeon, Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources
T.H. Samantha Power, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.
T.H. Ross Wilson, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the United States to Afghanistan
T.H. Sumona Guha, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for South Asia, National Security Council

Afghanistan

His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation
H.E. Amrullah Saleh, First Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Mr. M. Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Mr. Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Advisor of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Mrs. Habiba Sarabi, Member of the Peace Negotiation Team of Afghanistan
Mr. Abdul Matin Bek, Member of the Peace Negotiation Team of Afghanistan

--
Morgan Chalfant
White House correspondent, The Hill

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Foreign Pool Report #2 Pool Spray
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 25, 2021 5:14 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Ching-Yi
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 5:09 PM
To: Wranglers ; Perez, Angela D. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign Pool Report #2 Pool Spray

President Ghani arrived in the White House at 3:58 PM. He waved before he went into the West Wing. President Biden wasn't seen greeting him at the entrance.

At 4:15 PM, your foreign pooler was ushered into the Oval Office. Originally, we were told three leaders will all talk, but in the end, Chairman Abdullah did not talk, which caused a bit of confusion. Both President Biden and President gave roughly 2 minutes remark. So we were ushered out at 4:20 PM.

President Ghani spoke in English, he said that President Biden's decision, "we are here to respect it and support." And both countries are "entering into a new chapter of a relationship". And he said, "just for your information, today, Afghan security forces have retaken six districts," he continued, "so I hope that nobody exaggerating our (inaudible) before something has happened. Let us understand that in moments of great transition, things happen. But you will see that with determination, with the unity and with the partnership. We will overcome all odds."

As always, please check against the official transcript.

Per White House, the participants from Afghanistan side are:

His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation
H.E. Amrullah Saleh, First Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Mr. M. Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Mr. Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Advisor of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Mrs. Habiba Sarabi, Member of the Peace Negotiation Team of Afghanistan
Mr. Abdul Matin Bek, Member of the Peace Negotiation Team of Afghanistan

Prior to the meeting with President Biden, President Ghani already had several meetings today, including with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. During the meeting with the Speaker, President Ghani said President Biden's decision is a strategic one, "we respect that decision".

Finally, your foreign pooler found that, so far, it seems President Biden's meetings with foreign leaders in the White House are all in Fridays. With that. I'd like to hope everyone a great weekend.

Best regards,
Ching-Yi Chang
Chief Editor & White House Correspondent
Shanghai Media Group
From my iPhone

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH in-town poo report #6
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 28, 2021 4:45 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Wilner, Michael
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 4:43 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH in-town pool report #6

Your pooler is seeking out better audio of the bilat as his own is quite poor. In the meantime, the White House passes along a list of participants in the President's meeting with H.E. Reuven Rivlin:

U.S.

The President

T. H. Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor

T. H. Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State

T. H. Brett McGurk, Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa

T. H. Barbara Leaf, Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa

Ms. Julie Sawyer, Director for Israel and Palestinian Affairs

Israel

H.E. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel

H.E. Gilad Erdan, Ambassador of the State of Israel to the United States

Mr. Harel Tubi, Director General

Brigadier General Alaa Abu Rukun, Military Secretary

Ms. Naomi Kandel, Spokesperson

Ms. Shulamit Yona Davidovich, Senior Foreign Policy Advisor

--



Michael A. Wilner

Senior National Security and White House Correspondent

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Foreign pool 2 #POTUS and Israe President Reuven Rivin
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: June 28, 2021 5:10 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Nadia Bilbassy
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 5:07 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign pool 2 #POTUS and Israel President Reuven Rivlin

President Rivlin spoke in English, after few short comments with POTUS he said the following :

"Of course, I'd like to say, and to mention that I'm delighted, really delighted to be here once again in the White House, and with the President of United States. Of course, I want to repeat what we know very well, Israel has no greater friend and ally than the United States of America."

He talked about shared values between the two countries, he added that the shared values are based on democracy and liberalism, he also mentioned that sometimes both countries don't agree on everything.

He ended by saying " we have a great friend, Mr President. God bless you. God bless the people of America, and God bless the relationship between our two nations and our two countries". Thank you. Thank you.

Reporters shouted questions on Iran, POTUS didn't answer. We were ushered out.

Please check against official transcription.

Per WH, here is the list of attendees;

Participants in the President's meeting with H.E. Reuven Rivlin:

U.S.

The President
T. H. Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
T. H. Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State
T. H. Brett McGurk, Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa
T. H. Barbara Leaf, Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa
Ms. Julie Sawyer, Director for Israel and Palestinian Affairs

Israel

H.E. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel

H.E. Gilad Erdan, Ambassador of the State of Israel to the United States
Mr. Harel Tubi, Director General
Brigadier General Alaa Abu Rukun, Military Secretary
Ms. Naomi Kandel, Spokesperson
Ms. Shulamit Yona Davidovich, Senior Foreign Policy Advisor

Nadia Bilbassy-Charters

Bureau Chief

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In-town poo report #9 -- Biden takes questions after speech
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 8, 2021 2:39 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Garrison, Joseph" <(b) (6)>
Date: July 8, 2021 at 2:35:43 PM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #9 -- Biden takes questions after speech

POTUS took the podium in the East Room of the White House at 2:08 p.m. ET and finished his speech around 2:20 p.m. Portraits of George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt to his right. The press occupied seats spaced out across four rows in the middle of the room. He read from a teleprompter. A handful of WH aides including Jake Sullivan watched from the back.

Biden took question for around 14 minutes after the speech from the podium. The pool left the East Room at 2:34 p.m. ET

POTUS was asked by one reporter whether he trusts the Taliban.

"Is that a serious question?" POTUS said. "No, I do not."

"No, there's no 'mission accomplished,'" when asked later if this is a "mission accomplished moment."

I will provide for quotes in a later pool report.

You can watch Biden's full remarks here from the speech:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/live/>

Joey Garrison
White House correspondent

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Twitter: @joeygarrison

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: Foreign pool report #5 - attendees
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 15, 2021 3:39 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: (b) (6) (Marek Walkuski)
Sent: Thursday, July 15, 2021 3:35 PM
To: Wranglers
Cc: White House
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign pool report #5 - attendees

The White House passed along the following:

Attending the President's expanded bilateral meeting with H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

T.H. Daleep Singh, Deputy Assistant to the President, Deputy National Security Advisor and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council

Mr. Woodward Price, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the United States to Germany

T.H. Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council

Dr. Robin Brooks, Director for Germany, Central Europe, and the Balkans, National Security Council

German Manifest

H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mr. Steffen Seibert, State Secretary

H.E. Dr. Emily Haber, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United States

Dr. Jan Hecker, Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor

Dr. Lars-Hendrik Röller, Economic Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor

Ms. Petra Rülke, Deputy Head of the Chancellor's Office

Mr. Dominik Mutter, Head of Division

Attending the dinner hosted by the President and the First Lady for H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel and Professor Dr. Joachim Sauer this evening:

The President

The First Lady

H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Professor Dr. Joachim Sauer

The Vice President

The Second Gentleman

Dr. A. Paul Alivisatos, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost at the University of California Berkeley and Incoming President of the University of Chicago

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Hillary Clinton, Former U.S. Secretary of State

Dr. Stephen Jay Greenblatt, John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University

H.E. Dr. Emily Haber, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the U.S.

T.H. Stephen Hadley, Former National Security Advisor

Dr. Jan Hecker, Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor

T.H. Robert M. Kimmitt, Former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany
T.H. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives (CA-23)
T.H. Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate (KY)
T.H. Gregory Meeks, Chairman of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee (NY-05)
T.H. Phil Murphy, Governor of New Jersey and Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany
T.H. Colin Powell, Former U.S. Secretary of State
T.H. Steve Ricchetti, Assistant to the President and Counselor to the President
T.H. Susan E. Rice, Assistant to the President and Domestic Policy Advisor, and Former National Security Advisor
Dr. Lars-Hendrik Röller, Economic Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor
Mr. Steffen Seibert, State Secretary
T.H. Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry (MI)
T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor

Marek Walkuski
Washington / White House Correspondent
Polskie Radio S.A.
Te (b) (6)
Twitter: @marekwalkuski

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH pool report 11: Manifests for the bi-lateral meeting and the dinner
To: Goodander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 15, 2021 3:42 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Hans Nichols
Sent: Thursday, July 15, 2021 3:38 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH pool report 11: Manifests for the bi-lateral meeting and the dinner

Attending the President's expanded bilateral meeting with H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

T.H. Daleep Singh, Deputy Assistant to the President, Deputy National Security Advisor and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council

Mr. Woodward Price, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the United States to Germany

T.H. Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council

Dr. Robin Brooks, Director for Germany, Central Europe, and the Balkans, National Security Council

German Manifest

H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mr. Steffen Seibert, State Secretary

H.E. Dr. Emily Haber, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United States

Dr. Jan Hecker, Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor

Dr. Lars-Hendrik Röller, Economic Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor

Ms. Petra Rülke, Deputy Head of the Chancellor's Office

Mr. Dominik Mutter, Head of Division

Attending the dinner hosted by the President and the First Lady for H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel and Professor Dr. Joachim Sauer this evening:

The President

The First Lady

H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Professor Dr. Joachim Sauer

The Vice President

The Second Gentleman

Dr. A. Paul Alivisatos, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost at the University of California Berkeley and Incoming President of the University of Chicago

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Hillary Clinton, Former U.S. Secretary of State

Dr. Stephen Jay Greenblatt, John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University

H.E. Dr. Emily Haber, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the U.S.

T.H. Stephen Hadley, Former National Security Advisor

Dr. Jan Hecker, Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor

T.H. Robert M. Kimmitt, Former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany

T.H. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives (CA-23)

T.H. Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate (KY)

T.H. Gregory Meeks, Chairman of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee (NY-05)

T.H. Phil Murphy, Governor of New Jersey and Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany
T.H. Colin Powell, Former U.S. Secretary of State
T.H. Steve Ricchetti, Assistant to the President and Counselor to the President
T.H. Susan E. Rice, Assistant to the President and Domestic Policy Advisor, and Former National Security Advisor
Dr. Lars-Hendrik Röller, Economic Policy Advisor to the Federal Chancellor
Mr. Steffen Seibert, State Secretary
T.H. Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry (MI)
T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor

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Hans Nichols

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Twitter: @hansnichols

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: WH pool report 15: Two minute warning
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 15, 2021 5:32 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Hans Nichols
Sent: Thursday, July 15, 2021 5:15 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH pool report 15: Two minute warning

Press is the east room; correspondents, front row on the US side.

Tony Blinken and Jake Sullivan are seated up front (on the other side of the braided rope). Mike Donilon in the third row.

--

Hans Nichols

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Twitter: @hansnichols



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Hans Nichols

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: 7/16 Poo report #8
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 16, 2021 3:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Rozen, Courtney
Sent: Friday, July 16, 2021 3:00 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 7/16 Pool report #8

The White House press office sent the following to the pool.

Traveling with the President to Camp David:

Steve Ricchetti, Assistant to the President & Counselor to the President

Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor

Ashley Williams, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations

Courtney Rozen
Bloomberg Government

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In town poo report #1
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 18, 2021 8:27 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Paul McLeod (b) (6)
Date: July 18, 2021 at 8:09:25 PM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6) >
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town pool report #1

Good evening, I'll be your pooler for Biden's arrival at the White House tonight. We're gathering now. Marine One is scheduled to land at the south lawn at 8:30.

Returning with the President and the First Lady on Marine One:

Steve Ricchetti, Assistant to the President & Counselor to the President

Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor

Ashley Williams, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations

Jordan Montoya, Director of Advance and Trip Director for the First Lady

--



Paul McLeod

| Politics Reporter |

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: In town pool report 11 - expanded bilateral participant lists
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 19, 2021 3:33 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Feldmann, Linda
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 3:18 PM
To: Wranglers ; Kikukawa, Michael A. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town pool report 11 - expanded bilateral participant lists

Press office reports that the expanded bilateral meeting between King Abdullah of Jordan and President Biden began at 3:01 pm.

More info from White House:

Attending the President's expanded bilateral meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

T.H. Henry Wooster, Ambassador of the United States to Jordan

T. H. Brett McGurk, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, National Security Council

T. H. Barbara Leaf, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa, National Security Council

Ms. Alice Tobin, Director for Jordan and Lebanon, National Security Council

Jordan Manifest

His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

His Royal Highness Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II, Crown Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

His Excellency Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

His Excellency Jafar Hassan, Director of His Majesty's Office

Her Excellency Dina Kawar, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United States

Mr. Fahad Alkhitani, Director of Media and Communications

Mr. Mustafa Khalifeh, Director of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince's Office

--

Linda Feldmann

Washington Bureau Chief

The Christian Science Monitor

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Twitter: @linda_feldmann

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: FW: White House In-Town Pool Report #11 — Cabinet meeting attendees
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 20, 2021 3:50 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Scott Bixby
Sent: Tuesday, July 20, 2021 3:47 PM
To: Wranglers
Cc: Austin, Natalie S. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] White House In-Town Pool Report #11 Cabinet meeting attendees

Per the White House, the following officials are attending today's meeting:

Cabinet members

Vice President Kamala Harris

Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin

Attorney General Merrick Garland

Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo

Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh

Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge

Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg

Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm

Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas

Environmental Protection Administrator Michael Regan

Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shalanda Young

Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Cecilia Rouse
Administrator of the Small Business Administration Isabel Guzman
Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy Eric Lander
Chief of Staff Ron Klain

Staff

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Kate Bedingfield, Director of Communications
Jen O'Malley Dillon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Mike Donilon, Senior Advisor to the President
Anita Dunn, Senior Advisor to the President
Tina Flournoy, Chief of Staff to the Vice President
Gina McCarthy, National Climate Advisor
Jen Psaki, Press Secretary
Bruce Reed, Deputy Chief of Staff
Dana Remus, White House Counsel
Julissa Reynoso, Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Steve Ricchetti, Counselor to the President
Susan Rice, Domestic Policy Advisor
Cedric Richmond, Director of the Office of Public Engagement
Julie Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
Evan Ryan, Cabinet Secretary
Gene Sperling, American Rescue Plan Coordinator
Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
Louisa Terrell, Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs
Jeff Zients, Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response & Counselor

Scott Bixby
White House Reporter
(He / Him)
P(b) (6) M(b) (6)



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From: White House Press Office
Subject: White House In-Town Pool Report #11.5 — updated Cabinet meeting attendees
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: July 20, 2021 4:02 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Scott Bixby
Sent: Tuesday, July 20, 2021 4:00 PM
To: Wranglers
Cc: Austin, Natalie S. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] White House In-Town Pool Report #11.5 updated Cabinet meeting attendees

An eagle-eyed reporter at the Capitol (h/t Seung Min Kim) flagged that a few of the attendees on the White House's list are actually meeting on the Hill this afternoon. Here's an up-to-date list of Cabinet meeting attendees:

Cabinet members

Vice President Kamala Harris

Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin

Attorney General Merrick Garland

Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo

Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh

Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge

Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg

Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm

Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas

Environmental Protection Administrator Michael Regan

Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shalanda Young

Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Cecilia Rouse
Administrator of the Small Business Administration Isabel Guzman
Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy Eric Lander
Chief of Staff Ron Klain

Staff

Cristóbal Alex, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Kate Bedingfield, Director of Communications
Jen O'Malley Dillon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Mike Donilon, Senior Advisor to the President
Anita Dunn, Senior Advisor to the President
Tina Flournoy, Chief of Staff to the Vice President
Gina McCarthy, National Climate Advisor
Jen Psaki, Press Secretary
Bruce Reed, Deputy Chief of Staff
Dana Remus, White House Counsel
Julissa Reynoso, Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Susan Rice, Domestic Policy Advisor
Cedric Richmond, Director of the Office of Public Engagement
Julie Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
Evan Ryan, Cabinet Secretary
Gene Sperling, American Rescue Plan Coordinator
Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
Jeff Zients, Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response & Counselor



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White House Reporter
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH pool] in town pool report #6 Biden call with European leaders
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 7, 2021 12:08 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: Zolan Kanno-Youngs
Sent: Tuesday, December 7, 2021 12:00 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH pool] in town pool report #6 Biden call with European leaders

Passing along from the White House. (FYI I have asked if the Putin call is still going on and have not yet received an answer from the White House).

White House: This afternoon, President Biden will convene a call with President Macron of France, Chancellor Merkel of Germany, Prime Minister Draghi of Italy, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom following his call with President Putin. On their call yesterday, the leaders agreed to stay in close touch on a coordinated and comprehensive approach in response to Russia's military build-up on Ukraine's borders.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will join Press Secretary Jen Psaki at the daily press briefing today at 2pm to update further.

--

Zolan Kanno-Youngs
The New York Times
Cell/WhatsApp/Signal: (b) (6)
@KannoYoungs

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-Town Poo Report #5: Event begins
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: December 16, 2021 2:16 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: Shelby Talcott <(b) (6)>
Date: December 16, 2021 at 2:10:38 PM EST
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-Town Pool Report #5: Event begins

Pool was ushered into the East Room at 1:54pm (the event, as I'm sure you've figured out, is a bit delayed). There are a number of people seated and masked, and a podium is set up for POTUS to speak. There's a framed Medal of Honor flag on the stage opposite the podium.

VP and the Second Gentleman entered at 2pm and shook some hands, and the audience stood up shortly afterwards.

FLOTUS entered the room at 2:05pm and POTUS entered shortly after at 2:07pm. The event began with a prayer and POTUS began speaking at 2:09pm.

The ceremony is being streamed live on the White House website, but I'll provide color as necessary.

Passing along from the WH:

In attendance for the Medal of Honor ceremony are the First Lady, the Vice President, and the Second Gentleman, approximately 120 invited guests, including friends and family of the recipients, U.S. Army Military Leadership, Members of Congress, 4 previous Medal of Honor recipients, and Members of the Administration, including Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

Delivering the invocation: Major General Thomas Solhjem, Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Army

Reading the citations for each Medal of Honor: Lieutenant Colonel William Kerrigan, U.S. Marine Corps
Military Aide to the President

The Medal of Honor is being presented to the following for conspicuous gallantry:

Ms. Tamara Cashe on behalf of Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe

Shannon Celiz and Katherine Celiz on behalf of Sergeant First Class Christopher Celiz

Master Sergeant Earl Plumlee

Delivering the benediction: Major General Thomas Solhjem, Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Army

--
Shelby Talcott

*Senior White House Correspondent
The Daily Caller*

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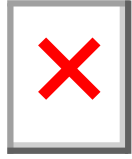
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 12, 2022 6:48 PM (UTC-05:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2022

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022**

In the morning, the President will receive the President's Daily Brief. This meeting will be closed press.

Then, the President will deliver an update on his Administration's whole-of-government COVID-19 surge response. The Secretary of Defense and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell will also attend. These remarks in the South Court Auditorium will be covered by the in-house pool and pre-credentialed media. [[RSVP here](#) by 8:00 AM EST]

In the afternoon, the President will meet with the Senate Democratic Caucus to discuss the urgent need to pass legislation to protect the constitutional right to vote and the integrity of our elections. This meeting will be closed press and the in-town travel pool will accompany.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: ABC
Print: TIME
Radio: AP

EST

9:30 AM THE PRESIDENT receives the President's Daily Brief
Closed Press

10:00 AM In-Town Pool Call Time

10:30 AM THE PRESIDENT delivers an update on his Administration's whole-of-government COVID-19 surge response; the Secretary of Defense and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell also attend
South Court Auditorium
In-House Pool and Pre-Credentialed Media (Gather 10:15 AM – Stakeout Location) [[RSVP here](#) by 8:00 AM EST]

1:00 PM THE PRESIDENT meets with the Senate Democratic Caucus to discuss the urgent need to pass legislation to protect the constitutional right to vote and the integrity of our elections
United States Capitol
Closed Press (In-Town Travel Pool Gather 12:35 PM – Palm Room Doors)

Briefing Schedule

3:00 PM Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town print pool report #1 - Biden to announce more tests during 10:30 am remarks
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 13, 2022 10:13 AM (UTC-05:00)

From: Brian Bennett
Sent: Thursday, January 13, 2022 10:09 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In town print pool report #1 - Biden to announce more tests during 10:30 am remarks

Greetings from a crisp, sunny winter morning at the White House. I'm the print pooler for today.

President Biden is scheduled to give remarks on COVID-19 at 10:30 am.

A White House official relays this: "Today, as a part of the President's remarks and briefing, he will announce that in addition to the 500 million tests that we are in the process of acquiring, he is directing his team to procure 500 million more tests to meet future demand."

Biden is slated to go to Capitol Hill to meet with the Senate Democratic Caucus at 1 pm to discuss legislation on voting rights and election integrity.

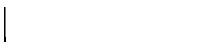
A press briefing with White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is scheduled for 3 pm. I'll be in the print pool seat today. (Reporters are spaced out in the briefing room to allow for social distance during the Omicron variant surge.) Feel free to send questions.

Brian

P.S. I took the White House's rapid antigen test before entering and am wearing an N95 mask.

Twitter: @bybrianbennett

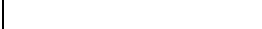
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Brian Bennett
Senior White House Correspondent
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH Poo] Foreign Poo Report #1 Background info ahead of the US-Japan Virtua Meeting
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 21, 2022 8:14 AM (UTC-05:00)

From: Mineko Tokito
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2022 7:07 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH Pool] Foreign Pool Report #1 Background info ahead of the US-Japan Virtual Meeting

Good morning and Ohayou Gozaimasu.

I'm Mineko Tokito Abe with The Yomiuri Shimbun Japanese newspaper and it's my pleasure to serve as your foreign pooler today.

At 8AM ET (10PM JST), President Biden is scheduled to convene his first virtual meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio (kee-SHEE-dah foo-MEE-o), who took office a little more than 3 months ago on October 4th, 2021.

*Kishida is the Prime Minister's family name and Fumio is his given name. In 2019, Japan decided to change the way Japanese names are written in English by placing the family name first, as it is traditionally written in Japanese, Korean and Chinese. This is why you will see the surname-given name order, especially for government officials in their official capacity.

Unlike President Biden's Virtual Meeting with President Xi Jinping, which allowed for in House Pool Spray at the Top, this meeting is (unfortunately for your foreign pooler) billed as Closed Press.

Nevertheless, I have compiled for you some hopefully useful background information to inform and include in your stories. I apologize in advance for the length.

Past In-Person and Telephonic Exchanges:

The two have spoken on the phone and met in-person briefly in their current capacities on two separate occasions, the first a post-election congratulatory call from President Biden to the newly-elected Prime Minister last October, and the second a brief, masked interaction at the sidelines of the COP26 U.N. Climate Summit in Glasgow in November where the two leaders were observed bumping elbows in an COVID-era greeting. According to the Washington Post, President Biden also "put his arm around the shoulder of Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and pulled him in for a squeeze."

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/04/readout-of-joseph-r-biden-jr-s-call-with-prime-minister-kishida-of-japan/>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-glasgow-cop26/2021/11/02/c2eb4792-3be4-11ec-8ee9-4f14a26749d1_story.html

During their conversation at COP26, Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden "confirmed that Japan and the United States will continue to work closely together towards further strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance, realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and tackling climate change"

https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_001194.html

After the exchange, Prime Minister Kishida told reporters that the two leaders had agreed to meet again in Washington at the earliest convenience possible to have more in depth talks, but alas, the world-wide spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant prevented such an in-person visit from occurring before the 208th Ordinary Session of the Diet began this past Monday, on January 17th.

As of now, the Japanese side has not released their attendee information.

Topics that May Be Discussed During the Virtual Meeting:

In his speech to the full Lower House on Wednesday, the 19th, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his hope to build a relationship of trust with President Biden and to be able to work with him towards realizing a nuclear-free world, a goal that is personal to the Prime Minister who hails from Hiroshima, an atomic bombed city. The Prime Minister defined the U.S. alliance as "the lynchpin of Japan's diplomatic and security policies." He also raised the North Korean abductions of Japanese nationals and his intention to closely cooperate with President Biden to resolve the long standing issue. Finally, the Prime Minister "pledged to promote energy reforms to meet the target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. He said he supported the use of "innovative" nuclear fusion technology as well as renewables to meet this goal."

https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2022-01-17/japan-fumio-kishida-parliament-opening-session-coronavirus-defense-4318643.html

Furthermore, Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu previewed the call as follows during his press briefing on Monday, the 17th:

"On January 21st, Prime Minister Kishida is scheduled to partake in a Japan-US Virtual Summit with President Biden. The US-Japan Alliance is the foundation of peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and the international community, as well as the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy and national security policy.

During this Virtual Summit, the two leaders plan to cultivate trust through candid discussions on key common issues ranging from national security, economic and regional and global affairs. The leaders also plan to confirm the importance of a closer Japan-U.S. alliance and to deepen cooperation and efforts towards realizing a "free and open Indo-Pacific" as well as a "world without nuclear weapons."

Japan hopes the first virtual meeting in 2022 between the two leaders will serve as an occasion to show the world the unwavering bond of the Japan-U.S. alliance as well as an opportunity to take the alliance to a higher level.

The Government of Japan strived to coordinate an in-person summit between Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden at the earliest date, but in light of the rapid domestic and foreign spread of the latest COVID-19 variant and in order to thoroughly take countermeasures against the virus, Prime Minister Kishida decided against traveling to the United States before the resumption of the Ordinary Session this month.

At the same time, it was decided that a virtual-style summit at the earliest convenience was most prudent at this time so that both sides can deepen a trusting relationship, further strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance and help realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific" as well as address global challenges including the creation of a "world free of nuclear weapons."

Calls and Announcements Prior to the Virtual Meeting:

1/20 National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Call with Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat, Akiba Takeo:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/01/20/readout-of-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivans-call-with-secretary-general-of-japans-national-security-secretariat-akiba-takeo/>

1/20 U.S. Japan Joint Statement on the Treaty on The Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons:

<https://www.state.gov/u-s-japan-joint-statement-on-the-treaty-on-the-non-proliferation-of-nuclear-weapons/#:~:text=Japan%20and%20the%20United%20States,basis%20for%20future%20nuclear%20disarmament>

1/20 On background from a Senior Administration official on President Biden's virtual meeting with Prime Minister Kishida of Japan on Friday January 21st.

There will be a background call following the virtual meeting

"President Biden's meeting with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan will highlight the strength of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, which is the cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida will discuss ways to advance our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific and a strong rules based order. They will discuss ways to deepen our alliance to address common threats, and to expand our close cooperation on critical issues like combatting COVID-19, addressing the climate crisis, and partnering on new and emerging technologies and cybersecurity, including through the Quad. The two Leaders are also expected to discuss a strong, united response that would result from further Russian aggression towards Ukraine.

Japan is a vital partner, and the U.S.-Japan Alliance is a top priority for the Biden Administration. From its earliest days, the Administration has focused on strengthening this relationship, through engagement at every level and across the whole of the U.S. government. For his first foreign-leader visit to the White House, President Biden hosted former Japanese Prime Minister Suga. After the Japanese elections, President Biden was the first leader to call Japanese Prime Minister Kishida, on the morning of his first full day in office. For their first trip abroad, Secretaries Blinken and Austin traveled to Japan. Secretary Raimondo and Ambassador Tai recently visited Japan for economic consultations regarding the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework on which you will see a deeper and more intensive economic engagement with Japan and other Indo-Pacific partners over the course of this year.

With Japan, we have made history marking the first (and second) time that the Quad met in person at the leader level. We are bolstering deterrence in the Indo-Pacific including through trilateral security cooperation with the ROK and Japan. We've enhanced collaboration in technology, economic security, and climate through a new Competitiveness and Resilience (CoRe) partnership announced last year. We are committed to further deepen ties between our governments, economies and our people with this meeting and beyond."

About Prime Minister Fumio Kishida:

Mr. Kishida, 64, hails from a political family. Both his father and grandfather were members of the country's House of Representatives

He became from the longest-serving post-war foreign minister, holding the post from 2012 to 2017

A Hiroshima native, he opposes the use of nuclear weapons, having seen the impact on his home town

Mr. Kishida arranged President Barack Obama's 2016 visit to Hiroshima, the first visit to the bombed city by a sitting US president

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58784635>

Mr. Kishida also spent part of his early childhood in Queens, when his father was assigned to a post in New York as a government trade official.

Thank you for reading.

Best,

Mineko Tokito Abe
The Yomiuri Shimbun

Mineko Tokito Abe
Washington Reporter
The Yomiuri Shimbun
General Bureau of the Americas
Suite 802 National Press Building
529 14th st. NW Washington DC 20045

Office (b) (6)
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH Poo] Foreign Poo Report #2 --Virtua Meeting Began at 8:01AM
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 21, 2022 8:39 AM (UTC-05:00)

From: Mineko Tokito
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2022 8:23 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH Pool] Foreign Pool Report #2 --Virtual Meeting Began at 8:01AM

The President's virtual meeting with His Excellency Kishida Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, began at 8:01 AM EST.

Meeting attendees:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce
T.H. Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
T.H. Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State
T.H. Rahm Emanuel, U.S. Ambassador to Japan
T.H. Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific
T.H. Daniel Kritenbrink, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs
Mr. Christopher Johnstone, Director for East Asia, National Security Council

Japan Manifest

H.E. KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan
Mr. MATSUNO Hirokazu, Chief Cabinet Secretary
Mr. KIHARA Seiji, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary
Mr. ISOZAKI Yoshihiko, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary
Mr. AKIBA Takeo, National Security Advisor of Japan
Mr. YAMADA Shigeo, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr. ICHIKAWA Keiichi, Director General, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. IRYA Takayuki, Director, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

--

Mineko Tokito Abe
Washington Reporter
The Yomiuri Shimbun
General Bureau of the Americas
Suite 802 National Press Building
529 14th st. NW Washington DC 20045

Office # (b) (6)
Fax # (202) 737-2050
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH Poo 1: Meeting participants
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 21, 2022 9:34 AM (UTC-05:00)

From: Hans Nichols
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2022 8:38 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH Pool 1: Meeting participants

A White House official sends along the following.

The President's virtual meeting with His Excellency Kishida Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, began at 8:01 AM EST.

Meeting attendees:

U.S. Manifest

The President
T.H. Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce
T.H. Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
T.H. Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State
T.H. Rahm Emanuel, U.S. Ambassador to Japan
T.H. Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific
T.H. Daniel Kritenbrink, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs
Mr. Christopher Johnstone, Director for East Asia, National Security Council

Japan Manifest

H.E. KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan
Mr. MATSUNO Hirokazu, Chief Cabinet Secretary
Mr. KIHARA Seiji, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary
Mr. ISOZAKI Yoshihiko, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary
Mr. AKIBA Takeo, National Security Advisor of Japan
Mr. YAMADA Shigeo, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr. ICHIKAWA Keiichi, Director General, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. IRYA Takayuki, Director, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 1/22 In-Town Poo Report #1
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 22, 2022 8:21 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: Rozen, Courtney (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, January 22, 2022 8:17 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 1/22 In-Town Pool Report #1

The White House passes along the following:

Today President Biden met with his national security team in person and virtually at Camp David to discuss continued Russian aggressive actions toward Ukraine. President Biden was briefed on the current state of Russian military operations on Ukraine's borders and discussed both our ongoing efforts to de-escalate the situation with diplomacy and our range of deterrence measures that are being coordinated closely with our Allies and partners, including ongoing deliveries of security assistance to Ukraine. President Biden again affirmed that should Russia further invade Ukraine, the United States will impose swift and severe consequences on Russia with our Allies and partners.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Counselor Steve Ricchetti joined the President in person at Camp David. Other national security officials joined by secure video.

Courtney Rozen

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report 9: Bi at participants
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: January 31, 2022 3:19 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: Kopan, Tal
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2022 2:31 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report 9: Bilat participants

(Still working to clean up the remarks in the Oval from difficult audio situations as best I can)

From the White House:

Participating in the President's bilateral meeting with His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T. H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T. H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor

T. H. Brett McGurk, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, NSC

T. H. Barbara Leaf, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa, NSC

Mr. Thomas West, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs

Ms. Lyndsey Merrill, Director for Transnational Affairs and Regional Security, NSC

Qatar Manifest

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Thani, Special Advisor to His Highness the Amir for Investment

H.E. Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Chief of the Amiri Diwan

H.E. Abdulla bin Mohammed Al-Khulaifi, Head of the Qatar Security Service

H.E. Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad Al-Thani, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the United States

H.E. Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Hajri, Director of Policy Planning and Research, Amiri Diwan

Tal Kopan

Washington Correspondent | San Francisco Chronicle

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town poo report #4: Bi at participants and Ova spray audio
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 7, 2022 2:23 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: Daniel Bush
Sent: Monday, February 7, 2022 1:52 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] [WH Pool] In-town pool report #4: Bilat participants and Oval spray audio

Thanks to our colleagues at VOA News, here is audio of the brief Oval spray:

<https://otter.ai/u/z3rncl4WkSwcBXKtAsHmT1YByHU>

And from the White House:

Participating in the President's bilateral meeting with H.E. Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany:

U.S. Manifest

The President

The Vice President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Janet Yellen, Secretary of the Treasury

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

T.H. Daleep Singh, Deputy Assistant to the President & Deputy National Security Advisor and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council

T.H. Dr. Karen Donfried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs

T.H. Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director for European Affairs, National Security Council

German Manifest

His Excellency Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

H.E. Steffen Hebestreit, State Secretary and Spokesperson of the Federal Republic of Germany

H.E. Dr. Jörg Kukies, State Secretary of the Federal Republic of Germany

H.E. Dr. Emily Haber, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mr. Jens Plötner, Foreign Policy and National Security Advisor to the Chancellor

Mr. Alexander Schiemann, Deputy Head of the Chancellor's Office

Mr. Alexander Eberl, Head of Division, Federal Chancellery

--

Daniel Bush | White House Correspondent

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-Town Pool Report #2: Jake Sullivan to Join 2pm Press Briefing
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: February 11, 2022 10:58 AM (UTC-05:00)

From: Philip Wegmann
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2022 10:37 AM
To: Wranglers ; Austin, Natalie S. EOP/WHO
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-Town Pool Report #2: Jake Sullivan to Join 2pm Press Briefing

The White House confirms that National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will be joining Press Secretary Jen Psaki at the Daily Press Briefing today at 2pm.

Best,

Philip Wegmann
White House Reporter
RealClearPolitics
P: (b) (6)
T: @PhilipWegmann

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] pool report #5/Cabinet meeting attendance list
To: Goodlander Margaret V (OAG)
Sent: March 3 2022 2 42 PM (UTC 05 00)

From: "Gillman, Todd"
Date: March 3, 2022 at 2:32: 3 PM EST
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] pool report #5/Cabinet meeting attendance list

From the press office

Participating in the President's Cabinet meeting

- Vice President Kamala Harris
- Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen
- Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin
- Attorney General Merrick Garland
- Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland
- Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack
- Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo
- Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh
- Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra
- Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge
- Secretary of Transportation Peter Buttigieg
- Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm
- Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona
- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough
- Secretary of Home and Security Alejandro Mayorkas
- Environmental Protection Administrator Michael Regan
- Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shanda Young
- Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines
- U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas Greenfield
- Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors Cecilia Rouse
- Administrator of the Small Business Administration Isabel Guzman
- Ron Kagan, Assistant to the President & Chief of Staff

Staff

- Cristoba Alex, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Cabinet Secretary
- Kate Bednigfeld, Assistant to the President & Director of Communications
- Brian Deese, Assistant to the President & Director of the National Economic Council
- Mike Donohue, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor to the President
- Tina Fournoy, Assistant to the President & Chief of Staff to the Vice President
- Jen Keen, Deputy Assistant to the President & Co-Chair & Executive Director of the White House Gender Policy Council
- Mitch Landrieu, Senior Advisor & Infrastructure Act Implementation Coordinator
- Jen Psak, Assistant to the President & Press Secretary
- Bruce Reed, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff
- Dana Remus, Assistant to the President & White House Counsel
- Steve Rachtel, Assistant to the President & Counselor to the President
- Susan Rice, Assistant to the President & Domestic Policy Advisor
- Cedric Richmond, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor & Director of the Office of Public Engagement
- Julie Rodriguez, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
- Evan Ryan, Deputy Assistant to the President & Cabinet Secretary
- Gene Sperling, White House American Rescue Plan Coordinator & Senior Advisor to the President
- Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor
- Neera Tanden, Staff Secretary and Senior Advisor to the President

- Louisa Terre , Assistant to the President & Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs

Todd J. Gillman

Washington Bureau Chief

The Dallas Morning News

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@ToddGillman

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report 13: Bi at participants
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 4, 2022 4:57 PM (UTC-05:00)

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Kopan, Tal" <(b) (6)>
Date: March 4, 2022 at 4:46:58 PM EST
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report 13: Bilat participants

Passing this along as well:

Participated in the President's bilateral meeting with H.E. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland:

-
U.S. Manifest

The President

T. H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

T.H. Toria Nuland, Undersecretary for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State

T.H. Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, NSC

T.H. Eric Green, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia

David Fabrycky, Director for NATO and European Affairs, NSC

Finland Manifest

His Excellency Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland

Ambassador Mikko Hautala, Ambassador of Finland to the United States

Dr. Hiski Haukkala, Secretary General

Dr. Petri Hakkarainen, Director of Foreign and Security Policy

Tal Kopan

Washington Correspondent | San Francisco Chronicle

(b) (6)

Twitter: @TalKopan

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool Report 3 — POTUS/Duque Meeting
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 10, 2022 3:11 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: "Figueroa, Laura" (b) (6)
Date: Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 2:48 PM
To: Wranglers (b) (6) >
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool Report 3 — POTUS/Duque Meeting

Pool escorted into Cabinet Room at 2:30pm after holding in hallway for 45+ mins. Escorted out at 2:45pm. POTUS did not respond to shouted questions.

Meeting attendees at bottom of email via WH press office. Will send cleaner quotes shortly.

POTUS noted at top that President Duque knew his late son Beau

List below of all attendees. POTUS and u.S officials sat on one side of conference table across Colombian officials.

POTUS: "Colombia is the lynchpin."

Thanked Duque for condemning attacks on Ukraine

Listed details of what the US has done to support Ukraine.

"The united States and people around the world are going to continue to support the Ukrainian"

"Colombia is the keystone"...to developing prosperity in the region

"our hemisphere's migration challenges cannot be solved by one" nation, Biden said.

Potus said relationship between both countries is critical to "Regional security and prosperity."

Duque: Thanked Biden, and celebrated 200 years of bilateral relations between both countries

Duque said "we appreciate a lot the decision to designate colombia a primary non-NATO ally"

Said at next summit of the Americas will be a venue to "embrace the cause of Build Back Better"

Duque on Russia's attack on Ukraine: "This has been a very horrifying moment for the world"

"Nothing justifies the bloodbath"

Participating in the President's bilateral meeting with Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense

T.H. Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor

T.H. Philip Goldberg, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia

T.H. Juan Gonzalez, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere

T.H. Katie Tobin, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Transborder Security

Colombia Manifest

His Excellency Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia

H.E. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

H.E. Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the United States

Ms. Maria Paula Correa, Chief of Staff of the President

H.E. Diego Molano, Minister of Defense

H.E. Maria Ximena Lombana, Minister of Commerce

H.E. Carlos Eduardo Correa, Minister of Environment

Laura Figueroa Hernandez
White House Correspondent
Newsday
Twitter: @Laura_Figueroa

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign Pool Report #2: President Duque's Quotes (at Bi at & Steak Out)
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 10, 2022 5:32 PM (UTC-05:00)

From: Bricio Segovia
Date: March 10, 2022 at 5:25:59 PM EST
To: "Perez, Angela D. EOP/WHO"
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign Pool Report #2: President Duque's Quotes (at Bilat & Steak Out)

President Duque and his delegation (see list at the bottom of this report) met with POTUS in the Cabinet Room for about 45 minutes and spoke to reporters right after from the steak out area for about four minutes.

Please find some of President Duque's quotes below. As usual, please check against transcript.

On the celebration of 200 years of US-Colombia relations:

“It's also a great honor for us to celebrate 200 years of the bilateral relationship that we have built based on values and based on principles. We have to also express not only our gratitude, but the continuous gratitude for you being one of the architects of Plan Colombia. That was a milestone in the bilateral relationship and allowed Colombia to face and defeat many challenges that we have over the last two decades.”

Plan Colombia is a US initiative aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and insurgent groups.

On Colombia becoming a Primary Non-NATO Ally:

“We appreciate that you have made the decision to designate Colombia as a Primary Non-NATO Ally because that is the recognition of the values and the principles that we have shared. We also want to thank your support for being the major donor of vaccines.

Colombia becomes the third Latin American country to get this special status, after Argentina and Brazil.

On Covid vaccines:

“You have been able to contribute to save the lives of millions of citizens. And this additional 2 million donation of vaccines to Colombia will also be used to attend the needs of many migrants that are in our country.

On the Summit of The Americas:

“We also want to reiterate that the next Summit of the Americas is going to be a great opportunity to embrace the cause of the Build Back Better World, an initiative designed to increase investment, job opportunities and to allow trade and investment to generate jobs.”

“We consider that we want to be a reference for other countries in Latin America.”

On regional immigration:

“I also want to express my gratitude for all the support we've gotten from US agencies in order to attend the needs of the 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants in our territory. They have crossed the border with frozen bones they have come to a country without any access to health services.”

On Ukraine:

“We also have to say that in the times we are facing, we have made a strong stand against the brutal, unjustified attack from Russia to Ukraine. This has been a very horrifying moment for the world.”

“We have also said that through the multilateral system, we're also be pressing for any sanctions to be implemented.”

“We have also spoken to the NATO Secretary General and I have been speaking with leaders in Poland, Romania, Slovakia and other countries in Europe to offer Colombia's advice on migration management in their circumstances. So we'll be there and we will also participate actively in giving that support. We have also made it a humanitarian

contribution to NATO.”

On energy transition:

“We are working with your Administration (US Administration) in the protection of areas in our country, maritime areas and old land areas. So we will not wait until the 2013 to meet the 30 by 30 criteria. And this year, before the month of August we ll have 30% of the Colombian territory declared as a protected area and we’re having US support in this.”

--The Colombian president came out to the stake out area after the bilateral meeting and spoke in Spanish to reporters for about four minutes. These are some of his quotes:

President Duque referred to the bilateral with POTUS as a “very good” and “historic” meeting.

“The designation of Colombia as a Major non-NATO Ally means celebrating these two hundred years of diplomatic relations taking it to peak in our history”, said Duque. The President also celebrated POTUS’ interest in having Colombia as “an example” to develop the Build Back Better World initiative, which intends to bring more investment to Latin America.

President Duque said that POTUS stressed the need to defend the Inter-American Democratic Charter and democracy “as the way to solve the crisis in Venezuela, that needs to help slow down the immigration crisis” of Venezuelans fleeing their country.

President Duque thanked POTUS for donating an additional two million Covid vaccines and stressed that the US is the largest donor of vaccines to Colombia. He also celebrated the agreement on an “energy transition agenda to invest in green hydrogen” and that the US is “supporting the declaration of 30% of the Colombia territory as protected area”.

Duque also celebrated the US engagement to aid Colombia manage 1.8 Venezuelan migrants. “This is a way to keep responding the needs of the Venezuelan people”, Duque added.

On Venezuela:

“Nicolas Maduro is a dictator and we have condemned that dictatorship and have sued Nicolas Maduro before the International Criminal Court”.

“Both countries (US and Colombia) see as the only solution to that situation (in Venezuela) with the comeback of democracy to that country”.

“Regarding the specifics of that trip (US delegation to Venezuela), regarding that issue, it is to the US to respond”.

Duque declined to respond questions on whether he spoke with POTUS about the US engagements with Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro.

Per White House:

Participating in the President’s bilateral meeting with Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia:

U.S. Manifest

The President

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

T.H. Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense

T.H. Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce

T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor

T.H. Philip Goldberg, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia

T.H. Juan Gonzalez, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere

T.H. Katie Tobin, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Transborder Security

Colombia Manifest

His Excellency Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia

H.E. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

H.E. Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the United States

Ms. Maria Paula Correa, Chief of Staff of the President

H.E. Diego Molano, Minister of Defense

H.E. Maria Ximena Lombana, Minister of Commerce

H.E. Carlos Eduardo Correa, Minister of Environment

Bricio Segovia

White House Correspondent MVS Radio

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 21, 2022 7:47 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2022

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022**

In the morning, the President will receive the President's Daily Brief in the Oval Office. This meeting will be closed press.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: FOX
Print: Washington Examiner
Radio: NPR

EDT

10:15 AM **THE PRESIDENT receives the President's Daily Brief**
Closed Press

12:00 PM **In-Town Pool Call Time**

Briefing Schedule

1:00 PM **Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan**

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #1 — fit check(ing in)
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 22, 2022 12:14 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Christian Datoc (b) (6)
Date: March 22, 2022 at 11:57:00 AM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #1 — fit check(ing in)

Good morning and happy Tuesday from the White House, where it s currently an overcast 63 degrees.

POTUS does not have any public events on his schedule today, although NSA Jake Sullivan will join Jen Psaki at today s 1:00pm press briefing to preview the president s Wednesday trip to Brussels: <https://youtu.be/WXbNFcxboZI>

As always, feel free to reach out directly with any questions.

--
Christian Datoc
White House Correspondent
Washington Examiner
1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington DC, 20005
(b) (6)
C: (b) (6)
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #4 — Sullivan press briefing starting soon
To: Goodander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 22, 2022 1:50 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Christian Datoc
Date: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 1:46 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #4 — Sullivan press briefing starting soon

Passing along from the White House, in light of Jen Psaki's positive COVID test...

"The Press Briefing with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will begin shortly."

--
Christian Datoc
White House Correspondent
Washington Examiner
1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington DC, 20005

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022 - SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 22, 2022 11:01 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2022

**COMPREHENSIVE TRIP GUIDANCE FOR
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022 – SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022**

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

The President will travel to Brussels, Belgium, where he will be greeted by Prime Minister Alexander De Croo of Belgium. The departure from the South Lawn will be open press and pooled for TV. The departure from Joint Base Andrews will be covered by the out-of-town pool. The arrival and greet at Brussels Airport will be open to pre-credentialed media.

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: NBC
Print: Washington Post
Radio: SRN

Out-of-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: CBS
Print: Politico
Radio: BBC

EDT

- 6:10 AM** **Out-of-Town Pool Call Time**
Joint Base Andrews Visitor Control Center Overhang
- 8:20 AM** **In-Town Pool Call Time**
- 8:40 AM** **THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route Joint Base Andrews**
South Lawn
Open Press and Pooled for TV (Gather 8:30 AM — Palm Room Doors)
- 9:00 AM** **THE PRESIDENT departs Joint Base Andrews en route Brussels, Belgium**
Joint Base Andrews
Out-of-Town Pool

CET

- 8:50 PM** **THE PRESIDENT arrives in Brussels, Belgium**
Brussels Airport
Open to Pre-Credentialed Media
- 9:00 PM** **THE PRESIDENT greets with Prime Minister Alexander De Croo of Belgium**
Brussels Airport
Open to Pre-Credentialed Media

Briefing Schedule

Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will gaggle aboard Air Force One en route Brussels, Belgium

3:00 PM **Press Briefing by White House COVID-19 Response Team and public health officials**

Thursday, March 24, 2022

The President will take a family photo with other leaders at NATO Headquarters.

The President will attend and deliver remarks at an extraordinary NATO Summit at NATO Headquarters to discuss ongoing deterrence and defense efforts in response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine. The President will reaffirm our ironclad commitment to the security of our NATO Allies.

The President will attend and deliver remarks at a G7 Leaders' Meeting at NATO Headquarters to further discuss with other G7 Leaders the consequences we are imposing on Russia for its war of choice.

The President will hold a bilateral meeting with European Council President Charles Michel at the Europa building.

The President will join and deliver remarks at a European Council Summit at the Europa building to discuss our shared concerns about Ukraine, including transatlantic efforts to impose economic costs on Russia, provide humanitarian support to those affected by the violence, and address other challenges related to the conflict.

The President will hold a press conference at NATO Headquarters.

Friday, March 25, 2022

The President will travel to Warsaw, Poland.

Saturday, March 26, 2022

The President will hold a bilateral meeting with President Andrzej Duda of Poland in Warsaw, Poland. The President will discuss how the United States, alongside our Allies and partners, is responding to the humanitarian and human rights crisis that Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war on Ukraine has created.

The President will deliver remarks on the united efforts of the free world to support the people of Ukraine, hold Russia accountable for its brutal war, and defend a future that is rooted in democratic principles.

The President will return to Washington, DC.

###

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White House Press Office · 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW · Washington DC 20500 0003 · USA · 202 456 1111

From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #2 / brief POTUS comments
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 23, 2022 9:04 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Viser, Matt"
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 8:57 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #2 / brief POTUS comments

POTUS walked out and spoke briefly, responding to two questions.

He was asked about his message to world leaders, and he said he would deliver it face to face when he arrives: "All I have to say, I'm going to say it when I get there." He indicated he would talk to reporters later "I'll be happy to talk to you guys when I get back."

Asked about how concerned he is and how high the threat of chemical warfare is, he said: "I think it's a real threat."

He then walked away and boarded Marine One, which lifted at 8:51am.

Traveling with the President on Marine One:

- Jen O'Malley Dillon, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff
- Mike Donilon, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor to the President
- Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor
- Annie Tomasini, Assistant to the President & Director of Oval Office Operations
- Ashley Williams, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations

Handing off to out-of-town pool.

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool Report #1 — JBA & Departure
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 23, 2022 9:45 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Christopher Cadelago
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 9:10 AM
To: Wranglers , Michael Kikukawa
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool Report #1 — JBA & Departure

Good morning from Joint Base Andrews, where it's windy, overcast and 51 degrees.

Marie One arrived about 9:02 a.m.

President Joe Biden, in blue suit and tie, boarded Air Force One at 9:05 a.m.

Secretary of State Blinken is also on the plane (see full list below).

Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will gaggle aboard Air Force One en route to Belgium.

We will be wheels up for Brussels, momentarily.

From the White House:

Greeting the President upon arrival to Joint Base Andrews:
Colonel Matthew Jones, Commander, 89th Airlift Wing

Traveling with the President to Brussels, Belgium on Air Force One:

- Secretary Tony Blinken, U.S. Department of State
- Jen O'Malley Dillon, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff
- Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President & National Security Advisor
- Mike Donilon, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor to the President
- Kate Bedingfield, Assistant to the President & Director of Communications
- Annie Tomasini, Assistant to the President & Director of Oval Office Operations
- Karine Jean-Pierre, Deputy Assistant to the President & Principal Deputy Press Secretary
- Yohannes Abraham, Deputy Assistant to the President & Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary of the NSC
- Ryan Montoya, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Scheduling & Advance
- Vinay Reddy, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Speechwriting
- Daleep Singh, Deputy Assistant to the President & Deputy National Security Advisor and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council
- Carlyn Reichel, Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director for Speechwriting & Strategic Initiatives
- Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director for Europe
- Ashley Williams, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations
- Neera Tanden, Staff Secretary and Senior Advisor to the President
- Charlie Fromstein, Director of Visits and Diplomatic Affairs
-
- Ambassador Rufus Gifford, Chief of Protocol, U.S. Department of State
- Amos Hochstein, Sr. Adv. for Energy Security, U.S. Department of State
- Tom Sullivan, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, U.S. Department of State

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #3 / AF1 gaggle
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 23, 2022 2:03 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Viser, Matt"
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 1:55 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #3 / AF1 gaggle

Flagging the gaggle has started on AF1, which is heading to Brussels. Jake Sullivan has started speaking, and will be followed by Karine Jean-Pierre. It's being livestreamed here:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/live/>

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool Report #2 — Arrival in Belgium
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 23, 2022 4:49 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Christopher Cadelago (b) (6)
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 4:23 PM
To: Michael Kikukawa (b) (6) >, Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool Report #2 — Arrival in Belgium

Air Force One touched down at 9:04 p.m. in Brussels, Belgium. (about 6 hours in the air, plus the 5-hour time change).

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre gagged on the flight.

Sullivan confirmed that the new sanctions regime being announced on Thursday will target political leaders and oligarchs, but he wasn't more specific. He stressed the president is taking a vigilant approach to China and reiterated it would be a topic of discussion with European leaders.

Sullivan ruled out any new U.S. forces being sent to Eastern Europe in the near term. He also said Biden in Brussels on Friday will speak specifically about European energy solutions before he departs for Warsaw, Poland.

At 9:19 p.m., President Joe Biden stepped off the plane and walked to a long line of greeters.

From the White House:

Greeting the President upon arrival at Brussels Airport:

- Prime Minister Alexander de Croo of Belgium
- Ambassador Olivier Belle, Chief of Protocol of Belgium
- Ambassador Michael Adler, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium, and Mrs. Judy Adler
- Ambassador Julianne Smith, U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, and Mr. David Black
- Ambassador Mark Gitenstein, U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, and Mrs. Libby Gitenstein
- Ambassador Rufus Gifford, Chief of Protocol of the U.S.

Getting in the vans soon and heading to Biden's overnight location.

CHRISTOPHER CADELAGO

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Supplementa Poo Report #1: POTUS arriva
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 24, 2022 5:23 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Pager, Tyler" <(b) (6)>
Date: March 24, 2022 at 10:03:32 AM GMT 1
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Supplemental Pool Report #1: POTUS arrival

Good morning from NATO. I will be serving as a supplemental pooler to cover POTUS arrival and the NATO family photo.

Pool spotted POTUS and NSA Jake Sullivan walking into NATO at 9:58 am. We are now positioned for the family photo.

Tyler Pager
White House Reporter
The Washington Post
Cell: (b) (6)
@tylerpager

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Supplemental Pool Report #4: NATO Summit attendees
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 24, 2022 5:57 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Pager, Tyler
Sent: Thursday, March 24, 2022 5:48 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Supplemental Pool Report #4: NATO Summit attendees

Passing along from the White House:

The President participated in a Family Photo with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and all 29 other NATO Heads of State and Government.

In attendance for the Extraordinary Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government:

Heads of State and Government

- President Joe Biden
- Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania
- Prime Minister Alexander de Croo of Belgium
- President Rumen Radev of Bulgaria
- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada
- President Zoran Milanović of Croatia
- Prime Minister Petr Fiala of the Czech Republic
- Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen of Denmark
- Prime Minister Kaja Kallas of Estonia
- President Emmanuel Macron of France
- Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany
- Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis of Greece
- Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary
- Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir of Iceland
- Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy
- President Egils Levits of Latvia
- President Gitanas Nausėda of Lithuania
- Prime Minister Xavier Bettel of Luxembourg
- Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapić of Montenegro
- Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands
- Prime Minister Zoran Zaev of North Macedonia
- Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway
- President Andrzej Duda of Poland
- Prime Minister António Costa of Portugal
- President Klaus Werner Iohannis of Romania
- President Zuzana Čaputová of Slovakia
- Prime Minister Janez Janša of Slovenia
- Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón of Spain
- President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey
- Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom
- President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine (via videoconference)

NATO Leaders

- Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, NATO
- Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoișă, NATO
- Secretary of the Council Jorgen Christian Jorgensen, NATO
- Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Chair of the Military Committee, NATO

U.S. Administration Officials

- Secretary of State Antony Blinken
- Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin
- Ambassador Julianne Smith, U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO
- Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Tyler Pager

White House Reporter

The Washington Post

Cell: (b) (6)

@tylerpager

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Trave Poo #8b G7 info
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 24, 2022 11:03 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Parti, Tarini
Sent: Thursday, March 24, 2022 10:26 AM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool #8b G7 info

Per the WH, info on G7. Note Zelensky speaking again.

The President is attending a G7 Leaders' Meeting with:
Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Germany
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada
President Emmanuel Macron, France
Prime Minister Mario Draghi, Italy
Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, Japan
Prime Minister Boris Johnson, United Kingdom
President Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission
President Charles Michel, European Council
Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, NATO

Delivering remarks via videoconference:
President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine

U.S. Administration Officials attending:
Secretary of State Antony Blinken
Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Daleep Singh, Deputy Assistant to the President & Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics
Andy Rabens, Director for Global Engagement and Multilateral Diplomacy, NSC

--
Tarini Parti
WHITE HOUSE reporter, WASHINGTON BUREAU

c: (b) (6)
o: (b) (6)
E: (b) (6) | T: @tparti
A: 1025 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 800 | Washington, D.C. 20036

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2022 – SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 24, 2022 7:48 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2022

**COMPREHENSIVE TRIP GUIDANCE FOR
FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2022 – SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022**

Friday, March 25, 2022

In the morning, the President will host European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the U.S. Mission in Brussels, Belgium for a bilateral meeting to discuss cooperation in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Following their meeting, the President and President von der Leyen will make a joint press statement. This meeting will be closed press. The joint press statement will be pooled press.

Then, the President will travel to Rzeszów, Poland, where he will be greeted by President Andrzej Duda of Poland. The departure from Brussels Airport will be open to pre-credentialed media. The arrival and greet at Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport will be covered by the out-of-town pool.

In the afternoon, the President will receive a briefing on the humanitarian response to ease the suffering of civilians inside Ukraine and to respond to the growing flow of refugees fleeing Putin's war of choice. This briefing at Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport will have a pool spray at the top.

After, the President will meet with service members from the 82nd Airborne Division, who are contributing alongside our Polish Ally to deterrence on the Alliance's Eastern Flank. This meeting in Rzeszów, Poland will have a pool spray at the top.

In the evening, the President will travel to Warsaw, Poland. The departure from Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport will be covered by the out-of-town pool. The arrival and greet at Warsaw Chopin Airport will be open to pre-credentialed media.

Out-of-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg

Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT

TV Corr & Crew: CBS

Print: Washington Post

Radio: VOA

CET

8:00 AM Out-of-Town Pool Call Time

9:20 AM THE PRESIDENT holds a bilateral meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to discuss cooperation in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

U.S. Mission, Brussels, Belgium

Closed Press

9:30 AM THE PRESIDENT and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen make a joint press statement

U.S. Mission, Brussels, Belgium

Out-of-Town Pool

11:55 AM THE PRESIDENT departs Brussels, Belgium en route Rzeszów, Poland

Brussels Airport

Open to Pre-Credentialed Media

2:15 PM THE PRESIDENT arrives in Rzeszów, Poland, where he is greeted by President Andrzej Duda of Poland

Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport

Out-of-Town Pool

2:55 PM THE PRESIDENT receives a briefing on the humanitarian response to ease the suffering of civilians inside Ukraine and to respond to the growing flow of refugees fleeing Putin's war of choice

Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport

Out-of-Town Pool Spray at the Top

3:50 PM THE PRESIDENT meets with service members from the 82nd Airborne Division, who are contributing alongside our Polish Ally to deterrence on the Alliance's Eastern Flank

Rzeszów, Poland

Out-of-Town Pool Spray at the Top

5:45 PM THE PRESIDENT departs Rzeszów, Poland en route Warsaw, Poland

Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport

Out-of-Town Pool

6:40 PM THE PRESIDENT arrives in Warsaw, Poland

Warsaw Chopin Airport

Open to Pre-Credentialed Media

Briefing Schedule

Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will

gaggle aboard Air Force One en route Rzeszów, Poland

Saturday, March 26, 2022

The President will hold a bilateral meeting with President Andrzej Duda of Poland in Warsaw, Poland. The President will discuss how the United States, alongside our Allies and partners, is responding to the humanitarian and human rights crisis that Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war on Ukraine has created.

The President will deliver remarks on the united efforts of the free world to support the people of Ukraine, hold Russia accountable for its brutal war, and defend a future that is rooted in democratic principles.

The President will return to Washington, DC.

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Trave Poo # 5
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 25, 2022 10:12 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Parker, Ashley" (b) (6)
Date: March 25, 2022 at 2:31:13 PM GMT 1
To: Wranglers <(b) (6)>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool # 5

Air Force One was wheels down at Poland's Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport at 2:03 pm local. President Biden has several events here on or around the airport. Rzeszów is in the southeast part of the country, and roughly an hour drive from the border with Ukraine.

In flight, principal deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and national security advisor Jake Sullivan gaggled.

Below is some background, passed along from the White House, on the 82nd Airborne Division, whose troops Biden will greet at one of his stops here:

The summary below captures the combined training, civic, and cultural engagements that members of Task Force 82 (TF82) have completed during their time in Poland in support of Operation New Normal. The first main body of TF82 arrived in Poland o/a 06 February 2022.

Training: TF82 Soldiers have emphasized interoperability and combined arms training with both our Polish and British Allies over the past six weeks. Highlights of these training events include:

- Combined Arms Live Fire Exercises incorporating paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division's 3^d Brigade Combat Team and the Polish 19th Mechanized Brigade.

- Combined mounted maneuver training, which involved American and British paratroopers gaining familiarity with Polish BMP-variant vehicles.

- Cold weather and mountain training, which culminated with 82nd paratroopers earning the Polish Mountain Badge.

Civic Engagements: TF82 engaged early and often with the local communities surrounding our unit headquarters throughout southeast Poland. These engagements are designed to foster closer ties between our service members and the civilian communities of our Polish hosts. Highlights include:

- At least 3x visits to local orphanages; our brigades are exploring ways to establish ongoing support relationships with these orphanages that will exist after our redeployment to Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

- At least 2x engagements with local youth JRTOC-like organizations, where our paratroopers provided training on basic soldier tasks such as first aid, infantry tactics, and physical fitness.

- At least 2x local commemorations of military heroes or memorial days, including the 103^d Anniversary of Colonel Leopold Lis-Kula, the father of the modern Polish Army.

Cultural Engagements: Our paratroopers and soldiers have fully availed themselves of Poland's rich cultural heritage and taken multiple opportunities to learn the deep history of this country. Highlights of these endeavors include:

- Multiple visits to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp site, designed to demonstrate

the painful legacy and human atrocities of the Holocaust.

Visits with the bishops of 3x Catholic diocese, as well as with the Archbishop of Przemyśl (the same city where the Department of State established a Welcome Center for American citizens seeking to leave Ukraine through Poland).

Multiple staff rides and cultural visits to both Warsaw and Krakow; staff rides, especially to Warsaw, focus on the devastation that was inflicted on Polish cities during World War II.

An upcoming mass for American service members to celebrate Palm Sunday in the Rzeszow Cathedral.

Aerial Port of Debarkation (“APOD”) Mission Overview

NATO countries and partners around the world unite at this airport to facilitate expedited deliveries of aid to Ukraine. The mission of the 435th Contingency Response Group, alongside U.S. Army forces, is to establish airfield operations in support of this aid to Ukraine. U.S. forces are deployed to multiple NATO nations to assure Allies and deter further aggression in the region.

435th Contingency Response Group Activities

The 435th Contingency Response Group (CRG) assessment team (9 Airmen) arrived at Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport (EPRZ) in late January to assess the capability of a sleepy regional airfield. Historically, the airfield received approximately 5-7 flights per day from civilian airlines.

Little did this town know that its airport would become the arrival location for the 82d ABN. The CRG (TF Wolf) deployed over 100 people on 3 Feb to receive and download the 82d ABN.

Once that mission was complete, TF Wolf returned 90% of its team to home-station due to the completed task. Four days after redeployment to Ramstein, TF Wolf was again called to Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport, but this time it was to provide critical aid to Ukraine.

Now the CRG and Army brothers and sisters are running the most critical node for aid to Ukraine and its sovereignty. The CRG provides Command and Control, aerial port operations, and aircraft maintenance. Since 26 Feb the 435th CRG has received 298 missions, 29 types of aircraft, and aid from 32 countries weighing in at 13.6 million pounds (6,807 tons). Our team works extremely close with our Host-Nation airport counterparts and our military counterparts from the Polish CRG and will continue to do so until our mission is complete.

APOD Equipment Support:

The CRG has approximately 70 personnel who make up an “advanced team” to establish airfield operations to support international aircraft and continue receiving the delivery of aid.

- The CRG has teams comprised of Air Force professionals who are responsible for receiving and maintaining aircraft, unloading cargo and ensuring safe and secure procedures as guests on this Airport.
- They also have teams of logistics personnel who are experts in safely processing the millions of pounds of aid.

Ashley Parker

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Poo report #13
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 25, 2022 12:53 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Parker, Ashley" (b) (6)
Date: March 25, 2022 at 5:33:51 PM GMT 1
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pool report #13

Your pool did not receive a translation of President Duda's remarks which he delivered in Polish at the humanitarian briefing. But the NYT's Mike Shear has generously sent along an Otter transcript of a translation from cable news. It is v rough, so do with it what you will, but it at least seems to convey the overall gist of Duda's comments.

OTTER of Duda:

"First and foremost, thank you for coming here to fresh off to the original patch which is very close, which is located directly to the Polish Ukrainian border. Thank you for coming to the place where this influx of refugees to Poland is the biggest your presence here, Mr. President, first of all, is sends a very big sign of unity. This is a huge sign of support end to Atlantic unity unity with my country with Poland. It demonstrates great friendship between Poland and the United States and a very profound Alliance. This is an evidence of great support and care for our mutual relations but also things of importance to me. It is a sign and a message that you care about the security of Poland. today. Mr. President, you met with US soldiers who are deployed here and who watch over our security. They also help in this very difficult work, which is receiving millions of refugees are crossing the border to our country right now. But first and foremost, they are guarding the security of the Polish border and guarding their security also off the entire Euro Atlantic community of the hell of NATO because today the Eastern Flank of NATO and I do not hesitate to say this. I also said it yesterday at NATO Summit. This is a front line today the eastern flank. I'm very happy to have you here, Mr. President, because as I said, your presence here sends a great signal and evidence of unity. Unity within NATO demonstrates a huge support and also a big significance attached by the United States. To the stability and world peace, to reinstating the peace where difficult situations are happening in places where somebody resorts to acts of aggression against other democratic and free nations, as it is happening today against Ukraine, where the Russian aggression unfortunately happening for a month now is effect. But it prisons mr. president here today in the city of threshold, is also a great sign of support to us support in terms of humanitarian assistance, which day is provided to the refugees from Ukraine but also it is provided to us Poles who are receiving guests because this is the name we want to apply to them. We do not call them refugees. They're our guests. Our brothers or neighbors who immigrated here today are in a very difficult situation where 12 million people have fled their houses by the war. By the Russian attacks. More than 3.5 million have already fled abroad. They cross different borders but first and foremost, they have crossed the border with Poland. Today we have got 2.5 million people in Poland. And the number is growing all the time. So the number I'm exceeding 2 million right now. It's still growing. And all signs are that if the Russian aggression continues, those numbers will continue to grow. So first and foremost, this it gives me an opportunity to extend my gratitude to mr. president to our guests from the United States but also to the NGOs. Both from my country starting from the organizations which are present here at this table today. But also, I want to express my gratitude to all NGOs, Polish NGOs who are involved, but I also like to thank the US organizations. A big number of them is already present in Poland and a lot of them since assistance to our country in this context. I'm so much grateful to you, Mr. President, for your

support, but also like to ask you to convey my personal words of things to the First Lady of the United States to Mrs. Joe Biden, that your spouse, Mr. President, and please convey very heartfelt greetings from my wife to your wife. Both ladies had a conversation a couple of days ago, my wife and gave an account of the situation in Poland. Both ladies exchange their views on the possibilities of health. Then my wife paid a visit to the United States and from the United States she brought in order to support Ukraine in order to support agreeing the hospitals and also centers here in Poland, which treats children from Ukraine. Also, when did children from Ukraine, she brought from the United States a number of medical equipment and medicines from the United States. So thank you so much for this very swift assistance. Thank you so much. And please convey these words of routings and these words of things to your wife and also please convey very heartfelt wishes from my wife to your wife. So ladies and gentlemen, this presents a huge challenge. This assistance is something unprecedented because within a couple of weeks, more than 2 million people have come to our country. We have never experienced anything like that throughout our history. This is the first time that I would also like to thank all my compatriots who have opened their hearts and opened their houses who have welcomed refugees, but as I said, first and foremost, our neighbors or brothers from Ukraine, who are in a difficult position today who are in need today. And all of us want to help them so much. They are staying in private houses and they're staying in different facilities. Very often these people are very much affected by the war winded persons alle persons, many of them have undergone and mental trauma after the experiences they had. Recently we have received people without any belongings to Poland, they fled from bombs. So the situation is extremely difficult. That is why we are so much thankful for any help and assistance because this is what we very much need today. And our product we are doing everything we can with huge dedication and devotion NGOs have also demonstrated huge energy, dedication, also volunteers, firefighters, so there was a lot of assistance from NGOs from churches, Catholic church, but also other churches in our country and religious communities. That there was a lot of support offered from all different sides, also from abroad. And once again, we're so much grateful for that this presents a huge challenge to us. But it is also a huge challenge to the whole free world as we understand it, and we all have to live up to it. Once again, thank you for this visit. And I'm so happy and delighted with our invitation that we can have. All the authorities in Poland are involved in providing assistance. It's not only the government NGOs and volunteers but also local governments. Tomorrow, Mr. President, you will meet refugees in Warsaw that also the Prime Minister of the Polish government will be present there Mr. metocean benefit scheme the mayor of Warsaw Mr. rehfeld szatkowski will be there and they will share with us there all the activities that are being conducted in Poland in order to live up to this difficult situation in order to solve the problem. So once again, we are delighted with the facility we're paying Curiouser and very a warm welcome to our country.“

And, per the White House, in attendance for a briefing on humanitarian efforts for Ukraine:

President Biden

President Andrzej Duda of Poland

Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Jakub Kumoch, Head of the International Policy Bureau at Poland's Presidential Chancellery

USAID Administrator Samantha Power

Gemma Connell, Head of Office Poland, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Jakob Kern, Emergency Coordinator for the Ukraine Crisis, UN World Food Programme (WFP)

Grzegorz Gruca, Vice President, Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)

Sebastien Lambroschini, Ukraine Country Director, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)

Aneta Ostasz, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Cordian Szwarc OFM, Caritas Polska

Grażyna Ignaczak-Bandych, Chief of the Chancellery of the President of Poland

Ambassador Marek Magierowski, Ambassador of Poland to the U.S.

Ambassador Mark Brzezinski, U.S. Ambassador to Poland
Kristina Kvien, Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy Kyiv
Stephen Allen, Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Leader, USAID
Jim Hope, Mission Director, USAID
Renee Lariviere, State/Populations Refugees and Migration Refugee Coordinator
Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Europe, NSC
Robin Brooks, Director for Balkans and Central Europe, NSC

The pool is now holding on Air Force One, as President Biden finishes the closed press portion of the briefing.

Ashley Parker

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool #4a - Quotes from the spray and participants
To: Goodander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 26, 2022 7:24 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Aurélie END (b) (6)
Date: March 26, 2022 at 12:11:56 PM GMT -1
To: WHCA Pool Reports (b) (6) Wranglers <(b) (6)>
Subject: Travel pool #4a - Quotes from the spray and participants

After listening to a better audio, it appears Kuleba was not specifically speaking about sleep in war conditions, but more generally about sleep and traveling.

Biden shared his own experience: “You’re looking at a fella who’s traveled over a million 200,000 miles”
“ I learned how to sleep”

Thanks to copooler Geoff Earle (Daily Mail) for these quotes and to VOA Anita Powell who shared her audio.

Pool still holding as of 12:05 AM.

The WH also shared this list of participants:

UNITED STATES

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

President of the United States of America

Antony J. Blinken

U.S. Secretary of State

Lloyd Austin

U.S. Secretary of Defense

Jake Sullivan

National Security Advisor of the United States

Kristina Kvien

U.S. Chargé d'affaires ad interim to Ukraine

Amanda Sloat

NSC Senior Director for European Affairs

Tom Sullivan

Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of State

Kelly Megsamen

Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of Defense

LTG Randy George
Senior Military Assistant

UKRAINE

FM Dmytro Kuleba
Foreign Minister of Ukraine

Oleksii Reznikov
Defense Minister of Ukraine

Andrii Deshchytsia
Ukrainian Ambassador to Poland

Andrii Yanevskyi
Chief of Staff, Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Heorhii Tykhyi
Media Advisor

Aurélia End
White House Correspondent
AFP

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool #6 - Arrival and Ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 26, 2022 8:11 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Aurélie END <(b) (6)>
Date: March 26, 2022 at 1:05:13 PM GMT -1
To: Wranglers (b) (6) >, WHCA Pool Reports (b) (6)
Subject: Travel pool #6 - Arrival and Ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw

The motorcade arrived at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw around 12:33 AM.
The ride was short and uneventful. The street leading to the Palace was lined with Polish and Ukrainian flags. Many onlookers taking pictures.
The Beast rolled at 12:37 AM into the courtyard of the Palace for the ceremony of arrival.
Members of the Polish forces representing different branches of the military including Navy and in ceremonial uniforms were waiting.
President Duda went out at 12:37 to greet Biden.
The President then shook hands with Polish officials, we saw him briefly put his hand on Duda's shoulder.
The two presidents then greeted the US delegation, detailed list below.
A military band played the national anthem followed by the Polish one. Biden put his hand on his heart.
Duda and Biden then proceeded to review the troops.
At one point some of the servicemen shouted in Polish "Hail to the president" according to the translation of an employee of the US embassy
The band followed by the other servicemen then left.
Duda and Biden went in at 12:47 AM.
Pool now holding inside.

Attendees at the arrival ceremony per the WH

U.S. delegation participants:

T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
T.H. Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense
T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
T.H. Mark Brzezinski, U.S. Ambassador to Poland
T.H. Samantha Power, Administrator of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
T.H. Dr. Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Europe
Ms. Robin Brooks, Director for the Balkans and Central Europe

Poland delegation participants:

H.E. Zbigniew Rau, Minister of Foreign Affairs
H.E. Mariusz Błaszczak, Minister of National Defense
H.E. Piotr Naimski, Deputy Minister of Economy
Mr. Jakub Kumoch, Head of International Policy Bureau
Mr. Pawel Soloch, Head of National Security Bureau
H.E. Marek Magierowski, Ambassador of Poland to US Mr. Piotr Gillert, Director of International Policy Bureau

Aurélie End
White House Correspondent
AFP
(b) (6)
@aureliaendafp

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Trave Poo #20 - Stop in Mi denha UK
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 26, 2022 5:11 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Aurélie END <(b) (6)>
Date: March 26, 2022 at 8:54:48 PM GMT
To: Wranglers (b) (6) >, WHCA Pool Reports (b) (6)
Subject: Travel Pool #20 - Stop in Mildenhall UK

At 8:41 PM local time (please note the different time zone) Air Force One landed at Royal Air Force Mildenhall (UK) where it will refuel.

Sharing this bit of information related to the departure from Warsaw.

Greeting the President upon departure from Warsaw Chopin Airport:

- Mr. Paweł Szrot, Secretary of State, Chief of the Cabinet of the President of the Republic of Poland
- T.H. Mark Brzezinski, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Poland

Traveling with the President en route Joint Base Andrews on Air Force One:

Jen O'Malley Dillon, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff
Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Mike Donilon, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor to the President
Annie Tomasini, Assistant to the President & Director of Oval Office Operations
Kate Bedingfield, Assistant to the President & Director of Communications
Yohannes Abraham, Deputy Assistant to the President & Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary of the NSC
Rob Flaherty, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Digital Strategy
Ryan Montoya, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Scheduling & Advance
Karine Jean-Pierre, Deputy Assistant to the President & Principal Deputy Press Secretary
Vinay Reddy, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Speechwriting
Meghan Hays, Special Assistant to the President & Director of Message Planning
Emily Horne, Special Assistant to the President & Sr Director for Press and NSC Spokesperson
Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director for Europe
Ashley Williams, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations
Neera Tanden, Staff Secretary and Senior Advisor to the President
Ambassador Rufus Gifford, Chief of Protocol of the U.S.

Aurélie End
White House Correspondent
AFP
(b) (6)
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Trave Poo #1a - With the president on M1
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 27, 2022 1:27 AM (UTC-04:00)

From: Aurélia END <(b) (6)>
Date: March 27, 2022 at 1:19:31 AM EDT
To: Wranglers (b) (6), WHCA Pool Reports (b) (6) >
Subject: Travel Pool #1a - With the president on M1

Sharing this from the WH

Traveling with the President on Marine One to the White House:

Jen O'Malley Dillon, Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff
Mike Donilon, Assistant to the President & Senior Advisor to the President
Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Annie Tomasini, Assistant to the President & Director of Oval Office Operations
Ashley Williams, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Oval Office Operations

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White House Correspondent
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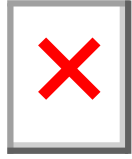
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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 27, 2022 11:07 PM (UTC-04:00)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2022

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022**

In the morning, the President and the Vice President will receive the President's Daily Brief in the Oval Office. This meeting will be closed press.

In the afternoon, the President will announce his Budget for Fiscal Year 2023, which will reduce deficits by more than \$1 trillion over the next decade, advance safety and security at home and around the world, and make the investments needed to build a better America. The Budget projects that the Biden-Harris Administration is on track to reduce the deficit by more than \$1.3 trillion this year, the largest one-year reduction in the deficit in U.S. history. The Director of the Office of Management and Budget will also deliver remarks. These remarks in the State Dining Room will be open to pre-credentialed media. [[RSVP here](#) by 10:00 AM]

In-Town Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: NBC
Print: Boston Globe
Radio: BBC

EDT

11:30 AM **THE PRESIDENT and THE VICE PRESIDENT receive the President's Daily Brief**
Oval Office
Closed Press

2:00 PM **In-Town Pool Call Time**

2:45 PM **THE PRESIDENT announces his Budget for Fiscal Year 2023, which will reduce deficits by more than \$1 trillion over the next decade, advance safety and security at home and around the world, and make the investments needed to build a better America; the Director of the Office of Management and Budget also delivers remarks**
State Dining Room
Open to Pre-Credentialed Media (Gather 2:30 PM – Palm Room Doors) [[RSVP here](#) by 10:00 AM]

Briefing Schedule

3:30 PM **Press Briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates, Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shalanda Young, Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Cecilia Rouse, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan**

###

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 3/28 poo report #11b -- note on briefing
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: March 28, 2022 5:11 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: "Bidgood, Jess"
Date: Monday, March 28, 2022 at 4:53 PM
To: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 3/28 pool report #11b -- note on briefing

Asked why National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan wasn't part of today's briefing, as the guidance sent last night indicated, a White House official said that when they sent out today's pool note, they knew POTUS would be taking questions and speaking to his trip to Europe, Ukraine and Russia himself.

Jess Bidgood
National Political Reporter
The Boston Globe
o. (b) (6)
m. (b) (6)
@jessbidgood

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From White House Press Office
Subject [EX ERNAL] n-town pool report #6 in the oval
To Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent March 29, 2022, 12:14 PM (UTC-04:00)

From Kadia Goba
Sent Tuesday, March 29, 2022, 2:03 PM
To Wranglers
Subject n-town pool report #6 in the oval

Pool entered the Oval at 2:25 a.m. and ushered out about 6 minutes later at 3:30 a.m. POTUS did not answer questions yelled to him.

POTUS and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong flanked the fireplace (Photo included)

POTUS opened by saying "this is a critical moment for both our countries..."

"The rule-based order is facing unprecedented challenges. Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war against Ukraine is an urgent threat to both Europe and, believe me, Indo-Pacific as well, and it's attacking the core tenets of a rule-based international order."

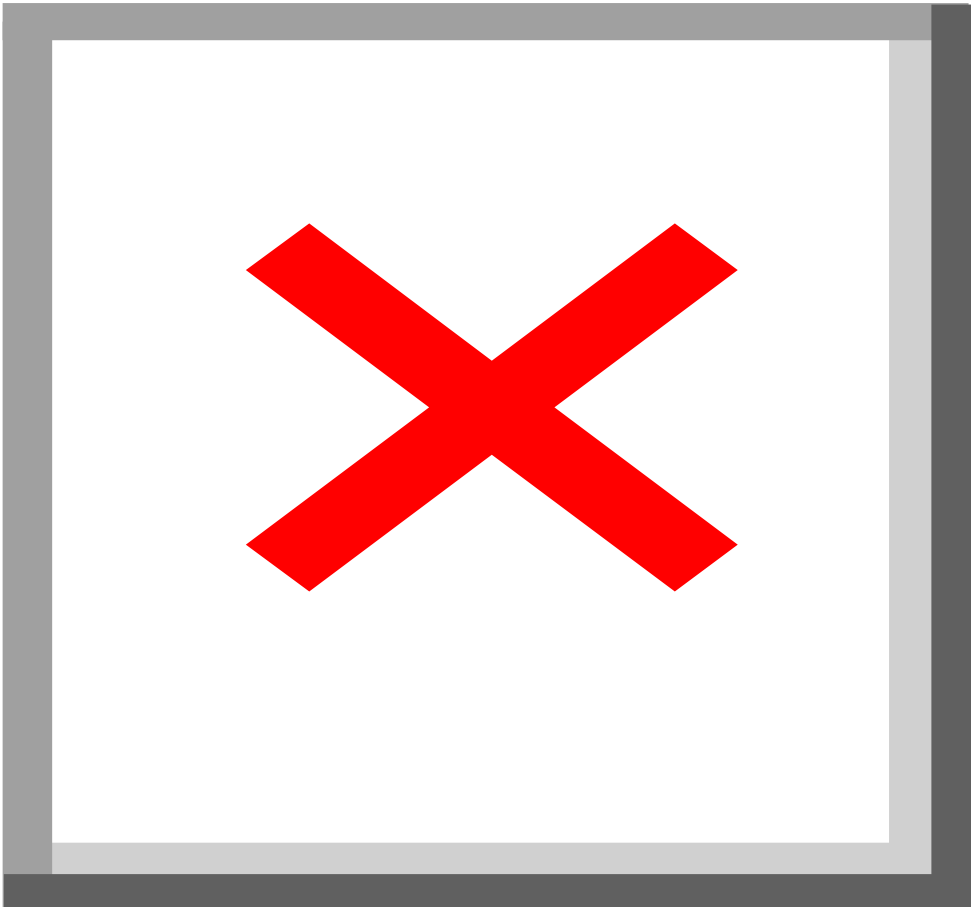
POTUS thanked Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for a principled leadership in supporting the people of Ukraine.

"You've stepped up every time you've had to."

Before turning the floor over to the prime minister, Biden said he would talk about the US-Asian relationship, upholding freedom of the seas, promoting the return of democracy in Burma, and advanced inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Catch quotes here

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?592-/president-biden-welcomes-singapore-prime-minister-white-house>



Attendees st:

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U S Manifes

T e es de

TH G a Ra mo do, Sec e a y of Comme ce

TH Jake Su va , Ass s a o e es de fo Na o a Secu y Affa s

TH Jo a a Kap a , Ambassado of e U ed S a es o S gapo e

TH Ku Campbe , Depu y Ass s a o e es de a d Cood a o fo e do- ac fic,

Na o a Secu y Cou c

TH Da e K e b k, Ass s a Sec e a y of S a e fo Eas As a a d ac fic Affa s

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Ms He etta Lev , D eco fo Sou eas As a, Na o a Secu y Cou c

Singapore Manifes

HE Lee Hs e Lo g, me M se of S gapo e

HE D V va Baak s a , M se fo o eg Affa s

HE Ga Km Yo g, M se fo Tade a d dus y

HE Josep e Teo, M se fo Commu ca o s a d fo ma o

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Kadia Goba | BuzzFeed News | Reporter **(b) (6)** @KadiaGoba

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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH in-town pool report #10/ Today's briefing
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 4, 2022 12:18 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: David Smith
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 12:06 PM
To: May, Lewis L. EOP/WHO
Cc: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH in-town pool report #10/ Today's briefing

From the White House:

'Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Jake Sullivan will be joining Press Secretary Jen Psaki at the daily press briefing today.'

--

David Smith
Washington bureau chief
Guardian News & Media

Office: (b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

(b) (6)

twitter: @SmithInAmerica



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From: White House Press Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH in-town poo report #17/ Press briefing under way
To: Good ander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: Apri 4, 2022 3:13 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: David Smith
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 3:09 PM
To: May, Lewis L. EOP/WHO
Cc: Wranglers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH in-town pool report #17/ Press briefing under way

The press briefing with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Press Secretary Jen Psaki began at 3.06pm.

Live stream here:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/live/>

--
David Smith
Washington bureau chief
Guardian News & Media

Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)
(b) (6)

twitter: @SmithInAmerica



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From: Austin, Natalie S. EOP/WHO
Subject: In-town pool report #5- PM Suga Arrival and bilateral meeting attendees
To: Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)
Sent: April 16, 2021 2:38 PM (UTC-04:00)

From: Ryan Brooks (b) (6)
Sent: Friday, April 16, 2021 2:03 PM
To: Wranglers (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #5- PM Suga Arrival and bilateral meeting attendees

Your pooler watched PM Suga arrive at the West Wing at 1:32pm.

The White House told the pool the Official Working Visit began at 1:50pm and passed along the names of the expanded bilateral meeting participants:

United States

The President

1. T.H. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
2. T.H. Janet Yellen, Secretary of the Treasury
3. T.H. Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense
4. T.H. Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce
5. T.H. Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
6. T.H. Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, National Security Council
7. T.H. Edgard Kagan, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for East Asia and Oceania, National Security Council
8. T.H. Melanie Nakagawa, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Climate and Energy, National Security Council

Japan

His Excellency SUGA Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan

1. Mr. SAKAI Manabu, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary
2. Mr. ADACHI Masashi, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister
3. Mr. KITAMURA Shigeru, Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat
4. His Excellency TOMITA Koji, Ambassador of Japan to the United States
5. Mr. IZUMI Hiroto, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister
6. Mr. MORI Takeo, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
7. Mr. SUZUKI Hiroshi, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
8. Mr. ICHIKAWA Keiichi, Director General for North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

RCB

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