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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY PRESS SECRETARY KARINE JEAN-PIERRE

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:42 P.M. EDT

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hey, good afternoon, everyone.

Q Hello.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Hello, hello. You guys will be very excited: do not have anything at the top for all of you. So we're going to go straight to questions.

Darlene, want to kick us off?

Q Thanks. Yep, would. On the gun framework that was announced over the weekend, can you talk a little bit about what specifics the White House would like to see as the lawmakers sit down and try to turn this into a bill? Specifics on what you want regarding access to juvenile records, red-flag laws, and redefining which gun sellers now have to do expanded background checks.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, as you know, the text is now going to be written, so we're going to allow the negotiators to go through that process.

What -- what we do believe and what the President has said is this is a historic agreement, and it's the most significant legislation that we have seen to reduce gun violence since more than 20 years. And so it's a bipartisan. The President is pleased to see this as a step forward.

As we know, you know, this is about saving lives. And so the President is going to -- wants to see Congress act. He wants to see this on his desk as quickly as possible. And -- and that's -- and that's going to be our focus.

As it -- as it relates to his involvement in any of this, his team continues to talk to Congress on a regular basis, as we have been, as they have been this past several weeks. And we're going to continue talking to negotiators on the Hill, to congressional members and staff on the Hill. And -- and we will continue to have those conversation. But we want to -- the President wants to see this on his desk to sign as soon as possible.

Q Will the White House weigh in at all in terms of the final legislative language and text and specific things that you would like -- you, the White House, would like to see?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: don't have any specifics on -- on any -- any, you know, pieces of the legislation and our involvement there.

What we will say is we want to see this move quickly. The President wants to see this move quickly. This is about saving lives. And we think -- again, this is a step -- a step forward in getting that done.

You know, legislating is -- when you think about legislating, it's about negotiating. It's about getting to a place where both sides can come to an agreement. And this is a bipartisan handshake, a framework, as you all know. And we want to -- we're pleased by that, and we want to get that done.

Q One other question. Over the weekend, before the President left Los Angeles, he was asked whether he had decided to go to Saudi Arabia. And his answer was, "No, not yet." And there was a follow-up question, and then he said, "That's the reason I'm going." So, can you settle it? Is he going? Is he not going? Just tell us.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, don't have anything to announce for you today.

Q When will you?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, let me just say this: When the President is ready to make that announcement, that's when we will.

But we continue to plan for a trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia. This would be an opportunity for the President to engage with leaders from across the Middle East region. Again, don't have anything to announce for you today.

You know, if you think about the focus -- what the focus would be, and the agenda,

it's on delivering results for the American people. That is what the President -- when he has these leader-leader conversation, that is the number one priority: those strategic partnership with those leaders and making sure that it indeed delivers for the American people.

And so, in this -- in this particular case, if this were to happen or when we are ready to announce, if and when we are ready to announce, it's -- it's -- would be about -- about diplomacy -- leading through diplomacy to bring stability to the Middle East region, which he has talked about himself.

And -- but again, don't have anything to -- any further -- anything further to preview at this time.

Q Thank you.

Q Thanks, Karine. Last week, you said that when the President met with the parents in Uvalde, they told him they just wanted to see some action, that they wanted to see if Congress can, quote, "put their politics aside and come in a bipartisan way and deliver something." Does this agreement that was announced yesterday deliver on what those parents in Uvalde were telling the President that they wanted to see?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, let me just make clear: What he heard and all of you may have heard from the folks in the community as well is to do something. And so the President has called on Congress to do something. They are doing something.

Now, does this framework has everything that the President wants or that everything that the President has called for? It does not. And the President is going to continue to fight for -- for -- for the renew our ban on assault weapons; for, you know, making sure that we confirm Steve Dettelbach to lead ATF -- right? -- which is something that we -- we believe is going to happen. And so -- expanding background checks to keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

So there are things that he wants to continue to see done.

But -- but, you know, again, this is about saving lives, and this is what's important right now. And this is a step towards that direction.

Q You said -- you said repeatedly now for several weeks that the President was going to give lawmakers time and space. And in the statement, he said yesterday, as you just said, that it didn't do everything that he thinks is needed. If he had gotten involved, is there something now, where we are at this point in the conversation and negotiations -- if he had gotten off the sidelines, is there one thing that could have ended up in the agreement that he would have liked to have seen?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So disagree with the framing of that question. The President has been involved. He has been involved since, would say, day one of his administration -- the first couple of days that he's walked into his administration.

And what mean by that is the executive actions that he took very early on and -- the most executive actions than any president at this time of his presidency, when it comes to dealing with a public health epidemic, which is gun violence.

And so he put that forward. He did everything at the time that he can from his perch in making sure that we -- we deal with this epidemic. He has said if there's anything more he can do on the executive action side, he will take a look, his team will take a look.

He's talked about it -- most recently State of the Union and also the first joint address.

So he has been vocal. He has been talking about this. And he also did a primetime -- a primetime delivery to the American people that, as you all know, that was about almost two weeks ago. So he has been involved, and to say that he is not -- he hasn't been is just not true.

Next?

Q meant in the negotiations.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: 'm sorry?

Q meant in the negotiations with this bipartisan group.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: But -- no, but 'm -- but more broadly, he has been involved. And he had Chris Murphy here just last week to -- to get a -- to get a download on the negotiations from him directly. And think that shows involvement, and that shows him wanting to make sure that we push this forward.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. On Saudi Arabia briefly, just to circle back on Darlene's question: The President seemed to say over the weekend that his trip would not focus on energy. You said just now that any trip to the region will focus on delivering results for the American people. If that's the case, why not make energy a major topic of the of the trip, considering gas prices are such a big part of what Americans care about?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, let me -- let me first say: There -- there's no trip to announce at this point.

Q But he's been talking about (inaudible).

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: 'm just saying that there's nothing to preview for you at this time.

But will say this: You know, to view engagement with Saudi Arabia and energy security as asking for oil is simply wrong and a misunderstanding of both the complexity of that issue and our multifaceted discussions with the Saudis.

That said, Saudi Arabia is the chair, as you know, of OPEC Plus and its largest exporter. Of course, we discuss energy with the Saudi government, as we do with oil producers around the world. And we welcome its leadership in achieving a consensus amongst the group members last week.

Q And just briefly on Afghanistan, if you could: Nearly half of Afghan -- Afghans are starving or don't have enough food. Is the administration considering doing more to send direct aid to Afghanistan, not just the United Nations, even if that means recognizing the Taliban?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: I don't have anything further on what else we might be doing, as aid -- for aid -- as aid to the people of Afghanistan. As you know, we have announced humanitarian aid that goes directly to the people and not to -- not to the government. But I don't have anything further to share on that.

Q Are you sort of in a rock-and-a-hard-place position here? If the President were to go to Saudi Arabia, would you not see a benefit in embracing the idea that with gas prices at record levels, of course you would speak to the Kingdom and its role in OPEC Plus in trying to increase supply? So why not embrace that?

Because if you're going to go to Saudi Arabia, wouldn't that be a benefit for the President to try to deliver on that, even though there are some political downsides to doing that domestically as well?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, I think what we're trying to say is that there are more complexities to that issue, and it's multifaceted -- discussions with Saudi Arabia. And it is an array of agenda -- of agenda that we would -- we would potentially be talking about.

I look, I want to be careful because we don't have -- I don't have -- we don't have a trip to preview for you at this time. But I also -- you know, as I said, Saudi Arabia is the chair of OPEC and is the largest exporter. So we talk to them like we do with any other oil producers around the world. So that is -- there's no difference there. But -- but again, I don't want to go into -- go into specifics.

Q Just on the surface, understanding no trip has been announced yet --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah.

Q -- we'll get there when we get there -- but the idea that the President would engage with Saudi and not talk about oil production and gas prices when Americans are at the highest level they've been in a long time just doesn't make sense to me. It would seem the White House would embrace that as one of the many complex issues you would deal with with Saudi Arabia. And we've all been covering Saudi Arabia's relationship, which has been fraught on many levels with the United States for a long time, so we know there are many issues.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah.

Q But you're not avoiding saying he's going to be dealing with --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, what I -- what I did say is: Of course, he will be -- they will discuss energy with the Saudi government. I think what I'm trying to say is to look at this trip as it being only about oil is not -- it would be simply wrong to do that. So we just wanted to be very clear on that -- on that regard.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. President Biden once bragged about the stock market hitting "record after record after record on my watch." How about now?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Meaning the stock market --

Q All the gains from President Biden's time in office have been wiped out.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, as you know, we are watching -- we're watching closely. We know families are concerned about inflation and the stock market. That is something that the President is -- is really aware of. And so, look, we face global challenges. We've talked about this. This is -- we're not the only country dealing with what we're seeing at the moment as it relates to inflation.

You know, Putin -- Putin's price hike, inflation, coming -- coming out of a once-in-a-generation global pandemic -- all of those things play a factor.

And, you know -- but the thing -- the way that we see this is that the American people are well positioned to face these challenges because of the economic historic gains that we have made under this President -- under this President in the last 16 months.

Q Okay. So, as you say that Americans are well positioned to weather this stock market decline, what is the President's message to somebody who might want to retire but their 401(k) is getting wiped out?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So we know -- we know that the -- that high prices are having a real effect on people's lives. We get that. And we are incredibly focused on doing everything that we can to make sure that the economy is working for every -- American people. But we are coming out of the strongest job market in American history, and that matters. And that -- a lot of that is thanks to the American Rescue Plan, which only Democrats voted for that -- Republicans did not -- and it led to this economic boom -- this historic economic boom that we're seeing with jobs.

Q Didn't it also lead to historic inflation?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: No. That is not --

Q No?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: That is -- that is -- that is not -- that is not how we're seeing the American Rescue Plan.

ook, the President came in -- we have to remember what the President walked into. When he walked into this administration, the economy was at a standstill. Schools were closed. Businesses were shutting down. Twenty million people were on unemployment insurance benefits. That is what he walked into. And he took action. He got the American Rescue Plan done. Democrats -- only Democrats voted for it. And it helped turn the economy around, including getting more than 200 million people vaccinated, having a comprehensive vaccination plan that -- that was not in place when he walked into the administration.

Q Okay. And then, quickly, is the President running for reelection?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: He has -- first of all, let's -- let's reset for a second. cannot talk about elections. cannot be a political analyst from here or -- you know, or the midterms or anything like that, or including 2024.

The President, as you know, has been asked that question many times, and he has answered it. His answer has been pretty simple, which is: Yes, he's running for reelection. 'm -- can't say more than that.

Q Okay.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Go ahead.

Q Karine, thank you. Back on the discussions about the gun framework. You said he spoke with Senator Murphy. You say negotiators continue to talk to people here at the White House. Has the President himself spoken with any of the Republicans engaged in the negotiations?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: -- hear the question. don't have any -- any calls to preview or read out to you at this time.

Q Did he -- know he was flying this morning during the latest January 6th hearing. But has he had a chance to go back and watch any of it, or is somebody keeping him updated on developments? What does he make of it all?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So as you know, the President is very busy today, and so he won't be catching it blow by blow but he'll get updates from -- from his staff.

Q Do you know who's been giving him the updates?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: -- don't have a person to -- to share with who's been giving his up- -- an update.

Q And has he been briefed on the arrests of the 31 men found inside a U-Haul truck near a Pride event in Idaho on Saturday?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yes, he's been -- yes, he's been briefed.

Q Oh, okay. Thank you. (laughter.)

Q Karine?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Okay. All right. (laughs.) We'll move on then. Go ahead.

Q Hi, Karine. wanted to switch gears to Brexit for a moment. Britain, guess, vo- -- Boris Johnson's party published today plans to override some of the post-Brexit trade rules for Northern Ireland. know Blinken told Foreign Secretary Truss that -- to continue good-faith negotiations with the EU to resolve -- reach a solution that preserves the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. But know that Boris Johnson characterized the changes as "relatively trivial," and wanted to know if the White

House agreed with that.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So the U.S. priority remains protecting the gains of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and preserving peace, stability, and prosperity for the people of Northern Ireland.

We have welcomed the provisions in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol as a way to manage the practical challenges of preserving distinct EU and UK markets while preventing the return of customs infrastructure on the land border.

We recognize there have been challenges over the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol. We urge the UK and the EU to return to talks to resolve these differences.

We support a strong and close EU-UK partnership. Transatlantic peace, security, and prosperity are best served by a strong UK, a strong EU, and the closest possible relationship between the two.

Q Thank you. And if you could just follow up quickly. Will this become an impediment to the U.S.-UK trade dialogue talks in Boston or a potential future U.S.-UK trade deal?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: No, I don't believe it will be.

Q Okay, thank you.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Go ahead.

Q Karine, just back on the Saudi issue for a second. Does President Biden believe that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was responsible for Kamal -- Jamal Khashoggi's death?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, I mean, we've spoken to this before. I think he was asked this question directly recently last week.

So, look, the President is focused on getting things done for the American people; that is engagement, leader and leader -- leader-to-leader engagement around the world. He takes that very seriously. And he takes delivering for the American people very seriously.

If he determines that the interests of the United States to engage with a foreign leader and that such an engagement can deliver results, then he'll do so. And so, as we -- as you have heard her say -- as you have heard us say, Saudi Arabia has been a partner to the United States for more than 80 years -- an important partner on a host of initiatives that we are working on, both in the region and around the world.

Q On the question that you asked though, does he believe that MBS was responsible for Khashoggi's death?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So we issued -- when the President -- when the President walked -- came into office, you know, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi was something that we and so



many others around the world took very, very seriously. He -- he issued an extensive report on Khashoggi's murder. And we instituted the so-called "Khashoggi ban" to make sure that any country that seeks to use tools of repression against people abroad who criticize their government will pay a price. We've used it multiple -- multiple times since. And we imposed sanctions or visa restrictions on over 70 Saudi individuals and entities, including the Saudi Royal Guard's Rapid Intervention Force.

As we emphasized then, it was also important to reorient but not rupture [rupture] relations with Saudi Arabia. So we took that incredibly seriously, and the po- -- the President spoken to this before, and I'm going to just let his word stand.

Go ahead.

Q Does he believe --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: -- I'm -- I've already answered the question.

Go ahead.

Q Karine, regarding all the trapped agriculture exports in Ukraine, there's been some reporting that there was a cable sent from the Biden administration kind of warning African nations to not buy grain from Russia under the pretenses that it may be stolen from Ukraine. Is the White House warning African nations like Senegal to not buy any grain from Russia right now?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: -- I can't speak to the wire that you're speaking of right now. But what I can say is: We are working with other countries to prevent the sale of grain that has likely been stolen from -- from Ukraine.

Q Would there be any consequences for nations if they do buy grain from Russia at this time (inaudible)?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: That's a hypothetical that I'm just not going to answer from here.

Q Can I have one more question?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Sure.

Q Recently, the family of Emad Sharghi told CBS -- he's an American Iranian citizen who was detained in Iran four years ago. His family told our colleague, Margaret Brennan, that they've requested a meeting with the President numerous times but has not received a response from the White House. Their latest request was a couple of weeks ago. They also haven't received requests from the State Department. Is there any update on when this meeting may take place?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: I don't have an update for you. I'm happy to check with the team. That is also a question for State Department, as they handle those types of engagements, situations.

As you know, the President is committed to bringing home U.S. nationals that are being held abroad. And that is a commitment that he has made to the American people.

Q Does the President think the Fed is running the risk of hiking rates too quickly as it tries to tame inflation? There are some reports suggesting that there's going to be a larger rate hike than we expected on Wednesday.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: The President believes -- as you heard from him directly multiple times and even in his op-ed most recently -- that the Federal Reserve is -- needs to have their independence. And he leaves -- he wants to give them their space to make their own decision -- monetary decision on how to deal with inflation. They have made that -- the Fed has made that a priority.

And so, that is what the President believes, and 'll leave it as that.

Q Just one more follow-up question. The U.S. Ambassador to Beijing, Nick Burns, said over the weekend that the U.S.-China relationship is at its lowest moment since 1972, given the aggressive comments by China's Defense Minister on Taiwan. s the -- does the President have any plans to speak with President Xi Jinping?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, let me just say this, since you asked a question about -- about China: The National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, met today with Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission in Luxembourg. The meeting was about four and a half hours long.

This meeting, which followed their May [March] 18th phone call, included candid, substantive, and productive discussion of a number of regional and global security issues, as well as key issues in U.S.-China relations.

Sullivan understood the importance of maintaining open lines of communication to manage competition between our two countries.

To your question on a POTUS -- POTUS-Xi meeting, Nancy: nteractions are planned at a range of officials across the U.S. government, but nothing to announce on a POTUS-Xi meeting at this time.

As you know, they last talked on the phone, as just mentioned, on March 18th. We will continue to maintain open lines of communication with China.

Q But what about even just a phone call? Not even --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: don't have anything to preview at this time.

Q mean, just building on Nancy, does the President want to talk to Xi Jinping by the end of the year?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: just don't have anything to preview. As you know, and said this moments ago, leader-to-leader conversations and communication is important to the President as we deal with, you know, important issues across -- across the globe. just don't have anything for you right now.

Q On Roe vs. Wade: When the President was in California, he spoke to Jimmy Kimmel, and he said that there were some executive orders under consideration if Roe v. Wade was overturned. Can you share a little bit about what is being considered?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: don't -- we don't have anything to preview at this time. Yes,

remember -- was there. remember the President saying that. We just don't have anything to share at this point.

Q Are there any, like, specific areas where the administration feels that they --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: No, the team --

Q -- have had some space?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: The team is looking into it; we just don't have anything for you at this time.

Q And just one more. At the Summit of the Americas, the Argentine President, Alberto Fernández, he -- he invited Biden to speak at the next Plenary of CE AC, where he's the pro tem president. Is that an invitation that the President is considering?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: We don't have anything to -- to preview or announce at this time.

Q Karine, had a question about China and tariffs. With inflation still an issue, there has been some pressure on President Biden to lift some of the tariffs on China, but it's also meeting some resistance from union members. As he heads tomorrow to the AF -C O, what does he want to see done as it relates to China and tariffs?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, as you know, the President has asked his team to look at that particular issue. He will make a decision on that; don't want to get ahead of it. So that is going to be for the President to -- to speak to when he's -- when he's ready.

Q And what's the timeframe on that?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: don't have a timeframe.

Q And just to follow up on MBS: heard you mention the report, but does the President believe that MBS is responsible for Khashoggi's death? didn't hear you, sort of, engage with that part of the question.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: mean, the President has talked about that. 've been asked about words that -- comments that he's made during the campaign. He -- he stands by those comments.

What 'm trying to say is that -- you know, the President said this last week: He's not going to change his view on human rights, and he'll -- let me quote him right now: "But as President of the United States, my job is to bring peace if can, and that's what 'm going to try to do." And that's how he answered the question when he was --

Q know, but that's a generalized statement. mean, this is a very specific question about what he believes.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: ook, we put -- we put measures in place -- we put out a report last year on that particular -- the serious nature of what happened, and we take that very, very seriously.

The President has spoken to it himself. And, you know, 'm going to leave his words -  
- as he has said himself, leave his words stand.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. want to follow up first on the Chinese goods and tariffs question. How quickly does the White House anticipate it would take for Americans to feel the effects on the price of goods if it lifts tariffs on some of these products?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: mean, the President hasn't made a decision on that. So -- that's a hypothetical that actually can't -- can't answer.

Q Does the White House feel that it would have a significant effect on inflation?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Again, mean, that is a decision that is going to be put together and -- by his team. And the President is going to make a decision.

-- that's a hypothetical literally cannot answer.

Q And one last thing. On the January 6th hearings, based on the evidence that lawmakers have presented so far, does the President believe that Attorney General Merrick Garland should prosecute former President Donald Trump?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: ook, the President has said this before in voicing his support for the vital work of the bipartisan January 6th Select Committee. And as Kevin McCarthy said just days after the attack, "We cannot sweep this under the rug."

We agree all Americans should watch and remember the horrors of one of the darkest days in our history. But this is up to the Department of Justice. This is the Department of Justice. And the President has been very clear. The Department of Justice is inde- -- is independent.

The President chose Attorney General Garland because of his loyalty to the law and our Constitution, and to restore the independence and integrity of the Justice Department. And this -- that's exactly what the Attorney General is doing. So we leave it up to the Department of Justice.

Go ahead.

Q Has the President spoken to Senator Schumer since the agreement on guns was reached?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: don't have a call to read out for you.

Q And on the arrests in daho over the weekend, what was the President's reaction when he was briefed? And what, if anything, has the administration done in response?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, that's still under investigation. can't speak to that from here.

Q Karine?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: 'll go to some people haven't gone to. No one up here. Okay.

( aughs.)

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. A question on gas prices. They hit the -- an average of over \$5.00 this weekend. So was wondering: is the administration reconsidering the idea of a federal gas tax holiday? And what other things are you guys thinking about are on the table?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, don't have anything new for you. We don't have anything new for you to announce on gas prices or the gas tax.

But as you know, gas prices are up nearly \$2.00. And that has been the case -- per gallon. That has been the case since Putin started to threaten the borders of Ukraine with -- with the troop enforcement at the border.

The U.S. is on track to produce a record amount of oil next year. We're releasing a record 1 million barrels of oil per day from the Stra- -- Strategic Petroleum Reserve. That has been for six months.

We've rallied our partners to join us, releasing an additional 240 million barrels of oil. And that has been because of the President's -- President's leadership.

We've also expanded access to E-15, which will lower prices for thousands -- thousands of gasoline stations, including people, families in the Middle East. So that was an important move.

And as mentioned before, we welcomed the production increase announced by OPEC Plus to increase global supply.

And if the President had not taken these actions, we would not have been able to blunt the -- to blunt what we're seeing now -- the prices. It would have been even worse.

And so -- but as far as anything new to share, we don't have anything new to share on that.

Q Let me ask you: The President expressed some real frustration with Exxon last week. Is he reaching out to these CEOs? Is there talk about having a meeting with them? Is there anything like that on the table?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, in just the first three months of this year -- just to give you a little bit of why the President made those comments last week -- Exxon made \$8.8 billion in profits. That's triple what they made during the same year -- the same time last year and the most they've made in nearly a decade.

Those record profits aren't because they produce more oil. In fact, Exxon produced less oil this quarter than any quarter this -- since 1999.

Oil companies making their largest profits in years have a choice: to put money into producing and refining oil or to put in -- to put it into the pockets of wealthy shareholders while American families suffer at the pump.

Exxon made that choice. They made the choice. This quarter, Exxon announced that it is tripling its buybacks to \$30 billion.

So, look, we're on track, as just mentioned, to -- to reach record levels of production next year. But oil companies also need to do their part as well. And that's why the President was -- was very, very clear about what he said last week.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Karine. A couple of questions, please.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Sure.

Q So as the Ukraine war drags on and the food crisis -- the resulting food crisis is clearly not going away -- it's only just getting worse -- there seems to be pressure growing in Europe from some of the U.S. allies to get Ukraine to a point where they're going to make some kind of deal with the Russians, or at least some sort of ceasefire -- anything -- primarily for the food situation.

So ahead of the President's trip to Europe this month, would you say his emphasis remains on helping Ukraine fight, or is it starting to shift into a place where the U.S. is going to be asking Ukraine to find a way to stop it?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, mean, the President has been very clear: Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine. Right? That -- mean, he's been very clear about that. He wrote an op-ed in the New York Times, saying -- reiterating those comments.

We are going to continue to assist Ukraine in helping to defend their democracy. Again, you know, we've said this many times is -- this is Putin's war. This is Putin's aggression -- unprovoked aggression onto another country's sovereignty. This is Putin's war to end and not Ukraine.

Ukraine needs to defend its country, and they have done that in -- in an incredibly impressive of way. And, you know, we hoped that it would end with negotiations. But right now, we don't see that coming from the Kremlin.

And so, we want to make sure we put Ukraine in the strongest possible place so that if that time comes, they can do that.

When it comes to grain exports and what you're asking me about food insecurity, this is a priority for the President. He's spoken to this. You know, again, Russia has been repeatedly damaging grain storage facilities in Ukraine, stealing Ukrainian grain, and actively blocking the export of food from Ukrainian ports, increasing world hunger.

Russia could immediately cease its war in Ukraine, which is devastating global food security, and allow the free flow of Ukrainian food and agricultural exports.

Q And a quick domestic one, please. Most presidents, 'm guessing, would say they don't pay attention to the polls. But does President Biden feel any concern that his approval rating is, really, pretty amazingly low and consistently low? believe today it went under -- the average went under 40 percent for the first time.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: The President is focused on delivering for the American people. That's his focus right now.

Q Karine, thank you. Inflation has been above 5 percent for an entire year now. Why did the President wait until almost December to decide who would be leading the Federal Reserve?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: The President has taken -- taken the economy as a whole and inflation very seriously, especially these past several months, in making sure that he does everything he can when it comes to -- as we know, inflation is -- is increasing -- is increasing costs in two important areas for the American people: food and gas. I have listed out the things that the President has done.

And so, that -- you know, that hasn't changed. It has been a priority. That's why we see the economy in a -- in a strong -- stronger place than it's been -- a historic place than it's been in decades.

And so, the President is going to continue to do that -- to do that work. We do have a Federal Reserve -- you know, the Chair and others in place. We're going to leave that and make sure that they're independent, leave the work to them. They have the strongest tools in dealing with inflation. They have made this a priority. And so, we're going to leave it to them.

All right. Go ahead.

Q The experts now suggest that --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: I'm going to move on.

Go ahead.

Q Thank --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Karine. Over the weekend, a crisis pregnancy center in Oregon was firebombed. That's the fourth one so far. And then, last weekend, of course, a would-be assassin was arrested outside the home of Justice Kavanaugh. I know that the administration condemns violence and you've said as much several times previously, but I'm wondering: Is there anything that the President is doing to cool passions before the Dobbs decision drops?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: You mean in -- with -- as it relates to abor- -- the decision?

So, I want it to be really clear: You know, the Department of Justice, as it relates to Kavanaugh, has U.S. Marshals providing support to the Supreme Court Marshal. And the President supports legislation to fund increased security for court and judges.

And it is how -- it has now been reported that the marshals our administration assigned to help protect judges were instrumental in the person not accomplishing the horrible deed that he set out to do. This is the threat that we saw against

Kavanaugh.

And so, we have taken this very seriously. Like you said, we have condemned -- condemned it. The President has, and we will continue to do so.

Any int- -- intimidation or threats against judges is something that we take very seriously.

And so, you know, one of the reasons -- again, one of the reasons the -- the act did not happen last week was because the Department of -- DOJ took that very seriously from the beginning when we were -- when we were hearing the threats and the intimidation and put U.S. Marshals there.

Q And then, with regard to some of the arson that we've been seeing around the country?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, that's something, clearly, the DOJ is looking into. And, you know, they've taken that very seriously. We have seen an uptick of that type of arson and bombing and -- or attempt to bomb, as we saw just recently over the weekend. And so, again, that's for -- DOJ is taking that very seriously, and they're going to continue to do so.

Q And then just one quick follow-up.

(An aide sneezes.)

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Bless you, Chris.

Q Jen was asked about some of these protests that were occurring outside of Supreme Court justices' home -- homes, and she reiterated that the administration wants them to remain peaceful. But does the President believe that there should be any type of protesters picketing outside of judges' homes when there's a case pending before them?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, you know, we have not weighed in on where people should or should not protest. We have said that all Americans have the right to peacefully protest, whatever their point of view, but that -- but that attempts at intimidation and violence are totally unacceptable and that they need to be condemned at any time they happen, regardless of who does it.

Q Thank you, Karine.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Go ahead.

Q Yeah, thank you. The President signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill on November 15th of last year for supply chains -- (phone alarm goes off) -- time is not up yet. (laughter.)

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah. Time is up, Ed. Your time is up.

Q know.

We heard at that that point -- that -- "wait until year, and then the sli- -- supply



chains will start to work themselves out." Well, it's June -- seven months later -- and we're still waiting for supply chains to work themselves out. So what's happening?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, let me just say that we're funding major new initiatives on the docks and on-dock rail systems --the Port of Long Beach -- to move goods more quickly. So we're making those investment right now.

An example that I want to give because the President was just at a port in Los Angeles, as you know -- the Port of Los Angeles, to be specific -- and announced May cargo volumes. There, he announced that May cargo volumes landed at approximately 970,000 container units, the third-best month in ports in a 115-year history. The port set a new record, averaging 12,000 units loaded off and back on each vessel, and half-shelved [on-shelf] availability is at 89 percent, just a tick below pre-pandemic.

So we have seen the investments are -- are out there. And we have seen some improvements.

Q But when is relief coming? Because when he signed it, inflation was 6.8 percent. It's now 8.6 percent. So when is that relief coming?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Look, we're going to continue to expand capacity of our ports, and that's going to be thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

So we're -- again, we're seeing investments now. I just gave an example of how we saw an uptick -- uptick in the, you know, container units, which is very important as we're talking about supply chain and what the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has been able to do. And we think we'll continue to see that.

Go ahead.

Q And can I ask you -- can I ask you a question on --

Q Thank you, Karine.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, I was calling him and then we can -- yeah.

Q Yeah, can I ask you a question on --

Q Thanks, Karine.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah, go ahead.

Q So there's a coalition of civil rights groups that have been calling for President Biden to sign an executive order that would do essentially what H.R. 40 is -- which is create a commission to study enslavement in the United States and consider reparations.

They've renewed these calls in the aftermath of the Buffalo shooting, saying that this is a symptom of the U.S. -- their inability -- the failure to respond or have -- to, sort of, reparatively respond to this issue.

saw -- talked to members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including Congresswoman Sheila Jackson ee. They are in support of President Biden signing this order, given the inability to get H.R. 40 passed in Congress in this session and probably not in the next session.

know you were asked about reparations previously, earlier this month, in relation to the California Reparations Task Force -- that President Biden's position has not changed on this.

However, considering the fact that President Biden did sign an executive order that created a commission to study reforming the Supreme Court, would he sign an executive order to create a permission for reparations?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: -- look, again, the President's position has not changed on this. You know, we've been asked this question many times. haven't checked in with him on this new -- kind of, new ask from congressional members because -- as it's connected to Buffalo. But the President's position just hasn't changed. don't have anything more for you to share on that.

Go ahead. You can go. -- -- sorry.

Q Yeah, thank you.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: accidentally --

Q That's okay.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah.

Q So, President Zelenskyy has been pressing for a quick Ukraine submission into the European Union. Does the President Biden support granting Ukraine accelerated path to the EU?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, that's not up to us. We're not part of the EU -- the European Union. That is something that the members have to decide. We're -- we're not going to inject ourselves in something that we just don't belong to.

Q One more, please.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah, sure.

Q So, Ukrainian officials warned that without a rapid increase in military assistance, Ukraine faces a defeat in a crucial region of Donbas. s President Biden willing to respond to those demands? And is the President satisfied with military assistance for Ukraine from U.S. Allies in Europe, especially France and Germany?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Well, you know, we -- as it relates to our Allies, we have seen them get involved in their own way. think it's up to them on how they want to assist Ukraine. But we have seen a coalition when it comes to NATO Allies, when it comes to our European partners in coming together in a way to help Ukraine. And that -- a lot of that is because of this President's leadership.

So, know that you're -- you're talking about a specific area in the east -- right? -- that people have been talking about. You know, it -- don't want to -- don't want to speculate with hypo- -- hypotheticals on what might happen there. know the city has been under fierce assault and Ukrainians have been fighting bravely under constant bombardment and difficult conditions.

President Zelenskyy has described the fighting as "severe" as Ukrainian forces battle Russian's forces "for every meter." We are continuing to surge security assistance to Ukraine to help them defend that area of the Donbas. So that is something that we're doing every day. There's security assistance going into Ukraine on a daily -- on a daily clip, if you will.

Secretary Austin will be in Europe this week holding the next round of meetings of the Ukraine -- Ukraine Contact Group, where he will host ministers of defense and chiefs of defense from dozens of countries and ask them to continue to provide weapons and equipment as well. So that also answers your question about getting others to get involved.

Q Thanks, Karine.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Oh -- oh, we're done?

Q Do one more.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Okay. ( aughs.)

Q Can -- can ask you a question on --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Oh, my gosh, who do want to go to?

Q (Cross-talk by reporters.)

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Go ahead, you in the corner. haven't ever called on you.

Q Thank -- thank you, Karine.

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah, in the back.

Q Thank --

Q Thank you. So have two questions on baby formula. So, first, what is the White House -- what is the latest update the White House has received on the current infant formula situation across the country?

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: Yeah, let me see if have anything new for you on that because think it's been a couple of days since we have asked -- been asked that question.

Okay. don't have anything new. know we made some announcements last week, don't -- just don't have them in front of me.

But if you want to come back, and we'll -- we'll talk through the things that we have

been able to do in the past -- what -- the most recent activities that we've done.

Q And a second question. So, House Appropriations Chairwoman Rosa De auro sent a letter to the HHS Inspector General asking the FDA to -- or asking the Inspector General to investigate the FDA's recent policy to use enforcement discretion for certain importation of infant formula.

So -- but she expressed concerns that the rapid pace that they're making these approval decisions, with only nine full-time staff members. So is the President confident that the FDA is being able to make these decisions to make sure infant formula that is being imported is safe and --

MS. JEAN-P ERRE: So, first, I haven't seen the letter. So that's number one. So, I can't really speak to the letter.

If you're asking me if the President has confidence in the FDA: He does.

Okay. Thanks, everybody.

4:27 P.M. EDT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 18, 2022

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:11 P.M. EDT

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Good afternoon, everybody. Sorry we're starting a little late. We had to finish for the President to complete his remarks, and that was a request that we got from WHCA, so we wanted to make sure we adhered to it.

As you all know, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is here. He's going to take your questions, preview Asia. And he has a hard out at 2:30, so we're going to try and get him out of here.

Okay, all yours.

MR. SULLIVAN: And I have 20 minutes of remarks, so -- (laughter) -- I hope you guys will bear with me.

I actually do have a number of things to get through because we have quite a stretch ahead here with respect to the President's foreign policy and national security priorities.

Very good to be back with you guys today.

Today, Finland and Sweden submitted their applications for NATO membership. President Biden has welcomed those applications, and he looks forward to working with NATO Allies and with Congress on a swift accession process.

(Audio playback of press briefing interrupts.)

Oh, sorry.

Q It's all happening again. (Laughter.)

Q I m sorry.

MR. SULLIVAN: Not a problem.

Q We got the audio.

MR. SULLIVAN: Small interruption of the accession process right there. But everything will be on track just fine. (Laughter.)

Tomorrow morning, the President will welcome the President of Finland and the Prime Minister of Sweden to the White House to coordinate on the path forward. And the three leaders will also have the chance to compare notes on our united efforts to support Ukraine in its defense against Russia's brutal invasion.

They will also have the opportunity to speak to the press and the public to affirm our shared vision for a peaceful and secure Euro-Atlantic region.

This is a historic event, a watershed moment in European security. Two nations with a long tradition of neutrality will be joining the world's most powerful defensive alliance. And they will bring with them strong capabilities and a proven track record as security partners. And President Biden will have the opportunity to mark just what a historic and watershed moment this is when he meets with them tomorrow.

After that meeting concludes, President Biden will board Air Force One for a trip to the Republic of Korea and Japan. This will be his first trip as President to the Indo-Pacific. And it comes at a pivotal moment.

President Biden has rallied the free world in defense of Ukraine and in opposition to Russian aggression. He remains focused on ensuring that our efforts in those missions are successful. But he also intends to seize this moment -- this pivotal moment -- to assert bold and confident American leadership in another vital region of the world: the Indo-Pacific.

That began last week with his hosting of the U.S.-ASEAN Summit here at the White House, where he welcomed nine leaders from Southeast Asia for a substantive set of meetings that covered a diverse agenda from economics and security to technology and energy.

President Biden made a series of significant announcements to show that when it comes to engagement with ASEAN, we're not just talking the talk, we're walking the walk as well.

This week, the President turns his attention to Northeast Asia. And on this trip, he'll have the opportunity to reaffirm and reinforce two vital security alliances, to deepen two vibrant economic partnerships, to work with two fellow democracies to shape the rules of the road for the 21st century, and to thank his allies in Korea and Japan for their remarkable and in some ways unexpected contributions to the effort to support Ukraine and to hold Russia accountable.

In Korea, President Biden will meet with the newly inaugurated -- excuse me -- the newly inaugurated Korean President, President Yoon, who campaigned on the platform of strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance and on improving relations between the ROK and Japan.

President Biden will engage with technology and manufacturing leaders in Korea who are mobilizing billions of dollars in investment here in the United States to create thousands of good-paying American jobs.

He will see American and Korean troops standing shoulder to shoulder in defense of our collective security and consult on the challenge posed by the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs.

And he will highlight the truly global nature of the U.S.-ROK alliance, from climate and energy and technology to economic growth and investment.

In Japan, President Biden will meet with Prime Minister Kishida and his team. And we believe that the U.S.-Japan alliance, at this moment, under these two leaders, is at an all-time high. This visit can take us even higher.

The two leaders will consult on the broad and deep economic relationship between our two countries, as well as on a range of regional and global security issues. We'll also cover the DPRK as well as a number of other security issues both in the Indo-Pacific and more broadly around the world.

The U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, and Japan's contributions as a security partner are rightly growing as the regional security picture becomes more challenging and dynamic.

President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida will also be able to compare notes on the G7 agenda as the G7 Summit approaches next month in Germany.

In Japan, President Biden won't just have a bilateral program, he'll also have the opportunity to participate in the second in-person Quad Summit, following on the summit he hosted here in Washington last September.

He will do this alongside the Prime Minister of Japan, the Prime Minister of India, and the Prime Minister of Australia. And we believe that this summit will demonstrate, both in substance and in vision, that democracies can deliver and that these four nations working together will defend and uphold the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

While he's in Tokyo, President Biden will also launch a new, ambitious economic initiative for the region: the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. "IPEF," as we affectionately call it, is a 21st century economic arrangement, a new model designed to tackle new economic challenges -- from setting the rules of the digital economy, to ensuring secure and resilient supply chains, to managing the energy transition, to investing in clean, modern, high-standards infrastructure.

President Biden will be joined in person by the Prime Minister of Japan for the launch of IPEF and virtually by leaders from a number of Indo-Pacific partners, from Down Under to Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia.

On security and economics, on technology and energy, on investment in infrastructure, we think this trip is going to put on full display President Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy and that it will show, in living color, that the United States can at once lead the free world in responding to Russia's war in Ukraine and at the same time chart a course for effective, principled American leadership and engagement in a region that will define much of the future of the 21st century.

And with that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

Yeah.

Q Thanks so much. Can you talk to us about Turkey and what the administration is doing and what conversations you might be having with Turkey about their plans to block Finland and Sweden's applications? Is there a deal to be struck with Turkey?

MR. SULLIVAN: We're confident that, at the end of the day, Finland and Sweden will have an effective and efficient accession process, that Turkey's concerns can be addressed.

Finland and Sweden are working directly with Turkey to do this, but we're also talking to the Turks to try to help facilitate. I spoke with my counterpart today; Secretary Blinken is meeting with his counterpart perhaps as we speak, in New York.

And we feel very good about where this will track to.

And President Biden will express that confidence as we believe the President of Finland and Prime Minister of Sweden will express that confidence tomorrow.

Yeah.

Q The Korean media is reporting that President Biden will meet with former President Moon Jae-in during his visit to Seoul. Is that accurate?

MR. SULLIVAN: We don't have a meeting scheduled with President Moon at this time.

Q Have there been any discussions between U.S. officials and Korean officials about Moon Jae-in potentially taking on a "Special Envoy to North Korea"-like role?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not familiar with any discussions along those lines.

Yeah.

Q In the statement today welcoming Finland and Sweden's application to NATO, at the very -- or almost at the very end, it said that "While their applications for NATO membership are being considered, the [U.S.] will work with Finland and Sweden to remain vigilant against any threats to our shared security, and...deter and confront aggression..."

Does that mean that the U.S. is extending, like, the NATO security umbrella to them while their applications are in process?

MR. SULLIVAN: Article 5 only kicks in once all 30 Allies have ratified the accession protocols and they become full-fledged members of the Alliance.

But the United States is prepared to send a very clear message, as are all of our European allies, that we will not tolerate any aggression against Finland or Sweden during this process. And there are practical measures that we can take along those lines that Secretary Austin will coordinate with his counterparts in both Finland and Sweden.

Yeah.

Q Jake, two questions. One on the accession and one on your trip.

So, when the initial NATO expansion happened, of course, there was a huge debate in Washington about whether it was a good idea or not. I remember Kennan himself wrote in the New York Times that he wasn't in favor of it. Was there any similar debate that went underway here about whether or not bringing Finland and Sweden in was a good idea, or whether it would further corner Putin?

And on the trip, tell us a little bit about what you know on the evidence that North Korea may attempt either a nuclear test -- hard to imagine what they would accomplish by a seventh test, but -- the seventh test -- or a missile launch, and what your preparations are if that happens during the trip?

MR. SULLIVAN: On the first question, President Biden posed the question to his national security team, to his Cabinet principals who cover national security, as to whether they supported the accession of Finland and Sweden, and for them to consider the risks as well as the benefits of bringing Finland and Sweden into the Alliance.

Unanimously, President Biden's national security team emphatically supported the entry of Finland and Sweden into the NATO Alliance on the grounds that they have already proven themselves as highly capable security partners. In the



parlance, we say “net security contributors,” meaning they give a heck of a lot more than they take when it comes to a security partnership or an alliance. And that we believe that Russian aggression has only reinforced the argument for the kind of defensive alliance that -- that NATO presents and poses.

And finally, we have the principle of the open door. And the open door says that if countries meet the criteria of NATO membership and display that they can be net contributors to the Alliance and to overall European security, they should be admitted. That is a principle that President Biden has believed since long before he occupied the Oval Office. And Finland and Sweden are two cases that are pretty clear-cut when it comes to meeting those terms.

With respect to the issue of North Korea, we've said from this podium, we've said at the State Department, and we've indicated in quite clear terms that our intelligence does reflect the genuine possibility that there will be either a further missile tests -- including a long-range missile test or a nuclear test or, frankly, both -- in the days leading into, on, or after the President's trip to the region.

We are preparing for all contingencies, including the possibility that such a provocation would occur while we are in Korea or in Japan. We are coordinating closely with our allies in both Korea and Japan on this. We have spoken with counterparts in China. I met -- I spoke with my Chinese counterpart this morning and covered this issue of the DPRK.

And we are prepared, obviously, to make both short- and longer-term adjustments to our military posture as necessary to ensure that we are providing both defense and deterrence to our allies in the region and that we're responding to any North Korean provocation.

Yes.

Q Jake, thank you. Two questions on different topics. One, could you update us on the situation with the Russian blockade on grains?

And also, on Haiti: What happens with the Title 42 with the Haitian migrants and maybe migrants of South America as well in the Caribbean when it comes to the end of Title 42 on May 23rd, if that happens?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, it is Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and nothing else that is stopping tens of millions of tons of food from getting out of the breadbasket of Europe -- Ukraine -- and onto the world market to feed people in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and everywhere else.

And that is true in two critical respects: First, Russia is bombarding Odessa, which is the port from which that food departs on large cargo ships bound through the Black Sea and then on to the world market. Second, Russian ships are engaged in an effective blockade of commercial ship traffic that would -- could leave Odessa Port, were not under this bombardment, and head out to the world.

So we have publicly called upon Russia to end its attacks on Odessa and to end the blockade and to permit the traffic -- the commercial and humanitarian traffic of ships into and out of Odessa Port.

We are working closely with both Ukraine and the United Nations on this issue, as well as other allies and partners. And we are supporting efforts to facilitate the delivery of that grain to the world market so that it can alleviate food prices everywhere.

And we would like to see an outcome in which the facts -- not just the rhetoric -- the facts bear out the actual permission by Russia of large numbers of ships moving through the Black Sea and onto the world market.

Q Is Russia responding to that request? And also the question I asked you about Title 42.

MR. SULLIVAN: There are ongoing intensive diplomatic conversations. The United Nations Secretary-General is

involved in this, the Ukrainians are involved in this, some of our other partners are involved in this. I'm not going to get ahead of those discussions. I'm only going to say that the United States stands ready in any way to help facilitate and deliver on that diplomacy to try to produce an outcome in which food is getting to the world stage.

With respect to Haiti, we will have to see. Obviously, there are a number of issues bound up in the courts right now. But with the end of Title 42, the United States has put in place a process by which those individuals who claim asylum and have legitimate asylum claims can stay and those who come and don't will go through the process -- the legal process that exists and has existed for some time.

Even when Title 42 was in effect, large numbers of individuals were not subject to Title 42; they were subject to the standard legal process by which we deal with claims at our border for people who want to come and stay here.

Q Jake, on Ukraine again: U.S. intelligence chiefs recently offered assessments that Putin continues to bank on the fracturing of Western resilience to continue this war. Is Turkey's concern about Finland and Sweden joining up perhaps an example of that?

And what about the, I guess, also congressional pushback, or the growing congressional pushback, to Ukrainian aid? What are you guys doing, sort of, in both regards to make sure that that doesn't continue to happen? I know you've described some of it, but it does seem now that there are examples of these growing concern or criticism resistance.

And then I got one other on another part of the world.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, growing congressional pushback, to me, is a strange premise for a circumstance in which the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly not just in favor of approving what the President sent up, which was \$33 billion, but actually adding \$7 billion to it to make a \$40 billion package. And we expect a similar overwhelming bipartisan vote in the Senate once the final procedural hurdle -- hurdles are cleared over the next 24 to 48 hours.

So there are some voices against this, but the chorus of voices on both sides of the aisle, from all sides of the political spectrum, in favor of standing up in defense of Ukraine's sovereignty and freedom and independence -- it's quite powerful and, frankly, in a way, quite moving. And it sends a clear message to the world that the United States can pull together behind the brave people of Ukraine in their hour of need.

What was your other question?

Q Well, just Turkey's continued concern here and whether there might be others who are going to raise concern about NATO expansion.

MR. SULLIVAN: Look, the great thing about the free world -- about the Western alliance, about NATO -- is that you've got a raucous collection of states that all have opinions, that all have perspectives, that all have interests. But they also know how to and when to pull together and how to settle any differences. And I expect these differences will be settled.

I expect that NATO will speak with one voice in support of Finland and Sweden at the end of the day.

And I think the remarkable unity you've seen with respect to sanctions coming out of the EU, the United States, and our Indo-Pacific partners; the support that we have provided Ukraine in terms of military and humanitarian assistance -- it's only grown stronger over the course of the last 12 weeks, and we expect that that momentum will continue, and it's having a major impact on the battlefield.

Ukraine won the Battle of Kyiv. Ukraine has now beaten Russia back from Kharkiv. And Ukrainian defenders are putting the military assistance we provided to good use in defending territory in the Donbas as well.

Yes.

Q Just a little bit about the challenges of trying to focus on the Indo-Pacific -- a priority for you all to get-go -- given just - I mean, look, a bulk of the questions even here today have focused on other parts of the world.

Tomorrow, Finland and Sweden are going. Just the juxtaposition of what is going on in the world right now as you all are trying to focus (inaudible).

MR. SULLIVAN: And, you know, it's interesting, we actually don't regard this as a tension between investing time, energy, and attention in Europe and time, energy, and attention in the Indo-Pacific. We regard this as mutually reinforcing.

First, look at the Indo-Pacific partners that have stepped up to help make these sanctions and export controls as effective as they are: Korea, Japan, Australia, even Singapore.

Second, look at the extent to which European countries are increasingly invested in the Indo-Pacific, in helping ensure that our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific is actually realized. We see that with the AUKUS partnership, where you've got the United Kingdom alongside Australia and the United States. We see it with the way the European Union has, for the first time ever, put out an Indo-Pacific strategy.

And so, actually, we think that there is something quite evocative about going from meeting with the President of Finland and the Prime Minister of Sweden to reinforce the momentum behind the NATO Alliance and the free world's response in Ukraine, and getting on a plane and flying out to the Indo-Pacific not just to deal with security issues, but to unveil a new far-reaching economic initiative, to host a Quad summit that will cover climate and cyber and emerging technologies, and to deal with Korea and Japan on issues that actually affect working people here in the United States, including major investments that will create jobs in states across the country.

So, for us, there is a certain level of integration and a symbiosis in the strategy we are pursuing in Europe and the strategy we're pursuing in the Indo-Pacific. And President Biden's unique capacity to actually stitch those two together is, I think, going to be a hallmark of his foreign policy presidency.

Q Jake?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q Jake, can you provide an update on when the President will visit Israel?

And secondly, can you elaborate further on the specific security guarantees that the United States has made Finland and Sweden in the interim period?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, first, on Israel, we are actively working with the Israelis to fix a date for the visit at some point in the not-too-distant future. The President is very much looking to go. But unfortunately, I don't have an announcement of a trip or a timetable for it standing here today, other than to say the President is excited to get the opportunity to go to reaffirm the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

With respect to the specifics on security commitments or assurances or actions that we will take with Finland and Sweden, those are ongoing conversations that are happening at an operational and technical level between our Department of Defense and their ministries of defense, and also with other NATO Allies and partners.

And so I'll leave it in those channels for now -- only to say that the U.S. stands ready to ensure that deterrence and defense for Finland and Sweden will be there should they need it, even though they don't get the full benefits of the Article 5 Alliance until the accession process is properly complete, as is required, frankly, under our Constitution, where we need to get advice and consent from the Senate for that treaty.

Yes.

MS. JEAN-PIERE: Last question.

Q Regarding the trip, to what extent is the message on this trip going to be like a cautionary tale delivered to China to say, "Look what happened in Ukraine. Look how we've responded. Don't do anything similar"? Is that going to be part of the messaging during the President's trip?

MR. SULLIVAN: The message we're trying to send on this trip is a message of an affirmative vision of what the world can look like if the democracies and open societies of the world stand together to shape the rules of the road, to define the security architecture of the region, to reinforce strong, powerful, historic alliances.

And we think putting that on display over four days -- bilaterally with the ROK and Japan, through the Quad, through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework -- it will send a powerful message. We think that message will be heard everywhere. We think it will be heard in Beijing.

But it is not a negative message, and it's not targeted at any one country. It's targeted at an audience the world over about what American leadership, working flanked by allies and like-minded partners, can deliver for people everywhere.

And we think we go into this trip very much with the wind at our back, with a strong case to make that we have what it takes to be able to deliver against the security and economic challenges of our time.

And President Biden will head into the Indo-Pacific with a spring in his step, and we're very much looking forward to this visit.

Q Will the President visit the DMZ, Jake? Will the President visit the DMZ?

MR. SULLIVAN: You can ask Karine. (Laughter.)

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: He will not visit the DMZ.

Q He will not.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: He will not. He will not.

Q Why not? Why not visit the DMZ?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Just not on this trip. He will not. He will go to South Korea, as you know. They will have an agenda to talk about a lot of things, including North Korea. But he's not going to the DMZ.

And just to -- just to reiterate here is that, as Vice President, he has been there before. But on this trip --

Q But now he's President, and his predecessor went --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: He's just not --

Q -- former President Obama went.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: But he's just not going to go on this trip. He's going to go to South Korea. He's going to show his support for the region. And -- but he's not going to go to South Korea on this trip -- I'm sorry, the DMZ on this trip.

Okay. We all love Jake. Thank you so much for your patience. And I have one topper, and then we'll get to it.

Okay. The Senate took an important step today with the bipartisan agreement announced by Chair Tester and Ranking Member Moran to advance their vision of the Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022.

President Biden has championed legislation to deliver the benefits and healthcare services that veterans impacted by toxic exposures have earned. This historic comprehensive bill will do just that.

The PACT will not only help deliver more timely access to benefits and services for veterans and their survivors, it will also ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs can act more nimbly to add future presumptive conditions when the evidence warrants. And the legislation will help the VA provide our veterans the level of service they deserve.

President Biden believes that we have a sacred obligation to support veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. That's why as part of this first state of the Union of his first State of the Union address, he identified supporting veterans as a key pillar of his Unity Agenda and an issue that can unite the country, Republicans and Democrats.

Passing the PACT Act would be a welcome and long-awaited achievement for the veterans who have served us well.

Darlene, you have the floor.

Q Thanks. Thank you. I wanted to ask Jake this question, but I'll ask you. It's about the Quad summit. And there is a possibility that Saturday's election in Australia will not produce a winner in time for someone to go to Tokyo to participate in the Quad summit. So what contingencies are there? Will the one meeting go ahead if Australia cannot participate?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I believe that the Quad meeting will go ahead. I don't have any more specifics than that about the -- you know, how that's going to affect any further, deeper.

But from what I understand, and even Jake said this, that there's going to be a Quad summit. It's going to happen. We can -- we can talk more about the specifics of what will -- you know, what it will look like with Australia.

Q And then, the First Lady's Office informed us that Ashley Biden, the President's daughter, is positive for COVID. Can you tell us when was the last time the President tested negative? Is he testing today in preparation for travel?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yep. So, the President tests regularly throughout the week as part of a cadence determined by his doctor. As we've -- as we've communicated, the President is not a close contact with Ashley. It's been several days that they last -- he and the First Lady last saw Ashley; I think about a week is what I've been told.

If his testing were to change because of a close contact, we'd let all of you know. But his cadence has not changed. I don't have when he last tested.

Q And then one final question on the church attack in California over the weekend. We haven't seen the President comment on that at all. Is he concerned that what happened there could somehow destabilize relations between Taiwan and China? Does he have any plans to call or reach out to Taiwan or China, or anything like that?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So I don't have any calls to preview of -- calls with Chinese and Taiwan as it relates to this particular case.

Our thoughts are with all those affected by gun violence, including the incidents -- the other incidents that at -- that happened this weekend in Houston, in Milwaukee, in Chicago, and, as we know, in Buffalo.

Federal law enforcement is supporting as needed. And the White House has been in touch with local leaders. These shootings and, of course, the one in Buffalo, as the President and the First Lady went to offer -- went to grieve with the

community yesterday, as all of you know, are a sad reminder of how important it is to redouble our effort -- our fight against gun violence and violent crime.

And as part of the President's comprehensive strategy to fight gun crime, we're putting more cops on the beat, as you've heard us say this past year and a half; as we're -- talked about a gun comprehensive approach here, cracking down on firearms trafficking, investing through the arts and community programs to prevent crime.

But I don't have any more to share on any calls that may have had occurred.

Okay, I'm going to go to people who haven't asked a question. Go ahead, Ashley.

Q Thank you. Two questions. Following up on Darlene, on Ashley Biden having COVID: She's in good company in this White House in that the Vice President had it, the Second Gentleman had it, you had it, Jen Psaki had it twice, a number of top Cabinet officials had it, a number of other aides in the West Wing. And no one so far that I can remember has been deemed a close contact of the President. Why are none of these people close contacts of the President -- and his sister, actually -- including family members?

And also, are there steps that the President is taking beyond the CDC guidelines that you could lay out? Are meetings in the Oval being kept --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q -- under 15 minutes? Is everyone masked?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'm glad to be -- said I was in good company. Appreciate that.

But -- so it is -- we take extra precautions, to your last question -- I'll answer that first -- here at the White House. And we've said this before: When we're in a meeting -- I was in a meeting with the President earlier today. I got tested first. I put my mask on, and we socially distanced.

Those are the extra protocols that we do take with the President and all the principals, not just him, just to make sure that we just take that extra added step there.

Look, you know, the close contact is as it's deemed by CDC. And he hasn't seen Ashley in several days. And it's also -- there's a time component to how long that person was in the room. We all wear masks.

So, yeah, I mean, the way we -- if he -- if he is -- if there was a close contact or he's a close contact of someone, we would let you know.

Q And on guns: Yesterday, when he was leaving Buffalo, the President said, "I've got to convince the Congress that we should go back to what I passed years ago." I just want to confirm that he was referring to the 1994 assault weapons ban.

And my question is: You know, when he was the point person for President Obama after Sandy Hook, Manchin-Toomey -- which went far less far than an assault weapons ban -- failed. What makes him think that he could get that through when, so far, no meaningful legislation has gone through in the past decade?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, look, this is what the President said yesterday. Right? He understands it's not going to be easy, but he knows that there's more to do.

You know, our country is facing an epidemic that is very real, as we have seen this past weekend, as gun violence is costing lives every single day.

And so, you know, when he was in Buffalo, we saw examples of that. He talked to the family -- talked to them in a very personal way. And this is a top priority for the President, as it's been throughout his career.

As you just mentioned, he mentioned his own legislation that he passed. Look, the President continues to urge Congress to act to pass universal background checks, to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and to renew a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines to keep weapons off our streets. It's not going to be easy. He understands that. But he's going to continue to work very hard to make that happen.

But I do want to add, Ashley, is that this administration has done more on gun violence reform via executive action than any other President in its first year in their administration. So that is the -- his commitment and what he's -- what he's done just this year and a half.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Karine. Jake mentioned his conversation with his Chinese counterpart. This morning, the readout you guys gave was pretty sparse, and so I was wondering if you can give any more details of that conversation, and particularly, sort of, an update on how the White House has seen China's actions towards Russia in light of Ukraine. I know that --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I -- I don't have any more to read out outside of what you -- what was put out by us earlier today. I'm just going to keep it to that readout. And -- and, you know, Jake has spoken to this before, about China and their relationship with Russia.

We haven't seen any evidence of any, like, material that has been provided to Russia. That continues to be the case. I don't have any more to add on that.

Q I wanted to ask about a pair of bills on Capitol Hill right now --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Sure.

Q -- both being forwarded by House Democrats. One is a Consumer Fuel Price Gauging -- Gouging Prevention Act, and the other is this domestic terrorism legislation.

I haven't seen statements of administration policy on either, and I'm wondering how supportive the President is, particularly on the domestic terrorism legislation. He kind of -- on the tarmac yesterday, he seemed to say that he didn't think it was necessary.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, on the -- the price -- the gas price gouging legislation that you just mentioned: Look, the President welcomes all ideas to protect consumers and to make sure that oil companies aren't taking advantage of Putin's war and are competing fairly. He's been very clear on that.

President Biden has been also very clear that no company should be engaging in unfair practices to hike prices on American consumers.

As the President has said, President Putin's actions are what is driving the price increase at the pump. The President is focused on doing everything in his power to address the Putin price hike, including the largest-ever release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, as we've talked about here at this podium, and working around the clock diplomatically to build a coalition of countries for the largest release in foreign reserves ever.

We know that there are a number of ideas being suggested by our allies and in Congress, and look forward to engaging on this issue so we can get Americans some relief, especially as we're in this particular time right now with high prices.

Q And then one last on the Dow. It's down 1,100 points so far today. Chairman Powell did an interview with the Wall

Street Journal in which he said he'd push forward on additional rate hikes, even if it resulted in unemployment coming up. Also, presumably baked into that is that the stock market -- we've seen the stock market do poorly as the Fed hikes rates.

So, you know, do you still, I guess, stand behind Chairman Powell's vision on rate hikes?

And broadly, you guys have said that you're not following day-to-day market tribulations, but we're now getting to a point where some of the gains that defined the President's tenure are being erased. And so, is there a new level of alarm within the White House about the stock market?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, as you know -- and we say this all the time, Josh -- you know, it's -- Justin -- the Fed chair -- you know, the Federal Reserve is independent. We leave them to make their own policy decisions. We do not get involved in that. And nothing has changed on how we see the stock market. We do not -- that's not something that we keep an eye on every day. And so, I don't -- I'm not going to comment about that from here.

I do want to touch base on the domestic terrorism and what the President said yesterday about the -- about domestic terrorism. Look, it's a -- it's a growing and evolving threat and one that the Biden administration has taken very seriously.

Since our first day in office, we have said we have been studying the details of different proposals. And there are a range of ideas that have been proposed in Congress that could improve our ability to detect and respond to these threats.

What the President was specifically referring to yesterday when he was on the tarmac was the set of existing laws on the -- on the books that provide law enforcement with authorities to investigate and prosecute domestic terrorism and hold those who commit hate-filled attacks accountable.

As part of our National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, we increased our support for federal, state, and local law enforcement as they address domestic terrorism nationwide, including increasing resources and providing trainings [sic] -- trainings to thousands of law enforcement entities.

DOJ has made domestic terrorism-related investigation and prosecution a top priority at the national and local level. And plus, DOG [sic] -- DOJ, earlier this year, announced the creation of a new domestic terrorism unit with the counterterrorism section -- sec- -- section of the National Security Division that will enforce the expertise and experience on these issues available to federal prosecutors nationwide.

So, there is a commitment there. And that's what he was talking about.

Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q We're about three weeks away from the Summit of the Americas. You got Chris Dodd down in Mexico today --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

Q -- trying to convince President López Obrador to come. What's the President's level of optimism that Mexico will attend this Summit of the Americas? And, well, is the guest list finalized? Has the President decided who to invite?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: The guest list is not finalized. Hopefully that will happen soon. And I promise, once we have it, we will share it.

You know, the President is optimistic. You know, we don't have anything to share at this moment. Again, once we have it, we'll be happy to share it with all of you.

Go ahead.



Q Thanks, Karine. DHS said today that they'll be pausing the Disinformation Governance Board. Did the White House play a role at all in perhaps expressing frustration on how it was rolled out or expressed any -- involvement in how it -- whether or not it should be paused?

And then also, some experts have said that it was sort of set up to fail the way it was rolled out. Do you have a response to that?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, the board has never convened. It -- so that's -- it never convened, and the board is -- yes, the board is pausing in the sense that it will not convene while former Secretary Chertoff and former Deputy AG Gorelick do their assessment.

But the Department's work across several administrations to address disinformation that threatens the security of our country is critical, and that will indeed continue.

And again, neither Nina Jankowicz nor the board have anything to do with the censorship or with removing content from anywhere. Their role is to ensure that national security officials are updated on how misinformation is affecting the threat -- the threat -- the threat environment.

She has strong credentials and a history of calling out misinformation from both the left and the right. And that's -- and that's our focus.

Q So did the White House -- did the White House play a role at all in whether it should be paused or what should happen with -- with the board?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No. First of all, like I said, this -- this is what's happening: There is a pause. We did not have an involvement in this at all.

Q And just another quick question. Congressman Schrader, who received a rare endorsement from the President in a Democratic primary, is on track to lose. What does that say about the power of the President's endorsement?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, look, I -- as it comes to -- you know, I have to be careful about what I can say here. (Laughs.) But we -- you know, the race in Oregon was focused on just how much each candidate supported the President -- supported the President. That's what we saw in this particular race.

His -- his counterpart in the race, McLeod-Skinner, ran on a -- an agenda of President Biden's priorities, including lowering the price of prescription drugs and tackling climate change and the fossil fuel pledge.

Her support for President Biden extends back to 2020 election, when she said, "He's the guy. He knows how to choose a great team." On the campaign trail, McLeod-Skinner has sought to tie herself to President Biden and paused -- and praised his presidency.

Even on day one President Biden endorsed Representative Schrader, McLeod-Skinner wrote, "I respect Biden's work to tackle COVID-19 and rebuild our economy." In February, McLeod-Skinner praised President Biden's effort at diplomacy around the situation in Ukraine. McLeod-Skinner praised President Biden's plan to lower health and -- care costs, eldercare costs, childcare costs, and prescription drug costs as a transform- -- formative -- "transformative investment in the future of Oregon's families."

So, that's how we see it. We think it's both -- both sides were very much supportive of the President.

Q Thank you. Karine, just to follow up though, I mean, the question is -- this -- both of them had similar platforms, to your point.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yep.

Q And yet President Biden endorsed one of them, and that candidate is on track to lose. So are there concerns within the President -- and I know you can't speak to politics of this -- is the President concerned --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Not at all.

Q -- that he doesn't have enough juice heading into these critical midterms?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No, not at all. Because, again, both candidates were running on a platform that supported, embraced the President's pla- -- the President's agenda.

Q Has the President reached out to any of the Democratic winners overnight, particularly John Fetterman, who is still in the hospital? Cheri Beasley?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don't have any calls to read out, but I do believe the one thing that I can say here is that he spoke -- last night, the President did speak to Gisele Fetterman, and wished the governor -- wished the lieutenant governor a speedy recovery.

Q Okay. And the President said of Fetterman's win and of the Republicans who were still locked in a pretty tight battle in Pennsylvania: "[W]hoever emerges will be too dangerous, too craven, and too extreme to represent Pennsylvania" and the United States. Do the Democrats run the risk of underestimating the Republican Senate nominee in Pennsylvania --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look --

Q -- and gubernatorial nominee?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: You know, the President remains really focused on delivering for the American people. And what you see from congressional Republicans and what you see from the GOP is -- the plan for American people is to raise taxes to -- in the middle class, to sunset Social Security and Medicare, and to take away a woman's right to reproductive healthcare. He's going to speak against that. He is going to continue to speak for the American public. And so, he's not going to stay quiet.

And that -- and this is something that is incredibly important to make sure that the American people and -- and what he's doing to -- for the American people is -- is -- you know, is made sure that it's -- it happens, right? What the -- what the other side is trying to do is trying to stop us from trying to lower costs for -- for folks, as we -- as I just laid out.

Q And, just very quickly, Senator Raphael Warnock is saying that he's coming to the White House to meet with the President today. Can you talk a little bit about that, about student loans? And is the President open to increasing the forgiveness rate? It seems like he's in the \$10,000 range. Senator Warnock wants it to be closer to \$50,000. Would the President come up?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, we meet with members of Congress on a variety of issues.

Q Is he going to meet with Senator Warnock today?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: (Laughs.) These are senators who have been leaders on college affordability and sent- -- and student debt. The President values their perspective and looks forward to the discussion this afternoon. So, yes. But I don't have more to read on that.

There's -- we -- you know, I've said this a couple of times: We don't -- a decision hasn't been made yet.

Q Is there timeline yet for --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I don't have a timeline. A decision hasn't been made yet.

Yeah.

Q Thank you, Karine. A follow-up to the disinformation board. Last week, you guys said that you needed this Disinformation Governance Board at DHS to make sure that freedom of speech is protected across the country and that these platforms are not used for forms of disinformation. So what changed?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, the Department of -- of Homeland Security, they began their statement report -- repeating that the board had been intentionally mischaracterized, which is a little bit of what you were asking me, and they were explicit about what it does and doesn't -- it does not do.

It was never about censorship, poli- -- policing speech, or removing content from anywhere. Its function was to keep Homeland Security officials aware of how bad actors -- including human smugglers, transnational criminal organization, and foreign adversaries -- could use disinformation to advance their goals.

As Secretary Mayorkas said, he has asked former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff and former DO- -- DAG Jamie Gorelick to lead a thorough review -- this is the pause that I was talking about -- and assessment as members of the bipartisan Homeland Security Council -- Advisory Council.

The board will not convene during that period. But the department's work across several administrations to address disinformation that threatens the security for our country is critical and will continue. So that work is going to continue.

Q So if it's pausing because you think the board was mischaracterized, then the disinformation board is being shut down because of disinformation? Is that what's happening here?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, I mean, the -- the board was put forth for a purpose -- right? -- to make sure that we really did -- really did address what was happening across the country when it came to disinformation.

Q And it's okay to wait now at 75 days to address --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, no, it's -- it's just -- it's going to pause. There's been a mischaracterations [sic] from outside -- outside forces. And so, now what we're going to do is going to -- we're going to pause it and we're going to do an assessment. But the work does -- the work doesn't stop. We're still going to continue the work. The DHS is still going to continue the work.

Q Okay. There's a bulletin now that DHS is worried if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, there could be violence against the Supreme Court building or Supreme Court justices. Are these threats from pro-abortion activists or anti-abortion activists?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, the President is clear on this question. He believes the right to peace- -- to peacefully protest in this country is fundamental, but he also believes that violence, threats, and intimidation have no place in political discourse anywhere. That is true whether it is in front of a courthouse or in front of a healthcare clinic.

And that's the thing. I feel -- it seems like, to us, it is very one-sided on what we call out as -- as intimidation or as violence. So we want to make sure we're calling out on -- on ei- -- on both sides of what is happening and what we're seeing.

While protests -- but while protests have been peaceful to date, the Department of Justice has U.S. Marshals providing support to support [the Supreme] Court Marshal, and the Pres- -- and the President believes Congress should pass the

legislation to fund increased security for Court and judges as soon as possible.

Yesterday, in reference to this, the Department of Homeland Security said they are “committed to protecting Americans’ freedom of speech and other civil rights and civil liberties, including the right to peacefully protest. DHS is also committed to working with our partners across every level of government and the private sector to share timely information and intelligence, prevent all forms of violence, and to support law enforcement -- enforcement efforts to keep our communities safe.”

Q And then, final question, on gas prices: Americans are now spending \$5,000 a year on gasoline. That’s almost double what they did a year ago. Where are people supposed to go to get all that extra cash?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: To get the extra cash to pay for gas?

Q Yeah.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I mean, one of the things that we’ve been very clear about is to do everything in our power to make sure that we lower costs. You know, it is important -- we see it. The President understands what the American people is -- are -- is going through.

And that’s why we’re doing everything that we can. We’ve made multiple announcements in the past several -- several months of what we’re doing -- whether it’s just the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, whether it’s the ethanol 15, to make sure that that -- that the American people are not feeling Putin’s price hike.

This is where this is coming from. Sixty to seventy percent of the current price hike that we have seen has come from Putin’s aggression against Ukraine.

Q So, the President announces on March 31st that he’s got all these steps to lower gas prices, and it’s still Putin’s fault, seven weeks later?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, because -- what I’m saying is, since the war -- since Putin’s war -- aggression against Ukraine started back in February -- we did see a spike. But before then, it had -- the price -- the -- the price per gallon had fallen down about 10 cents or more.

And then Putin started his aggression on Ukraine -- his violent aggression on Ukraine -- against their democracy, against their -- against their sovereignty. And we saw about -- I mean, the facts show it went up about 60 to 70 percent. So it is Putin’s tax hike. This is what we’re talking about.

Q Karine?

Q On that same subject --

Q Would you come to the back --

Q -- on inflation --

Q -- at some point?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Sure.

Q Thank you.

Q The inflation concerns are now rubbing off on quarterly earnings, reports for a lot of big companies -- Target, for

example, today says it missed its estimates because of increased costs of transportation, in gas. That's part of what's driving this at least 1,100-point drop in the Dow so far. What would you say, what does the White House say to investors and everyday Americans who are concerned that there's no end in sight to these price hikes?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Look, you know, I'm not -- again, I'm not going to speak to the stock market. But, you know, this is something that is very important to the President, when it comes to inflation -- inflation and making sure that we lower costs for the American people.

Last week, we announced new steps with private sector to lower the price of high-speed Internet for ten -- tens of millions of Americans.

The President traveled to Illinois to announce new actions to give farmers the tools and resources so -- they need to boost production, lower prices, and -- and feed the world.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that the deficit fell by \$1.5 trillion this year, putting us on track for the fastest deficit reduction in any year on record.

These actions build on other actions the President has taken to lower costs in recent weeks. Again, you know, this is to -- this is to address Putin's price hike at the pump.

The President, as I was saying, and allies and partners around the world -- they came together. And he was talking about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, the 1 million barrels of oil per day for the next six months, in addition to a -- to the 60 million barrels of oil from other countries' reserve. I talked about the E15 gasoline that we have allowed to happen so that it could be sold this summer.

The President also announced administrative actions to save hundreds of thousands of families hundreds of dollars per month by fixing the Affordable Care Act's family glitch. These are the things that we have been working on -- this President has been working on for the past several months, understanding that it is important to lower the cost of -- the costs for American families. And we're going to continue to do that.

I'm going to try and go to the back. Go ahead. You, sir.

Q Thank you. Oh, sorry.

Q Thank you very much. Thanks a lot, Karine.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, yeah. Go ahead. (Laughs.) Go ahead.

Q Can you talk a little bit about President Biden's long-term thinking on Ukraine? There's a possibility this war could go on for months or years. And what is the President's commitment to supplying weapons to Ukraine in the long term?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, as you know, there is a -- there is a supplemental -- there is a funding -- a Ukraine funding that's in the Senate right now for about \$40 billion that we are encouraging the Senate to pass. And so, that is going to be part of helping -- continuing to help Ukraine with material, with defense material and humanitarian aid.

Look, this is something that's incredibly important to the President, but also to our partners and allies, that we make sure that Ukraine is able to defend their democracy. It is important for us as a country, as a leader in this -- in this world to make sure that we're doing everything that we can so that happens.

What happens -- what is happening in Ukraine -- defending their democracy, defending their territorial integrity, defending their sovereignty -- affects us all. So, this is something that we are going to continue to be partners with -- with our allies, our partners.

The -- Jake was talking about the NATO Alliance and how strong they are, how unified, how they're speaking in one voice in a -- in a way that we have not seen in years. And so, this is something that we need to be -- continue to be a leader on, and that's what he believes.

And it's important to make sure that we protect our country's democracy.

Q What preparations is the President making if Putin escalates after the -- after Finland and Sweden join NATO?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'm not going to go into hypotheticals. We're going to focus on what's happening here and now.

You know, again, I think one of the things that we have to remember: This is a war that Putin started. This is a war -- his aggression, his violent -- very violent war that we have seen.

The Ukraine -- Ukrainians and their government have fought very bravely. And we've seen that with Kharkiv. We've seen that -- what they've done in Kyiv. It is remarkable what they have been able to do in fighting back this aggression against their -- against their country.

And so that is going to be our focus, to make sure that they have everything that they need to be -- to have a -- to strengthen their -- kind of their table when it comes to hopefully having some diplomacy and getting to an end of this war.

But in the meantime, we have to support them.

Q Karine?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yep. Okay. Go ahead, Jonathan.

Q Thank you, Karine. In the wake of the Buffalo shooting, there been several civil rights groups who have expressed some unhappiness at the lack of outreach from the Biden White House and frustration about a lack of progress on hate crimes, gun violence, and so on.

I'll just read you one: The Reverend Al Sharpton, who has visited the White House several times, says, quote, "This administration has met less with civil rights and civil liberty groups than previous administrations in a formal substantive way." He goes on to say that they even asked for meeting here in the wake of this shooting, and, quote, "We've got no response from the White House."

Can you give an update on this? And will there be a meeting with civil rights groups? And can you address his frustrations?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't have any meetings to read out for you or any meetings scheduled at this time. You know, we respect the Reverend. He has been here many times before, as you know.

Are you talking about the letter that the -- that the -- from gun -- gun rights groups have written? There were about 40-plus that --

Q He says --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I think it was in your --

Q Yeah, that -- that -- there's that, but --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Okay.

Q -- he says civil rights groups have also asked the White House for a meeting (inaudible).

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, we've met with civil rights groups over the last year and a half. I don't have any meetings to read out to you at this time.

Look, the one thing I do want to say is that, you know, the President agrees with these groups on the urgency of acting, and he applauds the work that they're doing to rally support around the country for a commonsense agenda to fight the epidemic of gun crime. He understands that. That's one of the reasons he went to Buffalo -- to have that conversation, to grieve with the family. And he spoke to them in a very personal way.

There's a couple of things from that letter that I do want to just -- just talk about a little bit, since it was in your publication. He agrees that innovative, neighborhood-based crime prevention programs like community violence intervention need to be at the core of our toolkit to make our ~~common~~-sense [communities] safer. That's why the President has unlocked existing money within the government to invest in community violence intervention. That's why he secured more than -- more money for that in his 2022 budget. And that's why he's calling for a significance increase in funding in his 2023 budget. He is calling for a \$5 billion investment over 10 years.

The President also is going to continue to call on Congress -- he talked about this yesterday when he was in Buffalo -- to pass commonsense gun violence legislation that would keep weapons off our streets and keep guns out of the hands of criminals. We're working closely with Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi on this and other issues, and will defer to their judgment on legislative mechanics, give them space to work on that and to do that.

And finally, on the question of a gun violence coordinator -- I was asked that yesterday; I think I was asked specifically about an office. You know, Amba- -- we have Ambassador Susan Rice here, who is the Chair of the Domestic Policy Council, as you all know. And she is coordinating the President's whole-of-government approach to reducing gun violence, leading a 12-person team that connects violence reduction to broader resources, like mental health supports, workforce development opportunities, and more.

She has decades of experience coordinating interagency process in the federal government. There's no one who is better at bringing stakeholders to the table to drive progress, and we know that's so -- that's important because tackling an issue as complex, and gun vi- -- and gun violence requis [sic] -- requires a multidisciplinary approach. And we're talking about housing, mental health, community support, all of the things -- apprenticeship -- all of the things that are so important in order to deal with this issue.

I'm trying to --

(Cross-talk by reporters.)

Oh, my gosh. I'm trying to call on people I haven't gotten yet.

Q Karine.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Oh, we have to go? All right, guys, I'm so sorry. We have to go. But we will -- we will -- hopefully I'll see some of you in Asia. All right.

Q Have a good trip.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Bye.

Q We're all the way back here in Siberia. You can visit anytime. (Laughter.)

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: I know. I -- next time. Next time, I promise. I did call somebody back there.

Q Thank you.

3:08 P.M. EDT

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**From:** White House Press Office  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 9, 2022

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:29 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Okay. A few minutes ago, you heard the President mention -- talk about Victory Day -- Victory in Europe Day, which the world commemorated this weekend as a celebration of the end of World War Two and a victory for the United States and the Allied forces over the scourge of fascism and aggression in the defense of freedom and democracy.

While President Putin and the Russian people celebrated Victory Day today, we are seeing Russian forces commit war crimes and atrocities in Ukraine as they engage in a brutal war that is causing so much suffering and needless destruction.

This day is supposed to be about celebrating peace and unity in Europe and the defeat of Nazis in World War Two. That is what is celebrated every year in Russia as well. And instead, Putin is perverting history, changing history to try -- or attempting to change it, I should say -- to justify his unprovoked and unjustified war, which has brought catastrophic loss of life and immense human suffering.

We're continuing to do what we can to provide support for Ukraine at this pivotal moment -- flowing security, economic and humanitarian assistance. Today, the President signed the Lend-Lease Act into law, which adds to our suite of tools as we provide Ukraine with the weapons and equipment they need.

Yesterday, as you all know, the First Lady visited Ukraine in a historic visit to meet with the First Lady of Ukraine. She did that purposefully on Mother's Day to be there and recognize the sacrifices of so many mothers during this time in

Ukraine and send an important message of solidarity.

And our chargé on the ground led a group of diplomats temporarily returning to Kyiv to demonstrate our unity with the people of Ukraine on Victory in Europe Day as they fight to defend their freedom and their democracy.

President Biden also spoke with our G7 partners yesterday and President Zelenskyy about our collective response to President Putin's brutal war.

And we announced a new round of actions to ratchet up the pain on Putin. This includes banning U.S. services that help Russian elites and companies build wealth and evade sanctions, additional restrictions on a broad range of inputs and products like bulldozers and industrial engines that Putin needs for his military, and sanctions on big executives at Russia's largest banks and Russian military officials.

The United States also sanctioned the top three most-watched TV stations in Russia that bolster Putin's war by spreading his propaganda.

And for the first time ever, the G7 agreed as a whole to ban or phase out Russian oil.

We will keep building on our unprecedented sanctions that are enacting a heavy toll on Russia's economy, with GDP expected to collapse by double digits. Our export controls with more than 30 other countries have throttled Russia's access to critical technology it needs to maintain its military.

With that, Will, why don't you kick it off.

Q Thank you. We have the Prime Minister of Italy, who's coming on Tuesday, and there's some pressures on the European bond market. I'm wondering: Does the Biden administration believe that the European economy is facing recession solely because of the effects of Putin's war, or are there other factors at work?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen the impact of President Putin's invasion of Ukraine here in the United States. We've seen, in our own economy, how inflation and an inflationary data over the last several weeks or even months has been impacted a great deal by energy prices. And a great deal of that is because of President Putin's invasion.

I don't have an assessment from here on the European economy other than to say we know -- if we look at the past several months, even before the invasion -- that the GDP here and our economic growth here was higher than the rest of the world, including Europe, because of the strength of the steps the President took earlier last year.

So, you know, we -- they will have a range of topics to discuss, including ongoing efforts to hold President Putin and the Russian leadership to account, to continue to put in place crippling sanctions, to continue to support Ukrainians as they bravely fight this war against the Russians.

And they will, of course, also discuss our close cooperation on promoting economic prosperity, increasing Europe's energy security, and combating climate -- climate change -- all topics that we expect to be part of the preparations and on the agenda for the G7.

Q Can I do one more on another topic? You suggested that peacefully protesting outside the homes of judges and Supreme Court justices is part of freedom of expression and part of, sort of, what we do in the United States. But there's a law of Virginia that actually prohibits protests outside private residence, even when done peacefully. So I'm wondering if any sort of demonstrations outside of private homes might run afoul of that law and other laws like it in other parts of the country.

MS. PSAKI: We're certainly not suggesting anyone break any laws. I would note that the President's view has long been -- and I tweeted this earlier this morning and repeated -- and made a number of these comments last week as well that violence, threats, and intimidation have no place in political discourse.

Yes, we are a country that promotes democracy, and we certainly allow for peaceful protest in a range of places in the country. None of it should violate the law; no one is suggesting that. And it should never resort to violence, to threats, to intimidation in any way, shape, or form. But that is what our position is and the President's position is.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. On abortion, Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has said that a national ban on abortion could be possible, depending on the votes. Without court intervention, just how at risk does the administration believe the U.S. is to completely outlawing abortion?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're at serious risk. You heard -- you noted Mitch McConnell and other Republicans in Congress are talking about a national ban on a woman's right to choose.

There were a number -- I think it was something -- I can get the exact number here -- but dozens and dozens of Republicans in Congress signed on to the -- to the Mississippi court case and -- advocating for severe restrictions on a woman's right to choose and a woman's right to make choices about her own body.

And we've seen in other places in the country -- just yesterday, the governor in Miss- -- of Mississippi said directly whether that -- just yesterday, the governor said directly whether they would -- wouldn't say whether they would directly go after the right to use contraception, meaning that's another area where --

So, as the President has said over the course of the last nearly week, his concern is about, yes, a woman's right to make choices about her own healthcare, about what this final opinion could be. It's also about what choices could be made that go beyond that.

I'd also note that Louisiana legislators advanced a bill to classify abortion as homicide, which would allow women who terminate their pregnancies to be charged with murder and potentially criminalize in vitro fertilization and forms of birth control.

So, in some ways, yes, you're seeing an outcry by the nearly two thirds of the public, many of them peacefully protesting, who are concerned about what this opinion will say. But you're also seeing a number of Republicans in states and some in Congress double down on this potential to overturn a law that has been the law of the land for 50 years.

Q You mentioned, though, the Mississippi governor and his comments on the possibility of banning certain types of contraception. Is the administration planning to take steps to try and preemptively safeguard access to contraception?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say there's a range of considerations that are underway -- both by our Counsel's Office, by the Department of Justice, led by the Gender Policy Council -- to take every step we can to protect women's fundamental rights and protect rights beyond that.

I would note that -- and the President talked about this a little bit last week -- but when we're talking about Roe, Roe has been the precedent for a number of other laws passed by the Supreme Court that impacts people's fundamental lives -- their basic rights, their freedoms, their privacy, and their protections -- including if you look back, *Griswold v. Connecticut*; *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, which ensured the right to use contraception was protected.

That is law now, but we are clear-eyed about this being a precedent for that and what could come next.

*Obergefell v. Hodges*, which protects the right to marry; *Lawrence v. Texas*, which stopped government from preventing sexual relationships between consenting adults.

For 50 years, Roe has been the basis for a number of these decisions that have impacted and changed people's lives -- in

our view, for the better.

Q You mentioned -- again, I mean, obviously, you're discussing next steps here. You've said before that you're not going to detail what's sort of on the table, especially until the final ruling comes down. But why not?

I mean, especially when states have trigger laws, sort of, why not communicate at least what the options are to try and get ahead of some of this, give women some assurances as we see, you know, obviously growing concern across the country?

MS. PSAKI: Sure, Mary. Well, what I've talked about a little bit in here in the past, which people can look to as a model for what we're trying to do, is what we've done in response to S.B. 8 in Texas. Right? We created the Dire Need Grant awards to provide funding to expand access to emergency contraception and family planning services.

In addition, you also saw the Department of Justice and the Attorney General released a statement in response to Texas S.B. 8 that reaffirmed their commitment to using existing federal law to protect the safety of patients seeking access to reproductive health services.

The Department of Health and Human Services has also been implementing a three-pronged, department-wide response to protect patients and providers.

We've also talked in here a great deal about the fact that we know that 26 states have indicated their plans on -- on a different variety -- varying levels, I should say, of overturning women's fundamental rights. Thirteen have trigger laws. And what we're looking at -- and some states have also taken steps -- Connecticut, California are two of them; others are also examples -- to protect women's rights.

What we're looking at here is nearly half the country potentially not having -- allowing women to have access to choices about their own bodies and their healthcare that has been the law of the land for 50 years.

So -- and we know who that will impact, because 75 percent of people seeking abortions make less than 200 percent of the poverty level. We know the majority of people seeking abortions are women of color. So, we're keeping -- taking into account all of that as we look at options.

Go ahead.

Q Just to follow up on all that. Mary asked what I would, for the most part. (Laughter.) But when are we going to hear -

MS. PSAKI: Look at that collegiality at play.

Q When are we going to hear from the President on this issue? We've heard from just about every other Democrat. You've clearly come prepared with all the details today. Do we have to wait until the court ruling is official, or might he speak out beforehand?

MS. PSAKI: I would say he spoke multiple times last week, and I expect you'll continue to hear him speak about this issue.

Q I mean, he spoke on the tarmac; it was noisy. (Inaudible.)

MS. PSAKI: Does that not count? (Laughs.)

Q Well, I'm just wondering if there's going to be something slightly more prepared and thoughtful to try to, you know, make use of the presidential bully pulpit the way he can. When he wants to, he can draw attention to issues.

MS. PSAKI: You're right. And I -- and what I was pointing to, Ed, is that obviously this was in his mind and front and

center for him last week, because he spoke multiple times to this, unprompted in some cases. Some -- some prompted by questions, of course. And I expect he will continue to do that.

What I don't expect he will do is speak to an opinion that is not yet final, that has not yet been released. But certainly, speaking to the protection of women's fundamental rights, of their rights to make decisions about their own healthcare. And certainly, his concern -- which he's talked about for decades -- about privacy and privacy protections, which he said last week was the basis of his leading the fight against the Bork nomination.

So, I expect you'll continue to hear him talk about that. And there's -- hopefully, there will be more opportunities for you all to ask good questions.

Q Two other, if I could, real quick. Tomorrow, he's giving a speech on inflation.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q I'm wondering if you can give us some sense of what more he'll get into.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, I would note that, as we -- as we announced and previewed a little bit, the President will be speaking to his plan -- his continued plan to continue the fight to address inflation in the coming months. There's a lot of work that has been done to date on this front, whether it was the steps he's taken to address energy crisis, the release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, additional steps he's taken on that front, or whether it was steps he's taken even in recent weeks to fix the family glitch, to help more people have access to healthcare, or steps he announced in the last couple of weeks to make E15 available to thousands of people at gas stations across the country.

But what you will also hear him talk about tomorrow is the contrast -- and the contrast that his plan, and the plan he has been implementing for months now, draws with those on the other side of the aisle, who has not -- who have not put forward any plan to lower costs for the American people. So it will be his opportunity to lay that all out together.

Q And there is growing concern about a persistent supply issue with infant baby formula.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q There's about 40 percent shortage right now. Major retailers having to limit how much people can buy -- especially acute in places like Tennessee, Missouri, Iowa. This is partly an FDA issue, but it could be a Biden administration issue. I'm just wondering if you guys are planning on taking any steps to help remedy that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say, as you know, but -- the FDA issued a recall to ensure that they are meeting their obligation to protect the health of Americans, including babies -- who, of course, were receiving -- or taking this formula -- and ensure safe products are available. That's their job.

Ensuring the availability of these products is also a priority for the FDA, and they are working around the clock to address any possible shortage.

(Playback of press briefing audio is heard on a cellphone.)

Okay, that is -- that is like hearing your name -- your voice on the answering machine, which I know -- that's a very outdated reference, but we've all been there. (Laughter.)

Okay, so what the FDA is doing -- which, while they are independent, they are part of the administration -- is taking a number of steps to address. That includes working with major infant formula manufacturers to ensure they're increasing production, because part of this issue is, of course, making sure there is stock on the shelves -- right? -- and working with the industry right now to optimize their supply lines, product sizes to increase capacity, and prioritizing product lines that

are of greatest needs. Because, obviously, as someone who -- my child has long been out of formula, fortunately, but it's close enough that I remember when you were trying to go to the store and get the specific kind of formula for your age child or whatever their needs are. So they are -- they are taking steps with that in mind.

They're also exercising flexibility and expediting review of notifications of manufacturing changes that will help increase supply, particularly in the case of specialized formula -- so that applies to that as well -- for medical needs.

And they're also trying to streamline import entry review process -- processes for already-notified infant formula products coming from notified foreign facilities.

So what they're trying to do -- in the shorthand of it -- is increase supply by working with a range of manufacturers in what their capacity is to ensure that the kinds of formula that is -- was recalled is -- where they're able to help ensure it's on the -- on the shelves.

Q It isn't something that's kept in a national stockpile -- do you know?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe there's a national stockpile of baby formula. But the FDA does -- it is not just their responsibility, in their view, to ensure that we are meeting our obligations to protect Americans. It is also their obligation to take steps to ensure supply can be met when they take these steps. So that is what they're very focused on.

Q What's an answering machine? If you could -- (laughter) -- no, I'm just kidding.

MS. PSAKI: Since you're 25, I'll explain it to you after the briefing.

Q Could you say -- just give some general reaction to Putin's speech this morning?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I tried to do it a bit at the top. But what I will say is that what we saw President Putin do is give a version of revisionist history that took the form of disinformation that we have seen too commonly as the Russian playbook.

Now, what is fortunate is that we are all aware -- reporters around the world are aware, Europeans are aware, Americans are aware -- of the disinformation factory that President Putin and the Kremlin seem to be.

But su- -- the suggestion that this war that was prompted by -- directed by President Putin was prompted by Western aggression or Western plans is patently false and absurd.

And otherwise, I would say: You know, our view is that we should remember -- and this is why I did this at the top -- what this day is actually about, which is something that we have all celebrated, which is the defeat of Nazis in -- after World War Two, something that Russians have celebrated in the streets for many years.

Q Quick question on a totally unrelated topic. Biden has blamed large meatpackers for the run-up in meat prices.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q And today, Tyson Foods have another record -- or very good earnings out that showed its average prices for beef had climbed nearly 25 percent compared to the same quarter last year.

I wondered if you all have any reaction to that. Is this the sort of, you know, price gouging that the administration is seeking to stop?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any reaction directly to one company's earnings. But what the President's concern is and what Secretary Vilsack, who's been here a number of times, is concerned about is that the meat industry -- the conglomerates

are so small, they're so -- I mean, not small; they're very large -- but they're so dominant that they are elbowing out, of course, smaller producers and that they have this capacity and ability to jack up prices and pass those on to consumers when they should not.

But I don't have any direct reaction to one company's reports. I am not aware of this issue and our concern being addressed, though. So, it's an ongoing concern.

Go ahead.

Q Just a little bit more on the Victory Day speech.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Given that he didn't really point to specific victories and he also didn't signal, you know, some kind of upcoming massive escalation --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- or some pathway to ending the war, I'm just wondering if there were any takeaways for U.S. officials specifically related to the trajectory of the war from that speech.

MS. PSAKI: I would say, what we're watching closely is what we're seeing on the ground. And what we're seeing on the ground is, you know, the -- right now, a great deal of the war, as you all know and my colleagues at the Department of Defense have briefed on this even as recently as this morning, has obviously moved more to the east, and that terrain is very different.

The Donbas is a lot more flat. It's little small villages. It's very different from what we were seeing in Kyiv. That is a terrain that the Ukrainians know well.

And what we look at as we look to the totality of the country and if we go back to mid-February, when President Putin was giving speeches basically declaring he was going to subsume Ukraine, take over the country -- the territorial integrity of the country -- and go beyond that, is that is exactly not what's happening today.

President Putin and the Russians are not marching through Kyiv. They are struggling to fight in other parts of the country. And the Ukrainians are bravely and courageously fighting every day.

So, we look at what's happening on the ground, though it is important to note and to call out the revisionist history that we saw in this speech and the fact that any such statement that we saw -- we've seen for months from President Putin that the war was prompted by the West is just patently false and inaccurate. And we can't state that too often.

Q And on the First Lady's trip to Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Is there anything more you can share? You've talked a little bit about --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- why she wanted to choose Mother's Day to travel into Ukraine. In terms of, sort of, the security concerns, which you've talked about a lot, how were you all able to get to a point where you could feel confident, the President could feel confident that she would be totally safe?

MS. PSAKI: I m not going to get into behind-the-scenes security concerns or considerations. Obviously, she would not have gone if we did not feel comfortable with the security arrangements.

I will note that she went there, as you said, because to -- she wanted to go on Mother s Day because she was thought -- thought it was important to show the Ukrainian people that the war has to stop, that the war has been brutal, and that the people of the United States stand with the people of Ukraine. That s why she went yesterday, to show that the hearts of the American people are with the mothers of Ukraine.

She also, of course -- you know, she s been back now, and she s had an opportunity to speak with the President and has conveyed -- and she said this publicly directly to him -- what she saw on the ground: the need to support the people of Ukraine. She saw the horrors and the brutality that the people she met had experienced. And, you know, that was something she conveyed directly to him.

But in terms of security, obviously we have a range of security considerations we make. And, you know, I m not going to get into those -- detail those from here, though.

Q Just had a quick COVID question.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q The warning about the 100 million potential COVID infections by the fall and winter if new COVID funding isn t approved --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Dr. Jha has said that this is based on a range of internal and external models. Could the White House point us to which specific models were used to get to that number?

MS. PSAKI: There are a range of, as he said, internal and external models well within that range -- is that number. It would hi- -- the point he was making is that we know what we need to do. We have put out an entire playbook to address the pandemic to help -- a preparedness plan to ensure Americans are protected and that we stay on the front foot in our fight against COVID.

If we do not take action, we also know that there are -- we know that the virus is going to continue to evolve. And without us staying vigilant and prepared -- like not having access to lifesaving vaccines, testing, therapeutics -- it s -- it is going -- it has the ability to upend our lives.

So, he is a doctor himself, as you know -- a very experienced one. He talks to a range of experts internally and externally. There s a range of models that are out there, and this is well within that range. And the point he was making is about the impact if we do not act, if Congress does not act.

Q Would the White House be able to make public --

Q Jen, can we spread out the questions a little bit? Can you yield to your colleagues, please?

MS. PSAKI: I -- I would be happy to, but I think it would be polite if you let --

Q Just a quick follow-up --

MS. PSAKI: -- MJ finish her question.

Q Seriously? Polite?



Q She s had several.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Can she yield to her colleagues, please?

Q Could -- could the White House make public the range of models --

Q (Inaudible.)

Q -- so that we re able to see how we got to that 100 million infections warning?

MS. PSAKI: We're -- I m happy to see if there s more specific data we can make available. But what I can assure you of is that Dr. Jha is a very experienced public health expert. He talks to a range of officials internally and externally. And that s what he s basing it on.

Let me go to the back. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q (Speaks in Japanese.) That means: Many in Japan are welcoming the upcoming visit. And two quick questions. One, Japan has a populace of 130 million but only 39,000 deaths from the virus. I m wondering if the administration is aware of that and maybe some best practices can be studied while we re there.

And second, the -- will there be a reaffirmation of the security treaty, especially about the Senkaku Islands?

And then I have one quick follow-up.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, what I can tell you is that we will certainly be doing a formal preview of the Asia trip -- probably early next week, I would expect, before the President departs.

While he is there, as you know, he s going to be holding bilateral meetings, including with his counterpart from Japan, and certainly discussing the ongoing COVID pandemic. And the global fight to address the global -- the pandemic will be on the agenda, and we re grateful for Japan s contribution to that.

They're also going to discuss a range of security issues, enhanced economic ties, climate change. There are a lot of topics that are on the agenda for this meeting.

And, of course, in light of North Korea's continued stabilizing ac- -- destabilizing actions in the region, including the test launch recently of multiple intercontinental ballistic missiles, the President will also make clear that our commitment to the security of Republic of Korea, and our Japanese allies as well -- range of topics. And we will have more, I promise, too.

Go ahead.

Q Just to follow up -- I brought this up before, but many of us who were embedded during the wars, we have a lot of personal relationships with people -- Afghanistan as well as --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- Iraq. We have one family -- the Ashu family -- that have -- still haven't been able to get out. Just any update on -- it's been almost eight months. And these are, really, people that gave their lives for us.

MS. PSAKI: For this specific family? I'm more than happy to take their information and check in with the State

Department after the briefing.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you. Lots of summits and meetings in the next couple of weeks --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- even ahead of the travel. Do you have any preview on what the President's participation will be in the COVID Summit?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. He will be addressing the COVID Summit. We are, of course, convening the COVID Summit in order to have an opportunity for the global community to continue to discuss our fight against the pandemic.

I would note, just to get everybody up to speed as you're preparing for your coverage: We committed to sharing 1.2 billion doses of safe, effective vaccines with the world; we're making good on that commitment. We've shipped over 530 million doses of vaccine to 115 countries around the world -- over four times more than our next closest donor.

But what we expect to be a topic, or what part of our agenda is for this meeting, is to talk about the fact that those doses are getting harder to place because countries' freezers are simply full. And we have tens of millions of unclaimed doses because countries lack the resources to build out their cold chains, which basically is the refrigeration systems; to fight disinformation; and to hire vaccinators.

And there are actually some good examples of where we've had funding, where we have worked with countries. So, for example, in Zambia, the U.S. government programs engaging local leaders in vaccine programs helped double vaccination rates from 12 to 22 percent.

We know meaningful gains are possible. But part of this is also going to be an opportunity to elevate the fact that we need additional funding to continue to be a part of this effort around the world.

Q And is it going to be -- and is it going to be a problem if, over on Capitol Hill, they move ahead with the Ukraine aid package and sort of leave that COVID funding to the side right as this summit is convening?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's an active conversation, literally as we speak right now, on Capitol Hill. So what I will tell you is that the President is absolutely committed to signing into law both the Ukraine funding and also COVID funding. And he will continue to fight for both.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Last week, you mentioned that the administration is talking to a wide range of people about how to respond to this upcoming decision on abortion.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q You mentioned business leaders. I'm just curious if you could elaborate on that. What kinds of businesses? And how do you see their role in this -- you know, in this response?

MS. PSAKI: I think the point I was making -- I don't have business leaders to read out for you, and we're going to keep a lot of these conversations private. But I would note that two thirds of the public, even in Fox News polls, have said that they don't want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

This is a mainstream position for the majority of the public. I'm not saying everyone agrees on it. That's not -- not at all what I'm saying. But it is about two thirds of the public.

So there are a lot of stakeholders, a lot of private-sector citizens and leaders who are concerned about what they could see if this opinion is -- is a -- if this is a final version or close to a final version of the opinion.

And part of our role here is to engage with leaders, whether they're on Capitol Hill or they are women's leaders or they're in advocacy groups and, certainly, private-sector leaders as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you. The President and you have talked about the "MAGA crowd" or the "ultra-MAGA." How does that jive with his desire to be the bipartisan guy?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President's view is you can do both. He believes that there is work we can continue to do together. We're actively advocating for -- he was out traveling in -- just last Friday on the Bipartisan Innovation Act. We believe that needs to move forward; it should move forward. And that can be -- can build on the nearly 80 bills that we signed into law last year that are bipartisan.

But he's also not going to stand by and not call out what he sees as ultra-MAGA behavior, ultra-MAGA policies that are out of the mainstream of the country and are not in the interest of the American people, whether that is efforts to prevent a woman from making choices about her own healthcare or whether that is Chairman Scott's policy and proposals on -- that would raise taxes on people making less than \$100,000 a year.

He's going to continue to call that out. But he believes there is still a path to move forward on where we have agreement.

Q And on the First Lady's trip to Ukraine: Does that change the calculations at all about the President making a visit to Ukraine, since this presumably worked?

MS. PSAKI: Their travel is a little bit different -- I think you all know from traveling with the President. But there's not a trip currently planned. But, again, he would love to go to Ukraine. I just don't have anything planned or anything to preview at this point.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. There are reports now -- and you just alluded to this a minute ago -- that Democrats are, in fact, going to bring forth that Ukraine aid without the COVID funding attached. And I know you told me last week that that was something that the White House wanted to see -- them attached. But we're being told that the President actually had said, "Look, the Republicans don't support that. Let's leave it aside." Can you confirm that? Was there a change in thinking over the last few days at the White House over how this package should proceed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that has been his preference -- to get both of them to -- done and done together, which he has thought that would be the most efficient process. Since this is actively happening right now, I don't have any confirmation of it from here.

I expect we'll have more. I've -- even though I have dwindling days left here, I'm still not going to get ahead of the President, because, you know, I want to enjoy those last few days. But hopefully we'll have more to say on where we stand soon.

Go ahead.

Q Does the President plan to condemn the leak of the Supreme Court draft opinion or the doxing of the justices, now that we've seen violence unfold?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that we have been clear and the President's position has long been that we should not see protests that takes the form of violence, that takes the form of vandalism, and that threatens anyone. That has long been his position for his entire career and continues to be his position.

Q And, for tomorrow, your office released that --

MS. PSAKI: But can I say one more thing? Sorry.

Q Please do. Please do.

MS. PSAKI: We have not seen violence or vandalism against Supreme Court justices. We have seen it at Catholic churches. That's unacceptable. The President does not support that.

We have seen it at some conservative organizations. That -- we don't support that. And we certainly call for -- we know the passion. We understand the passion. We understand the concern. But what the President's position is is that that should be peaceful -- the protests.

But continue. Go ahead.

Q And as for tomorrow, the President plans to offer, as you said, a contrast. And it was written, quote, to "Congressional Republicans' Ultra-MAGA plan to raise taxes."

Now, the Washington Post has called that claim false -- that there was a Republican congressional plan to raise taxes. Why is this statement still being shared?

MS. PSAKI: Because Chairman Scott's plan -- and we welcome -- we know he's asked for people to go to his website. We would encourage people to do the same thing and check out his plan that raises taxes for people making less than \$100,000 a year.

Q But Mitch McConnell and this report -- there aren't any other Republicans signing on to this at this point. So is it fair to say that Republicans as a whole are pushing a plan to raise taxes?

MS. PSAKI: He's the chairman of the committee. If Republicans want to repudiate his plan, they should go do that. But otherwise, that continues to be what they're running on. So that's their position, not ours.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, is the White House satisfied with the legislative strategy on abortion rights, which appears to be to have this vote on Wednesday, which will fail, and then make this a midterm issue?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we support Leader Schumer's decision to get people on the record on this -- on codifying Roe. And that's something the President would be happy to sign into law.

At the same time, we certainly recognize that the votes -- we don't have the votes. You can tell me -- you cover the Hill closely -- you can tell me if I'm wrong.

We understand that. But we think it's important and an important issue to get people on the record on.

Without getting into politics from here -- again, I don't make the rules, I just try to follow them -- in the President's

statement last week, he noted that in order to take legislative action, we would need more Democratic senators, and we would need more pro-choice House members after the election in November. So we certainly recognize that, and we know that's on the minds of many people across the country.

Q And then, if I could follow up on that. One of the votes you don't have is probably Joe Manchin's. I'm curious, when was last time the President spoke to him about either this issue or his domestic agenda, which Manchin has been signaling he's open to maybe reviving some of these conversations that basically died in December?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are -- we are open to this moving forward as well. I will say that just because we don't confirm conversations happening, it doesn't mean they're not happening.

But the President has asked us not to get into specific details or confirm the timing or specifics of their conversation, so I'm not going to do that.

Q Is it fair to say they're still actively happening?

MS. PSAKI: I can tell you that we are still in touch with Senator Manchin. We certainly are in touch with a range of Democrats about the need and the importance of moving forward.

And as it relates to the President's remarks tomorrow, obviously moving forward with a reconciliation package that would lower costs on American people -- on eldercare, on healthcare, on childcare -- would be a step that would help address how inflation is impacting people across this country.

So we're having a range of conversations. A lot of Democrats are having a range of conversations with each other. I'm just not going to detail them more from here.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, on the sanctions against Russia, what would it take to lift those if -- say if Ukraine agreed to a peace deal? Is that enough? Or would the U.S. want something more?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to negotiate from here on that. We do know that an end to this will be required -- we require a negotiated diplomatic process. And we support that. But we -- our role is to continue to strengthen the Ukrainians' hands, whether it's through military assistance, economic, humanitarian, continuing to keep the world united. And we're just not going to get ahead of the process.

Q And just real quickly, back on the Rick Scott question: Senator McConnell did repudiate that -- that plan. So how can you say it stands for what Republicans --

MS. PSAKI: Well, he's the chairman of the committee. I wouldn't say every Republican has repudiated. If they don't -- if that's not at all the plan they're running on and none of them are for it, then they can speak for themselves.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, on abortion, this country is about to engage -- some states that don't have trigger laws are going to decide what they think the restrictions should be on abortion, and that's going to be a tough question in many of these states.

Does the President have a clear belief in what he thinks the restrictions should be on, or if there should be any restrictions on abortion? I know you've been asked this before, but I just want to get a clear answer.

MS. PSAKI: The President's view is that women should be able to make choices about their own healthcare. I'm not going to detail it further beyond what he said in the past from here.

Q So does that mean no restrictions?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to detail his opinion. He's spoken to this a number of times.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. I have one question on ASEAN and one question on Russia.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q On ASEAN: The rotating Chair of ASEAN, Cambodia, said, prior to the upcoming summit, that the -- it's normal practice that the host of the nation to meet with the Chair of ASEAN. And we know President Biden actually wrote a letter to Prime Minister Hun Sen. And will the -- will the President have a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister?

MS. PSAKI: I'm very happy to check on that. The schedule -- I know it feels very close because it is; it's in a couple of days. But I will check and see.

He obviously invited the leaders of ASEAN -- from Brunei, to Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as the ASEAN Secretary-General -- to Washington to participate in the summit.

But in terms of bilateral meetings, I can check and see if there's any on the schedule.

Q And another question on Russia about the intel leaks by the American officials. Thomas Friedman said that he was told that President Biden "called the Director of National Intelligence, Director of CIA, and Secretary of Defense to make clear in the strongest and most colorful language that this kind of loose talk is reckless and has got to stop immediately -- before we end up in an unintended war with Russia." Is that true? And is the President worried about an unintended war with Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I will tell you, without confirming private internal calls, that the President was displeased with the leaks. His view is that it was an overstatement of our role -- an inaccurate statement -- and also an understatement of the Ukrainians' role and their leadership. And he does not -- did not feel they were constructive.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: "Did not feel." That was grammatically inaccurate.

Okay, go ahead.

Q Thank you. Thank you, Jen. There seems to be a lot of bipartisan support for listing Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. Is that something on the Hill you're talking about? Is that something being discussed in the White House? And if the President is not there, how would you define the line that would have to be crossed to go there?

MS. PSAKI: I know we've talked about this quite a bit in the past. I would note that to be named a state sponsor of terror, you -- there's only about four countries that have been named state sponsors of terror in the world.

There are a number of actions that are often taken if a country is named a state sponsor of terror. A number of those we've already taken, including economic -- crippling economic sanctions, sanctions on individuals, other restrictions for the country. And obviously, making the country a global pariah is part of that objective. Those are all steps that we have already taken and implemented as it relates to Russia.

I don't have anything to preview in terms of a consideration here. I can certainly -- we'll see what happens in Congress.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. What's the White House reaction to Sinn Féin's gains in the Northern Ireland Assembly over the weekend?

MS. PSAKI: Let me check with our national security team, and we'll see if we can get you a comment on that specifically.

Go ahead, Geoff.

Q Hey, Jen. You were unequivocal in condemning the violence. But as you know, there's also some allies who are protesting outside justices' homes, including Brett Kavanaugh, who -- if there's any kind of a compromise -- conservative ruling that preserves some of Roe, he could be part of that with Roberts. So, my question is: Is it appropriate to protest outside people's homes? And is it productive or not productive?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I would say, in terms of the productive question, that's not for me to speak to. Obviously, these justices make decisions as an independent body. How they are influenced or if they are influenced is not for me to make a determination of.

We do believe in peaceful protests. We do not believe in or support any intimidation of any kind -- obviously, the violation or breaking of any law, as somebody raised before, or threats or intimidation of any individual.

What we do support is people peacefully protesting. And they do that in a range of places.

Q But you wouldn't wave anybody off for tactical reasons?

MS. PSAKI: We're not here to give tactical advice to protesters. What we are here to call for is peaceful protest, for people not to resort to violence, to vandalism, or certainly intimidation of any kind.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah, as we look ahead to tomorrow's inflation speech, let me ask you to look back at some of the warnings that were issued last year by Summers and Rattner and so on. In retrospect, were they right that some of the government policies were going to lead to inflation?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say we agreed with them then, and we don't agree with them now.

I would note that as it relates to actions like the American Rescue Plan, the alternative to not putting in place and advocating for the American Rescue Plan would have been the economy continuing to spiral. Right? We would -- we were providing assistance and relief in the form of checks to people who needed that assistance at the time.

That package also helped fund and prepare for a fight against COVID.

It helped keep schools open. One hundred percent of schools are open today, in large part because of the American Rescue Plan.

It helped states and localities support and keep teacher keep -- keep police, keep local authorities, keep local governments open at a time where that was in question.

So we know, if we look at the recent inflation data, a large -- depending on which data you look at, two thirds to even 70

percent of inflation data is a result of energy prices.

A large part of that is the result -- and Chairman Powell has spoken to this and Secretary -- Secretary Yellen has also spoken to this -- is a result of President Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the impact on the global [sic] -- global energy markets. Those are all steps and impacts that I don't think anyone could have predicted a year ago.

Go ahead.

Q So, yeah, thanks, Jen. So, on that, the economy is signaling some weakness going forward. What's the level of concern? First of all, is the President watching the markets and the data coming in? And what's his level of concern there's a recession in the next 12 months?

MS. PSAKI: Well, without -- as you know, we don't -- we don't really speak to or comment on the judgments -- ups and downs of the stock market -- or the daily movement of the stock market, I should say. While it's volatile -- we've seen that, and we certainly monitor it from here -- I would note that since President Biden took office, the market is up considerably.

When we look at economic data internally and when a lot of external economists look at economic data, they look at the fact that we've created over 8 million jobs since the President took office; that the unemployment rate has dropped to 3.6 percent; that GDP grew up 5.7 percent last year, the fastest rate since 1984; and also, that household balance sheets are strong and businesses are investing in the United States.

So, we look at that base data -- those -- that data as we look at the economy. And, of course, we continue to monitor as data comes in and as we see fluctuations.

Q So what's his level of concern about a recession?

MS. PSAKI: Again, we monitor it. We are continuing to. We're not predicting that at this point in time.

Q One more thing on the new sanctions that was just announced on Russia --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- but China, last week, cut tariffs on coal from Russia coming in to zero. The Chinese have also had record imports last month from China -- from Russia to China. Fifty-seven percent was the increase. At what point is China breaking the sanctions?

And then, when is the President going to stand up and say -- and call out China to stop this behavior in supporting Russia?

MS. PSAKI: We clearly will watch closely. And if that were to happen, I don't think we have seen to date a breaking of the sanctions at this point in time.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Thanks. So, I'd like to ask you first about the coronavirus and then about a transparency matter.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q On the coronavirus, the CDC data indicate that we are getting pretty close to the 1 million death mark. Some outlets say we've already crossed a million deaths.

I was hoping -- you know, as we're talking about potentially rolling back tariffs on Chinese goods, can you say, you know,



where the tariffs question comes into pushing China to be transparent on the origins?

And can you detail anything that President Biden has done with his levers of power, be it sanctions or tariffs or anything else to press for transparency from China?

MS. PSAKI: Okay, there was a lot packed in there, so let me do my best here.

I would say, first, as you noted at the top -- or at the top of your question -- we track the CDC data as well as Johns Hopkins's data. And you are right: We are getting close to a million. And we will be marking that from here. And as we get closer, we'll have more to mark from here.

The President has had recent engagements with President Xi, as we have had at a very high level from a range of national security officials. And we always raise transparency in those conversations, but I don't have more to read out from those at this point in time.

And what was the third part?

Q Are tariffs part of -- are tariffs -- or, I mean, is that part of the pressure?

MS. PSAKI: There's an ongoing review. I would look at it separately from the COVID deaths or from Russia. There's an ongoing review on Chinese tariffs. We've been looking at those through the prism of how they're impacting industries here in the United States.

We feel that a number of them have not been constructive and have hurt -- had a -- had a negative impact on a number of industries. So, we're looking at and we're continuing our review of that, which is being led by our Ambassador Katherine Tai.

Q Would tariffs be used to pressure China to be transparent, though? I mean, is that part of the consideration at all when considering rolling them back?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we consider a range of factors as we look at the tariffs. The largest factor is the impact on the economy and a range of industries.

Q And the transparency question I have: In 2017 and 2018, the President routed \$13 million of income through S corporations. There are some ethics experts who are calling on him to divulge the specific sources of income in those revenue streams. Richard Painter, who ran for Congress for the Senate as a Democrat, has been among those who are calling for this.

Will President Biden be releasing the sources of income that were in that three -- \$13 million, particularly as there's attention being paid to his son and whether he earned any money from his businesses?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, the President doesn't have dealings with his family members about business. And he has released decades of tax returns, which is more than I can say for his predecessor.

Q But the S corporation, in particular?

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to ask about North Korea. So, some South Korean officials are saying that North Korea is likely to conduct another nuclear test around the time that President Biden goes to South Korea. Is the President monitoring this? And is the White House going to roll out any preemptive sanctions in the next week or so?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I will say we are -- we are certainly monitoring. And I would note that when the President goes to South Korea and Japan, North Korea, especially given the recent tests, will be front and center in the agenda and discussing security in the region with them.

I don't have anything to predict or preview in terms of any preemptive sanctions or actions.

Q And if I could just ask: The new South Korean President is coming in tomorrow, and he's expected to take a much more hawkish stance on China and North Korea compared to his predecessor, who wanted to really work closely with North Korea. So, does the White House welcome this kind of new hawkish stance against the two countries?

MS. PSAKI: The President looks forward to having a conversation with him about security in the region and, of course, denuclearization of the peninsula.

Q Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

Q Thank you so much.

MS. PSAKI: Last one. Go ahead.

Q Just a few follow-up questions.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q About the Cambodian Prime Minister --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q -- he's been in power since 1985, which is the last time answering machines were a thing. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. (Laughs.) More recently than that I would say, but --

Q He's been accused of corruption --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- of violence, of repression. This is the first time he's come to the White House. How does the White House respond to criticism that by allowing him in here and meeting with him, you're legitimizing that?

MS. PSAKI: I would say that the President has never held back in raising concerns about human rights when he has conversations with leaders where that's relevant.

And this was -- this is an ASEAN meeting, where all of the ASEAN member nations are included and invited. It's not isolating. It's not doing a state visit or anything along those lines. It's an opportunity to discuss with leaders in the region a range of topics that we work together on, whether it's COVID or econ- -- or economic growth or security in the region. And that's exactly what will be the focus.

But he has never held back in raising concerns where he has them, including with countries where we have a range of work we do together.

Thanks, everyone. We'll see you tomorrow.

4:17 P.M. EDT

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**From:** White House Press Office  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Press Gaggle By Press Secretary Jen Psaki En Route Cincinnati, Ohio  
**To:** Goodlander, Margaret V. (OAG)  
**Sent:** May 6, 2022 3:00 PM (UTC-04:00)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 6, 2022

**Press Gaggle By Press Secretary Jen Psaki**

Aboard Air Force One  
En Route Cincinnati, Ohio

12:31 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: So, welcome to our trip to Cincinnati. This is my last gaggle on Air Force One, so I have a lot of things to get off my chest. (Laughter.) I'm just kidding.

Okay, I wanted to give you guys a sense of the week ahead.

On Sunday morning, the President will participate in a G7 virtual leaders meeting chaired by German Chancellor Scholz.

The leaders will be joined by President Zelenskyy of Ukraine. They will discuss the latest developments in Russia's war against Ukraine, the global impact of Putin's war, showing support for Ukraine and Ukraine's future, and demonstrating continued G7 unity and our collective response, including building on our unprecedented sanctions to impose severe costs for Putin's war.

On Monday, President Biden and Vice President Harris will deliver remarks from the Rose Garden on how the Biden-Harris administration is lowering the cost of high-speed Internet for millions of American families and expanding access through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Also Monday, the President will sign the Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease -- Lend-Lease Act of 2022.

Sorry. Next page.

On Tuesday, the President will welcome Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy to the White House. They will reaffirm the strong bilateral relationship between Italy and the United States. They will discuss their ongoing coordination with allies and partners on measures to support the people of Ukraine and impose economic costs on Russia for its unprovoked aggression. They will also discuss our close cooperation on promoting global economic prosperity, increasing Europe's energy security, and combating climate change.

On Wednesday, the President will travel to Chicago, Illinois, to attend the 40th IBEW International Convention.

On Thursday, he will welcome the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, to the White House for dinner.

On Friday, the President will participate in a summit with the ASEAN leaders at the State Department to recognize ASEAN's central role in delivering sustainable solutions to the region's most pressing challenges and commemorate 45 years of U.S.-ASEAN relations.

With that, let's get to your questions.

Q I just want to ask you: Congress has limited the President now on some of his -- the administration's biggest ideas. Build Back Better and the Voting Rights Act has been a frustration. And now, many in the base with -- since the Alito leak -- are eager for him to push for codifying Roe. But as you pointed out this week, easier said than done.

I'm just wondering: How is the President and the administration looking forward? Is there any sort of angst or frustration about the ability to deliver the big idea?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that the President is incredibly proud of what he has already accomplished to date in 15 months of his presidency. And not only did he get the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed, but 80 bills -- bipartisan bills that he has helped lead the effort to move forward and sign into law.

And today he's going to talk about the Bipartisan Infrastructure -- or Innovation Act, and the need to move that forward in order to build more things in the United States, manufacture, make us more competitive here at home, and help address costs for the American people.

He was in the Senate for 36 years. He knows and understands it sometimes takes more time than he would like to get -- to get his agenda forward, to get your agenda forward. He also understands that with such a slim majority in the Senate, it requires having either every single Democrat prepared to move forward on, say, the reconciliation package, which we're still working to move forward, or it requires working in a bipartisan way.

So while I'm not -- while I'm not getting into politics here, I would just refer you and also point you to what the President said in his statement about the leaked document the other night, and how -- and how having more senators and House members in Congress who support his agenda will help him move it forward.

Q Jen, does the President want protesters to influence Supreme Court justices so that they uphold Roe?

MS. PSAKI: The President believes in peaceful protest. He believes that's part of our democracy and part of the history of the United States and this country. But he also respects and understands the independence of the third branch of government, and -- I mean, obviously, the Justice Department -- but also the role of the Supreme Court and what they play.

So I wouldn't say he has a view on that. He believes in peaceful protests, but they're going to make decisions they make, and we're not going to prejudge a final opinion.

Q Can I ask a little bit about the Sunday meeting with the G7?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Is -- sanctions are on -- new sanctions are on the table.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you give us any sense of what kind of sanctions? Are these aimed at individuals, you know, big companies? Is it more about sort of clamping down on people evading the sanctions that are existing? What is the meeting about?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything to preview specifically on what's next other than to say that all of those are steps that we've taken to date and we will continue to take to date. So, sanctioning additional individuals, additional companies, and also making sure we're taking steps to prevent companies or others from evading the sanctions we've put in place.

But I don't have anything to preview at this point about what's next.

Q Does the President have a particular message to the rest of the G7 that he plans to deliver that was different from the previous meetings?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it should not be lost -- the significance -- or on anyone -- the significance of when the timeline -- when his -- when this G7 meeting is happening, which is the day before Russia's Victory Day, which President Putin has certainly projected his desire to mark that day as a day where he is victorious over Ukraine. Of course, he's not. While he's expected to be marching through the streets of Kyiv, that's obviously not what is going to happen.

But certainly having this meeting and conversation on Sunday is an opportunity to not only show how unified the West is in confronting the aggression and the invasion by President Putin, but also to show that unity requires work; requires effort; requires blood, sweat, and tears sometimes. And the President is committed to continuing to engage to make sure people are unified -- that these leaders are unified moving forward.

Q And, finally, we understand many people are attending his speech to -- or his event today. Representative Tim Ryan, who just won the nomination, is not planning on being here. Do you have any comment on that -- his absence as the new Democratic nominee?

MS. PSAKI: I would just note they have been in touch. My understanding is Congressman Ryan has to attend a funeral and had other events he needed to attend. But the President remains in close touch with him; he's obviously very supportive of him. And he's looking forward to having both senators from Ohio there today.

Q Jen, does the President have a position on the -- Senator Manchin's efforts to do a bipartisan climate change bill? Is he aware of that specific bill and those efforts?

MS. PSAKI: He's certainly aware of them. And the President has long believed that there should be a bipartisan path forward for a range of his ideas, including the importance of addressing the climate crisis and doing more on that front.

We're not going to prejudge those efforts. But at the same time, we're not stalling or we're not delaying our conversations with a range of members about attempting or working to move the reconciliation package forward.

Q And I know that you're not negotiating in public or with us but --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- can you give us any sense of where those talks stand with regard to climate in the reconciliation bill? It is the beginning of May. The window is closing.

MS. PSAKI: Look, I would say that we made a decision, per the President's direction, not to talk publicly about conversations he's having or others are having on the Hill because we feel it's more constructive that way.

What I can tell you is there is still a great deal of passion and engagement happening behind the scenes. The President is very focused on moving his climate agenda forward. And so he's going to continue those conversations and continue working until we get it done.

Q Jen --

Q And just one on abortion. Sorry, Franco. Can you give us a sense of whether or not the White House is in touch with women's groups about this? What is your engagement? What is the level of, probably, both frustration and anger out there at the Supreme Court and perhaps at the White House about this?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of anger at the White House. Others could speak to that. Obviously, this is a leaked -- not final -- opinion from the Supreme Court. Right? So what our effort and our focus is on is on broadly engaging about the specifics on possible actions and preparing for the release of a final opinion when the -- when that is released early this summer.

We are in conversations with a wide range of people, including women's groups; including pro-choice activists; including folks inside of D.C., outside of D.C.; including business leaders; philanth- -- philanthropy; members of Congress; state legislatures; governors; advocacy groups, across the board.

We're using the convening power of the White House to talk to a broad range of groups. That effort is being led by the Gender Policy Council, which is coordinating work from the Department of Health and Human Services, from the White House Counsel's Office, from a range of -- from the -- from the Domestic Policy Council, from a range of officials in the government, working to see what our options are and what levers we have in government.

I would note that we already took steps in reaction to S.B. 8 in Texas, and we will continue to build on them and prepare for a range of options.

I'd also note that today we saw -- or yesterday, I should say -- we saw that, in Connecticut, Governor Lamont signed a bill that will protect medical providers and patients seeking abortion care in Connecticut who may be traveling from other states that have outlawed abortion. And additionally, the law expands abortion access in Connecticut by expanding the type of practitioners eligible to perform certain abortion-related care.

So, we're also here and available to states who are looking to take steps to protect women's rights. Obviously, our pri- -- our preference would be for Congress to codify Roe and, of course, for the final opinion not to look like the leaked opinion.

But we are also supportive of states. We're going to work with a broad range of stakeholders as we prepare for a final opinion to be released.

Q Jen, can you talk a little bit more about the ASEAN Summit -- what you hope to get out of that? Will that be -- will one of the objectives be building the coalition against Moscow? How much of an objective will that be?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would note that there has been a broad response to the invasion of Ukraine by President Putin and the Russian military, including by a number of countries who are participating. So, certainly, the war in Ukraine will be a topic of discussion, but it's also an opportunity to discuss security in the region; to discuss our fight against the pandemic, which is ongoing and important on the global front as well; and to discuss a broad range of issues -- North Korea as well.

So it has a broad-ranging agenda. The President, as I noted earlier, will be participating in not just hosting a dinner on

Thursday evening, but in a two-hour session on Friday afternoon to cover a range of topics.

Q On -- more on Ukraine. There has been some discussion or some calls to cut, cancel, or reduce Ukraine's foreign debt, kind of reduce their burden so they can put that money elsewhere. What's the administration's position on that? Does it have a position on whether or not there should be efforts to reduce Ukraine's foreign debt?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question. I'm happy to dig into it further. We're very open to anything that would help the Ukrainians rebuild their country; obviously fight against the invasion of Russia. And we know that humanitarian and economic assistance that will take many forms -- right? -- is vital to them and to their success moving forward. And I can check if we have a specific view on the canceling of foreign debt.

Q And finally, from me, just -- there's language in the Ukraine supplementable [sic] -- supplemental -- excuse me -- about Afghan adjustment for status. Can you talk -- what's the status of that?

This has been -- this has been tried before and it didn't make it in. Do you have the support? How important is that to the administration? What's -- what's the status?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an update on the status in Congress on it. I can also see if there's an update we have from here. I'd really ask members --

Q How important is it for the White House to get it in now?

MS. PSAKI: As you noted, it's something that we have supported in the past. But I -- I can't -- there's -- there's a lot of factors at play here, so I can't -- I can't speak to that.

Q One the news that the House is voting on a resolution next week to -- for congressional workers' right to organize, does the White House have a position on that? Does the President take a position on that?

MS. PSAKI: I can -- I can check more into the specifics of it. I don't think we've taken a specific position on it. Obviously, I haven't looked at the details of it. The President has been a supporter of the right to organize, of collective bargaining for some time. But I'd have to look into more details of what the other components of it are.

Q On Ukraine, maybe, we've seen reports about how U.S. intelligence is helping the Ukrainians take out generals and ships. Is there a risk that those revelations could help the Russians in the sense that they go with the rhetoric of a proxy war and that this could lead to further escalation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say, to speak to the reports: They're inaccurate. We did not provide Ukraine with specific targeting information for the Moskva. We were not involved in the Ukrainians' decision to strike the ship or in the operation they carried out. We had no prior knowledge of Ukraine's intent to target the ship. The Ukrainians have their own intelligence capabilities to track and target Russian naval vessels, as they did in this case.

And I've discussed this with both our National Security Advisor and the President, and the view is that, one, this is an inaccurate over-claiming of our role and an under-claiming of the role of the Ukrainians who, frankly, have a greater level of intelligence and access to intelligence than we do.

They take -- we do provide a range of intelligence to help them understand the threat posed by Russian ships in the Black Sea and to help them prepare to defend themselves against potential sea-based assaults, but they take our intelligence and they combine that with what they have access to. And so, on this specific report, it's just not an accurate depiction of how this happened.

Q Has the President tested in the last few days? There's, sort of, such a surge post-White House Correspondents' Association Dinner.



MS. PSAKI: He is regularly tested, as you know. The last test I'm aware of was Tuesday. I can check if there has been an additional test. And he was obviously negative then.

Q What did we not ask you that you're prepared to answer today, Jen? (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: Oh, my gosh. I don't -- I don't know, Jeff. What's -- what else is on your mind?

Q Can we ask you just on the job numbers --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- today? You know, good job numbers, but with the Fed hike, are we seeing the end of the bump of, you know, just what the economy can do as a result of the Fed rate -- pushing up the interest rates? And what's the way forward from there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to speak -- I mean, the Fed and, obviously, Chairman Powell spoke to a lot of that earlier this week, so I'm going to let those comments stand.

What I would note, though, is that, you know, the jobs numbers today -- 428,000 jobs in April -- bring the total number of jobs created by -- under the President's watch to 8.3 million. What he will talk about -- which we are very encouraged by.

It is also true that inflation is too high, that costs are too high. And what he will also talk about today is what we can do to address that.

And his view is that we need to do -- take a couple of steps. One is, of course, lowering costs for families and taking steps like addressing the supply chain manufacturing goods in the United States, which the Bipartisan Innovation Act would help do. And launching the initiative he's launching today -- the administration is launching today -- will help do -- will help make sure that by manufacturing goods here, we're lowering those costs.

Obviously, he's taken a lot of steps to address energy costs, which we know is a major driver of inflation. And the other piece that he's very focused on, that you've heard him talk about, is lowering the deficit. And he talked about, earlier this week, the revised Treasury -- the data, which showed that we lowered the deficit -- he lowered the deficit by \$300 billion and on track to lower it by \$1.5 trillion.

So, you'll hear him talk about all of that today. We know that's on the minds of Americans. And we certainly understand that with an unemployment rate of 3.6 percent, that -- you know, with that historically low number, that, you know, things will level. And we understand that and recognize that as well.

Q Just a follow-up on --

Q You said --

Q I'm sorry, Aamer.

Q Is there a sort of deadline/goal line for when the President wants to see the Bipartisan Innovation Act passed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we know it's in conference now, which is certainly a good sign. And he has been out there making the case in the country because he does believe that this is a piece of legislation that there is bipartisan support for it, there should be -- because certainly manufacturing goods in the United States, making sure we're not relying on the whims of a dictator, is to the advantage of all of the American people.

Q To follow-up on that topic broadly, is the White House concerned about the risk of recession? You hear more and more people using that word recently. Is that -- to what extent is that on your radar, and is it a concern?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're always looking at economic data, of course. But what we also look at is signs of strength in the economy, which is not just the jobs numbers and continued economic growth. It's also -- even in the GDP numbers earlier -- was it earlier this week, or last week? It's all running together. We saw business investment. We saw -- we saw -- the fact that the export numbers were down was actually because we are doing better than the rest of the world.

So, there is still a range of data that we look at and a lot of outside economists, frankly, look at to show where we are in the economy at this point in time. So, that's not something we are predicting at this point. We know some people can make their own predictions on the outside, but we're not assessing that or making that prediction at this point.

Q Can I ask you on the SPR? There was notice this week of the buybacks, but that'll take some time. Can you give us a sense of the timeline on that? How quickly will the U.S. begin replenishing the barrels that it is drawing down over the next months?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, it was -- as you noted, it was yesterday we announced the start of that process to replenish. So, we would have that ability to have the supply at a higher level so we could have it for the future.

I can check and see how -- the length of time of that -- what that will take.

Q The markets kind of jumped. They were thinking the U.S. was immediately buying it back, but it didn't seem like that was the case.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. I don't think it's an overnight thing, but I will see if we have a timeline of that.

Q Going back to COVID quickly: As someone referenced earlier, there's been a spike of cases following the Correspondents' Dinner. With the upcoming foreign trip, is the President taking any additional mitigation strategies to ensure that he can go on the trip, and, you know, make sure he doesn't test positive before his next foreign trip?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say that we have a range of strict protocols in the White House that go far beyond what the CDC requirements are, including the fact that everybody who is meeting with the President is tested, everybody who is traveling with him is tested. We take steps to make sure we're socially distanced in meetings, and we wear masks in meetings with the President.

And he, of course, is tested regularly. He went to the Correspondents' Dinner to honor the work of all of you and your colleagues and made a decision -- a risk assessment, like we all do every day, that that was important for him to do.

But beyond that, we'll just continue the strict protocols we already have in place.

Q Speaking of international travel, is the U.S. considering lifting its testing requirements for people flying in? Other countries have started to pull back those sorts of measures. Is that on the table at all?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of a timeline for that. Obviously, we are -- we are basing any decisions on the CDC and what their recommendations are.

Q The CDC said on May 3rd that they still recommend masking on airplanes. They did not say whether they would have extended that rule had the court not knocked it down. Because it would have -- that would have been the sort of pivot point, regardless of the court ruling.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

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Q Do you know whether they would have extended it regardless of that? And is there any update on the appeal that DOJ has stuck its foot in the door on?

MS. PSAKI: I would really point at the Department of Justice. They've indicated their plans to appeal, and that has been the case for several weeks now. I can't speak to what the CDC would or wouldn't have done. Obviously, they made a decision, and we still have a masking require- -- or recommendation in place. And -- but, you know, it's hard to get into a reverse hypothetical.

Q And, finally, can you give a sense: Does the President view the Roe v. Wade potential repeal, the issue more broadly, as a core message for Democrats heading into the midterms? And if so, or regardless, who does he think should be giving that message? Is it him? Is it the Vice President? Should, frankly, men be out in front on it? Should women be out in front on it? Does it matter? Who does he think -- does he think Democrats should be leaning into this issue? And if so, who does he think should be leaning into it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you saw in his initial written statement that he spoke to, you know, the need to have more Democrats -- pro-choice Democrats in Congress in order to codify Roe. And that spoke to his view of politics, without me getting into it too much.

I think his view is that it should be all of the above: him, the Vice President, any others. And, you know, as it relates -- what was the last part of your question?

Q Does he think Democrats should make this a key issue, or is it sort of one of a range of issues?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, you heard the President, two days ago, talk about the Ultra-MAGA Agenda. And what he's referring to there -- yes, he spoke about Chairman Scott's plan to raise taxes on people making less than \$100,000 a year; he's also talking about the advocacy by some in -- elected officials, Republicans -- to take away a woman's right to make choices about her own body and make choices with their doctor. And his view is that is another example of the Ultra-MAGA Agenda as well.

Q Is the timing of this trip just -- you know, Tuesday, they had their primary. Is he going in part to also contrast the Democratic agenda versus what some of the people that may be coming in and what they're offering?

MS. PSAKI: I think you will see him do a whole lot of that moving forward, but today is -- his remarks are largely focused on making the case for the Bipartisan Innovation Act, how it would help us manufacture jobs in the United States, lower costs, make us more competitive.

Q One quick follow-up on Ukraine. Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. told reporters yesterday that a definition of "victory" would include restoring sovereignty to Crimea and the Donbas region. Is that a definition the White House supports in terms of victory for Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: We have long said that we would support the Ukrainians and their efforts through negotiations in a diplomatic process to determine what victory looks like.

But I would say that, in our view, the victory or the definition of victory that President Putin outlined from the beginning -- which was taking over Ukraine, taking over their territorial integrity, their sovereignty, dividing NATO, dividing the West -- has been ineffective -- has been ineffective. And, therefore, because President Putin will not be marching through the streets of Kyiv, we've already won in many ways.

Q The President has also said he's going to host his vaccine summit -- his second vaccine summit on -- next Thursday, the 12th.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q What is he hoping to get out of that?

MS. PSAKI: It's an opportunity to lift up the need to continue to fight around the world to combat COVID, and the fact that our job is not done, there is great deal of work ahead.

The United States remains far and away the largest provider of vaccines and know-how to the global community. The world needs to continue to do more. It's an opportunity to discuss that.

I think we should all sit down. Okay. Thank you, everyone.

12:55 P.M. EDT

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**From:** White House Press Office  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 5, 2022

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

5:16 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Hi, everyone. It's been a bit of an exciting day around here.

So, before I get to the briefing, I just want to start by -- I'm going to cry. Okay, whew. I want to talk about my friend Karine.

You've got to come up here. (Ms. Jean-Pierre goes up to the podium.)

So, I just want to take the opportunity to celebrate and congratulate my friend, my colleague, my partner in truth, Karine Jean-Pierre, the next White House Press Secretary.

Now, many people in this room have known her for some time, but for anyone who does not know her, I want to provide a little bit of a primer for you, so settle in.

First, as you all know, she will be the first Black woman, the first out LGBTQ+ person to serve in this role, which is amazing, because representation matters. And she is going to -- she will give a voice to so many, and allow -- and show so many what is truly possible when you work hard and dream big, and that matters. And we should not -- we should celebrate that.

But I also want to make clear what all of her qualifications are, what a remarkable person is. She got her start in New York

City politics. She comes to this job with decades of experience, even though she looks very young. We're both in our 20s.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: (Laughs.) That's right.

MS. PSAKI: Having served in communications and political roles on many campaigns, in the Obama-Biden administration, and for both of former -- Obama -- President Obama's campaigns.

She's a longtime advisor to President Biden and Dr. Biden -- they are partners -- having served in senior roles for him and for both of them back to when he was Vice President.

And she's worked for a number of advocacy organizations, fighting for issues and justice for so many Americans.

And I just want to say: I will have a lot to say about how grateful I am for being -- for the trust the President and the First Lady and the whole team have given me and entrusted me in the last 15 months, but this day is about Karine. And we're -- I want to celebrate her.

And on a personal note: I want to say that one of the first conversations we had when we both found out we were --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: (Laughs.) Yes.

MS. PSAKI: -- getting these jobs was about how we wanted to build a drama-free -- on your best days -- place, workplace where everybody worked hard; where we, on our best days, we're rebuilding trust with the public. And I am just so grateful to have had Karine by my side for this over the last 15 months, and I just can't wait to see her shine at the podium.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thanks, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: So, congratulations. And I can't wait to see you bring your own style and brilliance to this job.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you. Love you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Love you.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. PSAKI: I promised not to cry again. So that's it.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Doing a lot of crying for all of us.

MS. PSAKI: We already cried. We already cried.

Okay, with that note, this is going to feel like an abrupt turn but I'm going to give you an update on a Russian oligarch's yacht that was seized that you may have seen. (Laughter.) It's not meant to be funny, but I did want to note and make sure everybody saw it.

Today, the Department of Justice announced that the Fijian law enforcement executed a seizure warrant freezing the motor yacht Amadea, a 348-foot luxury vessel owned by sanctioned Russian oligarch Suleiman Kerimov. The yacht is worth approximately \$300 million or more.

This was done with support and assistance from the FBI, and Fiji acted at the request of the Department of Justice following issuance [sic] -- issuance of a seizure warrant from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Fijian authorities executed the request, obtaining a domestic seizure warrant from a Fijian court.

As you know, the President has made clear we will go after Russian oligarchs and their ill-gotten gains using every authority we have to hold them accountable.

Oh, and here is the yacht. Look at that. (Photo shown on television screen.) I wanted to really go out with a bang so we got a yacht, just to make the point about oligarchs.

Also just wanted to note: As you know, the President nominated Steve Dettelbach to lead ATF to end our nation's fight against gun crime just a few weeks ago. And just today, he was endorsed by a group of over 140 former high-ranking federal prosecutors and DOJ officials, including more than 30 Republican appointees, two former AGs, and six former Deputy Attorney Generals.

Last note for you: As you know, the President is going to be traveling to Cincinnati tomorrow where he'll meet with manufacturing leaders, see new additive manufacturing technologies at work, and discuss his plan to make more in America by passing the Bipartisan Innovation Act.

Since he took office, we've created 473,000 new manufacturing jobs, which is more manufacturing jobs on average per month than any other President in the last half a century. And we're building on that progress through the Infrastructure Law, of course. And with the Bipartisan Innovation Act, we can help lower prices by strengthening our supply chains and domestic manufacturing.

With that, I promised we will not make it a marathon today. I know it's 5:20. So, why don't you kick it off, and we'll get around to as many people as possible.

Q Excellent. Congratulations to both of you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

Q First, will the President and/or White House officials participate in any way in the May 14th abortion day of protests?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any schedule, plans to preview for you at this point in time. We are certainly aware of the protests, but our focus right now is on overseeing and running a policy process to do everything we can to protect a woman's right to make choices about her own healthcare.

Q And secondly, Senator Minority Leader McConnell today, again, made clear that he wants to see a clean Ukraine bill. Considering that, what other options is this White House looking at to secure money for therapeutics, other COVID-related needs, as it seems that Congress is unlikely to provide any more money soon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as we look at recent data -- and we've seen, obviously, the growth of some subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5 -- what it makes clear is that we are in dire need of being able to plan ahead and take steps to ensure that we are able to be ahead of the rest of the world in ordering the supply we need, especially if there are better vaccines, if there are better boosters, et cetera.

So, we're going to continue to advocate, continue to sound the alarm on what the impact will be if we don't get funding.

In terms of the exact vehicle, which I think is kind of what you're asking, I don't have any update on that for you. We are continuing to have conversations with Congress.

Obviously, the President sends up both together because he feels it's essential. If we don't get this funding, we will have fewer vaccines, treatments, and tests. We'll watch others around the world have the best lifesaving tools. Americans will literally die. Businesses will be hurt.

There is not a plan B here. We need Congress to pass this funding so we have this funding to continue to prepare and

continue to fight the pandemic.

Go ahead.

Q First of all, congratulations to both of you. And this is not your last one, though, right?

MS. PSAKI: No. Don't worry. I'm still here through next week.

Q Got it. There have been concerns and there's stepped-up monitoring among law enforcement across the country for potential violence around this draft majority opinion and the ultimate decision by the Supreme Court. The justices have had to see their security stepped up in the last few days.

Just curious what the President would make of that, if he's aware that that's had to happen; what the message might be to those who are upset by this and are contemplating the unthinkable.

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say the President -- for all those women, men, others who feel outraged, who feel scared, who feel concerned -- he hears them, he shares that concern and that horror of what he saw in that draft opinion. It's not a final opinion. What it has prompted is a redoubled effort across the administration and with Congress to take every step we can to protect women's healthcare.

What he -- his message directly would be to anybody out there who is feeling that frustration, is participating in peaceful protest, is: Ensure it's peaceful; have your voice heard peacefully. We should not be resorting to violence in any way, shape, or form. That's certainly what he would be conveying.

Q And the other day, you hinted there might be plans for the U.S. to join Ukraine or other European allies in some kind of May 9th commemoration as Russia holds its holiday. Any update on that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update. I will note that what I -- what our plans are that are in the works: We are working to finalize a G7 call that will likely happen in the coming days.

What our effort and our focus is on is continuing to emphasize unity but also lift up the unit- -- that unity as we look and face Russian aggression.

But in terms of what we will do to mark Monday, I don't have anything to preview for you at this moment. We'll have more as we -- time proceeds.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, and congratulations. In the Senate, they are moving forward with plans to vote on a bill that would codify the principles of Roe v. Wade.

Right now, that bill seems doomed to fail. But there are these two Republicans who do support legislation that would guarantee a woman's right to an abortion -- Senator Murkowski and Collins -- but they oppose the current bill because they feel it's too expansive and too broad. So, would the President like to see legislation that is perhaps more narrowly focused, just on guaranteeing the right to an abortion, codifying Roe v. Wade, if it was able to get more Republicans on board?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. The President, as you stated and I've stated a number of times, absolutely supports and would love to sign a bill into law codifying Roe. What he said in his statement the other day, as you know, is that there will be a need -- and his sense is there will be a need for additional members who would support that in the Senate in order for that to happen.



We are in a range of discussions with leadership in Congress, with a range of members in Congress about the path forward and what's possible, but I just don't have the details of what that might look like, and so I can't speak to it at this point in time.

Q But might he encourage Democrats to take a more targeted approach?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any details to preview at this point in time. We're having a range of conversations.

Q And you have said, you know, that the administration is considering, of course, additional options and steps that you may be able to take to support women's reproductive rights. I know -- you know, you haven't wanted to get into the details of what those options may be, but are you confident that there are additional executive actions that you can take, options that can have an impact, that can withstand legal scrutiny?

MS. PSAKI: Well, yes. I mean, I would point to the fact that after Texas and S.B. 8 passed, we did take steps. And we did take steps to secure funding, to secure grants. Obviously, the Department of Justice made clear -- in response to Texas S.B. 8, they reaffirmed the Department of Justice's commitment to using existing federal law. We also created a grants program, and the Department of Health and Human Services announced a three-pronged department-wide response.

I think what's important to remember here, in part, is who will be impacted across the country. And we are mindful of that as we are planning and thinking about what our policy options are.

We know that 75 percent of people who are having abortions or pursuing an abortion are under 200 percent of the poverty level. We know that the majority are -- are women of color. And we know that there are 13 states that have trigger laws and a total of 26 states, including those 13, that have indicated plans to put in place more restrictive abortion, more -- restrict abortion more.

And so this is not -- there are states who've also affirmed that they would -- they would take steps to protect.

So, we are mindful of all of this, what the impact could be, if this draft opinion or a version of this draft opinion becomes the final. And we are thinking about that -- the Gender Policy Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and all of us working with -- with Congress as well to see what actions we can take.

Obviously, codifying Roe is a way to protect.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. President Biden just met with organizers -- labor organizers from Amazon and Starbucks and others. Could you just talk a little bit about what -- what was discussed, and if he offered any specific commitments to, perhaps, support the Amazon labor union or the -- you know, the different unionization drives that are underway?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has long been a supporter of the rights of workers to organize, the rights of work- -- of collective bargaining. And he dropped by this meeting to simply offer his support for those efforts. But he is not engaging -- we don't engage or get directly involved in individual labor disputes, obviously, but he certainly supports the rights of workers and we've seen that take place across the country in a range of cases.

Q So should this then be viewed as his support only for the labor movement and not necessarily for Amazon? Or is that -- I mean, that has to be a part of it, right?

MS. PSAKI: We don't take -- we don't weigh in on individual labor disputes. Those are up to the workers and the organizers.

But throughout his career, for decades, he's always been a supporter of organized labor, of the rights of workers to seek

collective bargaining. And certainly we're seeing that across the country.

Q And one quick question on the Senate Judiciary earlier today passing a bill from Senators Klobuchar and Grassley that, essentially, exposes OPEC to lawsuits for colluding to raise prices of crude oil. Given, sort of, the inflationary environment that we're in, and, you know, how big a concern inflation is for this administration, does the White House support that piece of legislation? Is the President, you know, looking at it? If you can talk about that.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. It's called "NOPEC," which is creative, even if you don't like what the outcome is of the legislation, I will say.

The President has been clear that strong competition policy is essential to ensuring fair markets and lower prices, as is evidenced by the actions we have taken, like the President's executive order to support the promotion of competition and innovation by firms large and small.

I don't have an official position on this legislation right now, but we do believe that this potential -- the potential implications and unintended consequences of this legislation require further study and deliberation, particularly during this dynamic moment in the global energy markets brought about by President Putin's invasion of Ukraine. So, we're taking a look at it and certainly have some concerns about what the potential implications could be.

Q Are those concerns perhaps tied to this idea that analysts are, you know, talking about, which is, you know, if you actually go after OPEC in that way, they could either potentially refuse supplies to the U.S. or maybe flood the oil market? I mean, is that what the concern is broadly?

MS. PSAKI: Without detailing it further, obviously our objective is ensuring the supply in the oil markets meets the demands. OPEC has a role to play there. We've obviously been working with them and have had a great deal of engagement with them even prior to President Putin's invasion of Ukraine. And that is what our overarching objective is. So we're taking a look at what the implications and impact would be.

Go ahead.

Q One area that's come into focus in the abortion debate is the use of medication abortions.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q The FDA relaxed some of the federal regulations tied to that, allowing them to be sent by mail. But does the White House feel like they have other viable options to possibly expand the access to these abortion pills?

MS. PSAKI: We are looking at a broad range of options. As we detailed earlier this week when this leaked document came out, I would expect we wouldn't have more to preview before there's a final opinion issued.

Q And U.S. intelligence assessments have shown that North Korea may be ready to conduct underground nuclear tests within the coming months. Are there concerns from the White House about that, and also specifically related to the President's travel, given that he will be in the region later this month?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say we certainly always assess security, as we do with any of the President's travel. But that has not been a concern as it relates to his travel coming up in just a few weeks.

There's no question that North Korea is going to be on the agenda when he visits South Korea and Japan. I can give you a little bit more of the pre- -- I know that some asked this yesterday, so I got a little bit more on the trip. So let me venture to do that as well.

While he's there in South Korea and Japan, the President will hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts: newly elected

President of the Republic of Korea and Prime Minister Kishida of Japan. The leaders will discuss opportunities to deepen our national -- our vital security relationships and enhance economic ties. They will also discuss climate change, COVID-19, and other shared challenges.

In light of North Korea's destabilizing -- continued destabilizing actions in the region, including the test launch of multiple intercontinental ballistic missiles, President Biden will make clear that our commitment to security of the Republic of Korea and Japanese allies makes -- reiterate our commitment, I should say, including our extended deterrence commitments, is ironclad.

So that will certainly be a part of the discussion. Naturally, they will also be talking about joint efforts to support the people of Ukraine, hold Russia accountable. And you've seen South Korea and Japan join us in the unprecedented sanctions and export controls we've imposed so far.

While in Tokyo, the President will also meet with the leaders of the Quad -- grouping of Australia, Japan, India, and the United States. The administration has made history already by establishing, for the first time, the Quad meeting at the leader level. So this will be a continuation of that.

So North Korea will certainly be discussed, of course, given the -- the importance role that South Korea and Japan both play in security in the region.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Sorry to see you go.

MS. PSAKI: Are you? (Laughter.)

Q Yes. And you've always been a good sport.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. As have you.

Q So on behalf of everybody, thank you for everything.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you. Thank you, Peter.

Q And I can't wait to see you up there, Karine. (Laughter.)

So, you guys had some time yesterday talking about what you think are the extreme wings of the Republican Party. Do you think the progressive activists that are now planning protests outside some of the justices' houses are extreme?

MS. PSAKI: Peaceful protest? No. Peaceful protest is not extreme.

Q But some of these justices have young kids. Their neighbors are not all public figures. So would the President think about waving off activists that want to go into residential neighborhoods in Virginia and Maryland?

MS. PSAKI: Peter, look, I think our view here is that peaceful protest -- there's a long history in the United States and the country of that. And we certainly encourage people to keep it peaceful and not resort to any level of violence.

Let me tell you what I was referring to and what the President was referring to yesterday.

Q Not about yesterday, though -- just about moving forward. These activists posted a map with the home addresses of the Supreme Court justices. Is that the kind of thing this President wants to help your side make their point?

MS. PSAKI: Look, I think the President's view is that there's a lot of passion, a lot of fear, a lot of sadness from many, many people across this country about what they saw in that leaked document. We obviously want people's privacy to be respected. We want people to protest peacefully if they want to -- to protest. That is certainly what the President's view would be.

Q So he doesn't care if they're protesting outside the Supreme Court or outside someone's private residence?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an official U.S. government position on where people protest. I want it -- we want it, of course, to be peaceful. And certainly, the President would want people's privacy to be respected.

But I think we shouldn't lose the point here: The reason people are protesting is because women across the country are worried about their fundamental rights that have been law for 50 years. Their rights to make choices about their own bodies and their own healthcare are at risk. That's why people are protesting. They're unhappy. They're scared.

Q The President's position on choice has evolved over time, so just checking for his official position. Does he support any limits on abortion right now?

MS. PSAKI: Peter, the President has spoken -- has talked about his position many times. He supports the right of a woman to make choices about her own body with her doctor.

Q But I know that one of the Democrats that he endorsed and -- who won their primary this week, Tim Ryan, said yesterday that he does not support any limits on abortion. Is that where the President's thinking is now?

MS. PSAKI: The President has stated his view many times.

Q So does the President support abortion up until the moment of birth?

MS. PSAKI: The President has spoken about this many times, Peter. And I would refer you to his own comments about abortion and a woman's right to choose and make decisions about her body with her doctor, which is what any of those women would do.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, does President Biden support Leader Schumer's strategy to hold a vote next week on abortion rights, even though the votes are not there, that it's doomed to fail?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly are working in lockstep and closely with Leader Schumer. Obviously, we have stated, and the President's statement the other day made clear, that he did not feel we had the votes at this point in time. But certainly, providing a moment for people to voice their view and voice their strong opposition to overturning *Roe v. Wade* is something we support Leader Schumer doing.

Q I guess the fact that there are only so many moments, obviously, that exist right now and only so much political capital in this moment -- so, I mean, doesn't it highlight divisions within the party? A not too dissimilar vote back in February had only 46 votes. Are there any concerns about that?

Is this the best use of time for this administration, given all the urgent needs on COVID funding, the Ukraine funding that you're looking for, and beyond?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, we think that Congress should act -- move forward on all of those objectives. But having a vote and allowing people to voice their view and voice their support for the protection of a woman's fundamental rights is something we also support.

Q Let me ask you: Yesterday, you were asked -- I know that you guys have been heav- -- that the White House has been heavily focused on the substance, obviously, as it relates and has the biggest impact on Americans broadly.

But you were asked about the leak itself. And given the historic nature of the leak, which was so unprecedented, as you acknowledged, you said: "I don't think we have a particular view on that other than to say that we certainly note the" historic -- or "unprecedented" -- excuse me -- "nature of it."

Why wouldn't the White House condemn this leak? Are there any concerns -- do you have concerns about the, sort of, further politicization of one of the branches of government?

MS. PSAKI: Have you ever reported anything that's been leaked to you?

Q I am -- and you guys have criticized leaks before as it's been provided. So, I'm ask- -- you've criticized in the past. Why not criticize this leak?

MS. PSAKI: Again, because I think what is happening here, and what we think is happening here, is there's an effort to distract from what the actual issue here --

Q Can't both -- can't both be true, though?

MS. PSAKI: -- which is the fundamental rights -- I don't think they're at the same level.

Q Fair enough.

MS. PSAKI: We don't think they're at the same level.

Q So they're not at the same level, but would you agree that it's still worthy of condemnation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look, I think there has been a call for an investigation by leaders of the Supreme Court. Decisions on that and how it will be pursued will be made by the Department of Justice and others. And that's certainly their space and right to -- to make that decision in government. That's how government is set up.

But at the same time, what we've also seen, Peter, is many Republicans, who are trying to overturn a woman's fundamental rights, try to make this about the leak. This is not about the leak. This is about women's healthcare and women having access to healthcare and making choices with their doctors.

Q Understood.

MS. PSAKI: And we are not -- we are working not -- to not allow that to be the distraction.

Q Understood. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Thank you.

Go ahead.

Q Is the President planning on meeting with abortion providers or activists at all next week?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything about his schedule quite yet to preview. Obviously, we are deeply engaged with a range of healthcare officials and experts from the government -- both from the Department of Health and Human Services, from our DPC team here -- and we will continue to maintain that engagement.

Q But, I mean, you've said a few times that this is obviously a priority for the President. Just any -- a sense of what he is doing specifically on this issue, you know, would be good for us to know, just given how much of a priority you've said this is for him.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important for everybody to know -- including the American people, of course -- that the President, of course, oversees the whole of the government. He has launched a whole-of-government effort to look at options and pursue options from every department -- whether it's the Department of Justice and what they do, the Counsel's Office, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Domestic Policy Council -- to take -- put together a range of steps we can take to protect women's fundamental rights. And that is what his focus is on in reviewing those and considering those. And obviously, he's spoken to this over the last several days multiple times, and I think he will continue to.

Go ahead.

Q The Prime Minister of Italy is coming to Washington on Tuesday. Italy, like Germany, has done a U-turn on its Russia policy. How much has the U.S. taken note of this? And does it elevate Italy in the eyes of the U.S. in terms of being a key interlocutor in Europe?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's really important to note in that there were a number of countries, some you noted, where the world, and journalists who have covered this closely, were skeptical that they would remain as unified and take steps as aggressive as they have to stand up against Russian aggression. This is an example of that.

Certainly, there's a lot we work with Italy on and we'll continue to, and the meeting will have a range of topics discussed. But of course, we've taken note of the efforts they have -- and their leadership in standing up against President Putin and Russian aggression.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. Congrats to you. And thanks for your words.

I wanted to ask Karine, though, if she could share some words about what this means to her -- what this means to you, Karine.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q And -- and if you could talk a little bit about the historic nature of what you're about to --

MS. PSAKI: Come on up.

The good news is the podium height is the same because we're both very short. (Laughter.) So, go -- go ahead.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Wow. Thanks for your question. I first want to -- want to take this opportunity, while I have it, to thank Jen. She has been just a wonderful colleague, a friend, a mentor during this past year and a half. And I don't think I would be here without so many people, but including her.

And she is just -- just a true, solid, amazing person. And so, we were very lucky to have her here this past year and a half. So, I wanted to make sure I had the opport- -- since I have the opportunity --

MS. PSAKI: I'm going to give you another hug.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- to say that. We were doing a lot of crying --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. (Laughs.)

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: -- so I'm trying not to do it now.

Wow. I am still processing it because, as Jen said at the top, this is a historic moment, and it's not lost on me. I understand how important it is for so many people out there, so many different communities that I stand on their shoulders and I have been throughout my career.

And so, it is an honor and a privilege to be behind this podium in about a week or so, when Jen is ready. And that -- that is something that I will honor and do my best to represent this President and this First Lady the best that I can, but also the American people.

And so, it is -- you know, it's a very emotional day. That's probably the best way that I can explain it: a very emotional day. And I just appreciate this time and this moment. And I hope that I make people proud.

Q And, Karine, I mean, there's a lot of folks who questioned when this day would happen. I mean, what is your message to those? And, like, what -- what is the message to -- to young girls, to --

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: And young boys, too.

Q -- minority communities. Young boys, too.

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah, young girls and young boys. Let's not -- you know, I think this is important for them to see this as well.

You know, I used to -- I used to teach college students. I had the pleasure of doing that for about six, seven years. And they would ask me, you know, this -- a similar question, like, "How did you get to where you got to?" And I would say to them -- and it took me a little bit of time to figure this part out that I'm about to share with you, which is: Follow your passion. Follow what you believe in. And -- and just, you know, keep that -- keep that focus, because that matters.

I think if you are passionate about what you want to be or where you want to go and you work very hard to that goal, it will happen. And, yes, you'll be knocked down and you'll have some tough times. And it won't be easy all the time, but the rewards are pretty amazing, especially if you stay true to yourself.

And so that's what I would tell them. And I see them from time to time, and they always mention those words that I just shared with all of you. And so that's what I would say.

And, you know, there are people who support them, people who will lift them up when they're down. And so, I think that's really important to know. And, you know, I think so many of them as well -- they are standing on shoulders, on folks who came before them, and are creating these opportunities that I currently have and will, you know, take that on the best as I can.

Q Congratulations.

Q Karine, have you ever doubt -- being a woman of color, have you ever doubt be in this position one day?

MS. JEAN-PIERRE: No, not at all. I just worked hard towards it. But I understand how hard it is. I do. We all do. But just keep working hard towards it.

I'm going to give it back to Jen. Thanks, everybody.

Q Jen, can I ask a question? A Catholic church was just vandalized with pro-abortion slogans in Colorado. It just

happened recently. Is the White House aware of that, first of all?

MS. PSAKI: I've not seen that report. Obviously, we don't condone vandalism. We condone peaceful protest, and that's something certainly we're encouraging with everybody who feels passionate --

Q What would you say to those vandals going after -- targeting Catholic churches, especially when it involves Roe? That's what they're basically focusing on.

MS. PSAKI: Again, we don't condone vandalism. We condone peaceful protest.

I think it's important to note that 60 percent or 70 percent, depending on the poll you look at, of the American people do not want Roe to be overturned.

I'm going to move on. Go ahead.

Q Will the President respect the High Court's final decision on Roe (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're moving on. Go ahead.

Q Jen --

Q This is a follow-up question. That's all. Just like everyone else gets.

Q A coalition of racial justice advocates sent a letter to the White House asking Biden to issue an executive order about reparations. Has Biden seen the letter? Has he read the letter? Is there a response to the letter?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware of the letter. I'd have to take a look at it. And we can see if there's more of a substantive response to you after the briefing.

Q Okay. And just to follow, on executive actions, is -- you know, as things get, sort of, harder to pass through Congress, is there a sense of whether or not the White House is looking more at executive actions as a means of getting things that are not able to get through Congress?

MS. PSAKI: Well, you note that there are a range of executive actions we're currently looking at. Right? We're looking at one on police reform. The President is certainly looking at steps he can take on student debt. And there are others we're looking at as well.

But at the same time, we're also looking to get the Bipartisan Innovation Act through. We're looking to see what can be done on a range of issues where we feel there is bipartisan support. And we're continuing to engage closely with Democrats in Congress about a reconciliation package to lower costs for the -- for the American people.

So, we're doing both, and we're pursuing both paths.

Go ahead.

Q On the -- on the police reform executive order, we reported in January --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q -- that there was a draft of that executive order that was shared with stakeholders. It seemed like it was getting near to being issued; it's now May. Can you just explain what the delay is and what exact work is being done?



MS. PSAKI: Yeah. Sure. I would say it was some good reporting on your part. And it was an early part of the process, and it takes months to get executive orders through the full legal and policy process. But it is still something the President has every intention of doing. We just haven't finalized it yet.

Q So is -- there's -- can you specify what work is still being done on that executive order? What needs to happen at this point? Or is it --

MS. PSAKI: Policy and legal review process.

Q It doesn't have anything to do with not wanting to issue it before the midterms?

MS. PSAKI: No.

Q And on -- you were asked earlier this week -- I think it was Monday -- that -- on the President's phone call with López Obrador.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, yeah.

Q You were asked about whether or not he asked for an increase in troops on the Mexican and southern border. And you said there -- there's going to be ongoing conversations. I just wanted to follow up on that: Did the President ask anyone in the Mexican government or in that conversation for an increase of troops on the southern border?

MS. PSAKI: No.

Q He has not?

MS. PSAKI: No. He did not and did not on that call.

Go ahead.

Q So, yesterday -- going back to executive orders --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- yesterday, the President met with a group of Democratic senators to discuss immigration. And Senator Menendez said today that one of the things they discussed was looking into executive actions that the President can take to provide relief to some immigrant families.

I guess, what are those actions? Can you give us a little bit more details on, like, what that meeting was like; what actions are there -- you know, is the White House looking into; and, kind of, is there a timeline for that?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have a timeline to preview for you. I would say that the President met with Senator Menendez and a group of senators, members of the CHC, yesterday, as a continuing part of his engagement with different caucus groups from Congress. And there's a range of topics that's often discussed in these meetings -- of course, immigration, but they discuss a range of issues typically. And it's an opportunity for the President to hear, to listen, to understand what there is an opportunity to move forward, what there is not an opportunity to move forward.

And we've said before, and he reiterated during this meeting, that we are certainly open to and looking at what executive actions could be taken on immigration and on that front, even though, obviously, passing a law through Congress would ensure that it was permanent.

Q And going to that, there is a group of bipartisan lawmakers that met today to discuss immigration reform.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Has the President been in contact with them at all? Has he discussed, kind of, you know, what would he like to see in a bipartisan immigration legislation? I know he introduced his own, kind of, outline of what he would like to see in immigration legislation, but has he talked to any of these senators?

MS. PSAKI: He's talked -- well, he met with the CHC yesterday, and he met with the House CHC -- House CHC members just a couple -- in the last couple of weeks. And certainly, he's discussed with those pivotal members recently what he would like to see and his interest in moving an immigration bill forward.

I would say the bill he put forward on his first day in office he very much thinks could be a bipartisan bill. It includes smarter security -- something everybody should support. It includes efforts to fix our asylum processing system, to protect DACA recipients. Those are all steps and components that have had bipartisan support in the past, so he continues to see that as a model.

Q But has he reached out to any of -- any Republican senators -- Senator Tillis, Senator Cornyn -- on this topic?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any individual calls or engagements to read out. I would just tell you that the fact that he put forward this bill his first day in office shows you how important he thinks this issue is. And he is open to working with anyone who -- who wants to play a constructive role in fixing the broken immigration system.

Go ahead, Karen.

Q Thanks, Jen. Our ABC poll with the Washington Post this week found that in the states where abortion restrictions have been passed in recent years, only 30 percent of residents in those states were actually aware of the restrictions. What role does the White House have in raising awareness of those specific state restrictions? And what will you do about that in the coming months?

MS. PSAKI: You know, Karen, I'm not sure that's the White House role, right? We obviously are in this moment now where the world -- the country is tuning into the fact that women's healthcare and women's basic rights -- fundamental rights that have been the law for 50 years -- could be at risk. And that will likely alert many Americans to that as well as state laws in their own states, because there's more reporting and there's more talking about it. And, certainly, that's something we fit into and we engage with. But it will also be leaders and elected officials in these states that will continue to educate their public about this as well.

Q And just on a different topic: The country is closing in on a grim milestone of a million deaths from COVID. We saw the White House mark the 500,000 deaths in February. How will the President mark that milestone? Will he, at the White House?

MS. PSAKI: He certainly will. We look at the CDC as well as Johns Hopkins data. I know different media organizations track it differently, so just so you know how we track it from here. And once we hit this milestone, the President will certainly mark this incredibly somber moment.

This moment will call on all of us to remember the tragedy of this number and the importance for all of us to act. That's what the President has done: standing up a historic vaccination program, investing in lifesaving treatments and tools for the American people. And Americans have acted too by getting vaccinated and boosted.

But we have more to do. More -- and more -- and we can honor -- and we can honor -- also honor those who have lost.

I don't have anything to preview at this point in time, but he certainly will be marking it here.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. Sweden has said that they have gotten security guarantees from the United States in case they decide to apply to join NATO. Can you maybe offer a comment and tell us whether those guarantees would apply to other countries willing to join NATO?

MS. PSAKI: Well, our militaries have worked together for years, and we are confident that we could find ways to address any concerns either country may have, if -- about the period of time between a NATO membership application and the formal accession to the Alliance. We, obviously, strongly support NATO's open-door policy and the right of each country to decide its own future, foreign policy, and security arrangements.

And both Sweden and Finland are close and valued defense partners of the United States. So we've worked with them for years, and we are confident we'll be able to work with them to address any concerns either country may have. But those are ongoing discussions.

Go ahead.

Q Hi, Jen. In the wake of the draft Supreme Court decision --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- Texas Governor Abbott indicated that Texas may seek to overturn the 1982 Supreme Court decision that found that states were required to offer free public education to all students, including the children of undocumented immigrants. Does the White House have any response to those comments from Abbott?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's ultra MAGA right there, as the President talked about yesterday. We're talking about -- I think, just to restate that -- denying public education to kids, including immigrants to this country. I mean, that is not the main -- a mainstream point of view.

What I will tell you is the President has looked at and reviewed -- since you referenced the draft opinion, and he's talked about this a little bit, but just to re- -- build this out a little bit more for you. He's talked about how it raised the alarms for him how and the draft decision would endanger other American rights, in addition to the basic right of every woman to keep her personal healthcare decisions between herself and her doctor.

Obviously, there are decisions like that out -- way out of the mainstream that Governor Abbott has announced. But it's also -- if you look at Roe, Roe is the precedent. Right? It's the precedent for the right to privacy. And that -- and that has -- that decision has been upheld numerous times since, and everybody doesn't make the connections between what Roe has been the basis of.

So let me just spell it out for you, and this is what's on the mind of the President: The right to privacy has been the basis for other landmark decisions that safeguard our basic rights as Americans, including who we choose to marry, with whom to have romantic relationships, and whether to use contraception.

For example: I mentioned *Griswold vs. Connecticut* yesterday; *Eisenstadt vs. Baird*, which ensured that the right to use contraception was protected; *Obergefell vs. Hodges*, which protects the right to marry; *Lawrence vs. Texas*, which stopped government from preventing sexual relationships between consenting adults.

This -- the basis for the draft decision would cut against decades of precedent and throw millions of lives into turmoil. And when he talks about this -- and when he talks about privacy and when he goes back and talks about the fight against Bork, he's talking about this as a precedent for a lot of these decisions that have enormous impacts on people's lives.

Go ahead.

Q Yesterday, the House Whip, Clyburn, appeared alongside Congressman Cuellar. He's facing a primary challenger who supports abortion rights; he doesn't. Does the President think that Democratic leadership should be standing behind a member of Congress who is part of the Democratic Party who opposes abortion rights at this time, especially in Texas, which has a trigger law?

MS. PSAKI: I certainly understand your question. I'm just not going to get into political -- politics or political primaries from here.

Go ahead.

Q Oh -- on --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead. Do you have another question? Go ahead.

Q I thought you might say that.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q On the --

MS. PSAKI: The Hatch Act --

Q -- the confirmation process --

MS. PSAKI: -- it is the law. It is the rule. I don't make the rule.

Go ahead.

Q There's been a lot made of what the -- Justices Kavanaugh, Gorsuch, Barrett said during their confirmation hearings about Roe versus what we assume they would have -- where they would have come down in this draft opinion.

Obviously, the President was the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee for a long time, and we've seen senators on the committee now say that this is just more evidence that, you know, we're not -- these aren't informative or productive process if they're not willing to answer these questions. What does the President make of the -- of this kind of debate happening right now between the utility of the confirmation hearings?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think the President -- we have not seen a final opinion. And I don't think the President is going to weigh in on that. He may not even weigh in on that afterwards. But obviously, they will all be judged by what their comments were.

Now, at the same time, the President -- no one is questioning, including certainly not the President -- as you noted, former Chairman of the -- of the Ju- -- Senate Judiciary Committee -- checks and balances or the legitimacy of the Court. We are certainly not from here.

As a former Chair of the Judiciary Committee who has been steeped in these issues for decades, he disagrees with the reasoning behind this draft opinion profoundly because it would throw the healthcare for millions of families into turmoil and would also threaten protections, as I noted. And that goes back to the precedent for a number of important cases that have determined who people have the right to marry, the privacy over contraception.

Remember, it used to be that you would have to -- you wouldn't have the privacy of deciding to get contraception with

your husband. Imagine how crazy that is. That's what we're talking about right now: these type of rights that the American people have.

And he may strongly agree[disagree] with the outcome or the final opinion of that, but he -- but, you know, he, of course, believes in the legitimacy [sic] -- legitimacy of all three branches of government.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, thank you. Yester- -- I -- first of all, congratulations to both of you and Karine.

MS. PSAKI: I appreciate I'm getting congratulations. (Laughter.) I guess it's so that I can sleep and read books. And I'm taking all of the recommendations. Huge congratulations, really, to Karine.

Q Surviving (inaudible) months.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Thank you, though. Yes.

Q I have two questions. The first is: Yesterday, you were talking from the podium -- the Fed Chair during his press conference as well -- about the strength of the economy --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- the possibility for a soft landing. Today it's a little bit of a different story. The stock market is down more than 1,000 points. A CNBC survey shows 80 percent of small-business owners see a recession in the next 12 months. So I'm wondering if the White House took note of the market route today and what, if anything, it signals about the health of the underlying economy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we don't judge the economy by the daily movement of the stock market. And that is true -- has been true of most Presidents and most White Houses in the past. We look at Main Street and not just Wall Street.

I would note, just for facts' sake, that since President Biden took office, the stock market is up approximately 9 percent. I still think that's true as it closed; you can check me on that.

But our focus and the focus of many economists who look at this question of whether we're headed toward a recession is on fundamental economic data, including the number of jobs that have been created, the growth of -- of the GDP. Obviously, we have the unemployment rate at 3.6 percent -- the biggest single-year drop in U.S. history. Household balance sheets are strong, and businesses are investing in the United States.

And we even saw the invest- -- the high level of investment, even with the GDP numbers that we saw earlier this week -- last week? -- we still saw high levels of business investment.

So, that's all the data we look at. That's the data most economists look at. We certainly understand that in terms of consumer confidence. And I don't know what this small-business data looked at; it may be that people see costs, they see the stock market. We understand that when people are -- when you're measuring people's emotions or people's reaction, that's what that captures. But we're still looking at the basic fundamentals, as are many economists on the outside, including Jason Furman and others.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, I have one more question, which is just about the -- Operation KleptoCapture. You talked about the yacht that was seized --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q -- at the top of this. What does the U.S. do with all the assets that it's getting? I mean, where do these yachts go? What are you using all of the money for that you're obtaining from these oligarchs?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there is actually legislation that we've proposed and that we're working with Congress on, on where some of this could go, but I can check on that for you. And where they -- where the yacht is parked right now, I'm now very interested in that question as well.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. Just a quickie for you. Can you tell us your plans now that you have a successor?

MS. PSAKI: I have -- I have nothing to announce on my plans other than, as I said earlier, to sleep, to read books.

Q Will we keep seeing you on TV?

MS. PSAKI: If there's anything I should stream on Netflix or wherever -- Hulu, other places -- I'm happy to do that. I take recommendations.

So, I'm -- I'm, today, obviously just celebrating Karine. And I will have a lot to say about my team, the President, Dr. Biden, all of you -- I'm just kidding; it will be nice things about all of you -- next week, but nothing to say or announce about what's next.

Go ahead.

Q A question --

Q Quick follow-up. Is anyone in the administration --

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, last -- last one. Go ahead.

Q -- looking out for the unborn child?

MS. PSAKI: Sir -- sir --

Q Is anyone in the administration looking out for the unborn child?

MS. PSAKI: I think I've taken two questions from you --

Q No, no, no.

MS. PSAKI: -- so I'm going to take a question over here. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q When does the President believe life begins? Thank you.

Q Let me just first also say congratulations to you and also to Karine. I'm so excited to have you as a new person in this position.

Just two quick questions. My colleague before talked about what Texas is doing.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q But in D.C. tomorrow, there's going to be a new bill introduced by a councilmember that would prohibit the city from cooperating with any other state's investigation into someone who's gotten or performed an abortion. And the states are trying to scramble what to do. Is that something that you would even see the administration kind of getting behind as we're seeing all these things pop up in different states?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. So, if I understand it correctly, it's to protect people's rights so that they can't be investigated?

Q Right.

MS. PSAKI: Right. So the Department of Justice -- I'd have to check with them and Counsel's Office on this. But one of the things they reiterated when we saw S.B. 8 in the Texas law is people's rights.

And I think it's important for people to remember now, even in this moment, that this has not been overturned at this point. The final opinion has not been out. People across the country still have fundamental rights to make choices about their own healthcare.

And so, that sounds to me like it's an effort to protect people's rights and those who support them. That's something the Department of Justice has spoken out against -- again -- to make sure people understood that. I can certainly check on this specific law.

We've got to wrap it up because it's six o'clock. But anyone going to Cincinnati: It's going to be great. (Laughter.) Okay, thanks, everyone.

6:03 P.M. EDT

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