

White House Press Briefing  
07/02/21  
1:49:42 p.m.  
3 minutes and 38 seconds

PETER DOOCY: Is the White House concerned that some vice presidential staffers reportedly feel like they work in an “abusive environment.”

JEN PSAKI: Well I would first note that I try not to speak to or engage on anonymous reports or anonymous sources. I will say that the vice president is an incredibly important partner to the President of the United States. She has a challenging job, a hard job, and she has a great supportive team of people around her, but other than that, I'm not going to have any more comments on those reports.

DOOCY: Okay, hoping to clarify the administration's position here on defunding the police. You say the President does not want to defund the police. But is the President concerned then that, last year, the now associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta said it was, “critical for state and local leaders to heed calls from Black Lives matter and Movement for Black Lives activists to decrease police budgets?”

PSAKI: Well, let me first say that, as a Fox News report that came about in February quoted: “Current former police chiefs in more than 53 cities across the country, as well as the National Fraternal Order of Police, are issuing their support of the nomination of Vanita Gupta, President Biden's nominee for associate attorney general, praising her leadership and record and urging the Senate Judiciary Committee to quickly confirm her to the post.” I don't know that that was your report or not —

DOOCY: It was not.

PSAKI: — but it was certainly one from your network.

DOOCY: But she said — okay, so that's the Fox report.

PSAKI: Yeah.

DOOCY: Thank you, uh, and Senate testimony, she said she wanted to decrease police budgets, so was she —

PSAKI: She also made explicitly clear in her confirmation process that she opposes defunding the police and the President ran on, most importantly, did not run on defunding the police. He's always opposed defunding the police. I'll also note because you've asked this question before, or a few times over the last several days that, when we talk about, uh, individuals in Congress and their support for funding or opposition to funding for the police, I think what the American people are most focused on is how people vote, what their record is, which is a public record. And I will note that, while the President ran on and won the most votes of any candidate history

on a platform of boosting funding for law enforcement after Republicans spent decades trying to cut the cops program, which, again, is public record, we don't need to under — under — undervalue the intelligence of the American people, uh, the President ran on increasing that funding. It's in his budget. In President Trump's budget, he significantly cut that, so that's a change. And the American Rescue Plan had a great deal of funding for local and state authorities, something that can support funding for local police in communities across the country, something many have used. Doesn't require me telling you names of individuals who opposed the American Rescue Plan. Every Republican opposed the American Rescue Plan, and I don't have time to read out all their names today.

DOOCY: Okay. On another subject, the official White House account tweeted yesterday: "The cost of 1/4 of July cookout was down 16 cents from last year." 16 cents?

PSAKI: There — there has been a reduction in some of the costs of key components of the Fourth of July — a Fourth of July barbecue.

DOOCY: So the —

PSAKI: That was what the Tweet was noting.

DOOCY: — so does the White House think that 16 cents off of barbecue has more of an impact on people's lives than gas being a dollar more this time — this Fourth of July than last year?

PSAKI: I would say if you don't like hot dogs, you may not care of the reduction of costs.

DOOCY: You can't —

PSAKI: You don't have to like hot dogs.

DOOCY: — you can't buy a hot dog for 16 cents.

PSAKI: But — I — I — a reduction of —

DOOCY: Maybe a bite of a hot dog, though.

PSAKI: — I will say that what we are most focused on is the fact that we've created now more than three million jobs since the President took office. That's what we're focused on and continuing to implement additional components of his economic Build Back Better agenda. Go ahead, Andrea.

ANDREA SHALAL: I'm just going to switch gears completely —

PSAKI: Great. [ROOM LAUGHS] Hot dogs.

(...)

1:54:58 p.m.  
50 seconds

SHALAL: And then the President is going to be speaking later on today to the National Education Association. Um, what is his primary concern? And you know, we've talked a lot about in here about critical race theory. Is this something that he's going to bring up in terms of the teaching of — of American history.

PSAKI: Well, I would say, first he's married to a teacher, um and a longtime teacher, still a teacher, and so certainly educators and making sure he is communicating, conveying his commitment to the education system and the role of educators in the country is always going to be close to his heart. I will certainly expect that he will talk a bit about his plans and initiatives, whether it's the American Jobs Plan or the components of the American Families Plan, which will be critical to communities, to school communities across the country. But I think that would be the focus of his remarks.

(...)

1:57:20 p.m.  
24 seconds

KAITLAN COLLINS: And can you explain why the President was citing the July 4th weekend when he was being asked questions about Afghanistan as to why you did not want to answer further questions on that matter?

PSAKI: I think what he was trying to convey to all of you is that he is heading into July 4th weekend, a weekend for family, a weekend to celebrate America and that he was — ready to be done answering questions. It wasn't — it wasn't related to Afghanistan.

(...)

2:06:36 p.m.  
1 minute and 54 seconds

JENNIFER EPSTEIN: OPEC+ has been stuck in talks around raising oil production to ease prices. Is the White House concerned about high oil prices? And has some president or anybody in the administration been in touch with allies in — who are involved in OPEC to talk about this and then somewhat relatedly, on — on gas prices being high in the U.S. at, you know, peak travel time, probably even more so because of — kind of the pandemic getting better, um, you know, are you concerned about that for Americans at a time when it does seem like there are a lot of economic data points working in your favor that this one that Americans really do feel day in day out? It is — is not, you know in a great position.

PSAKI: Sure well, generally first say that there are, of course, we have seen an increase in the price of oil as anyone has seen as they've seen us who watches data. It will be, of course, a topic

of discussion as you noted when OPEC meets over the coming days. I'm not in a position to speak to those conversations from here. I do — I can say that, currently, we expect there is enough spare oil production capacity globally. Um, and as you know, because of the restart of global economy and resumption of normal consumer activity, there is some impact on oil market conditions. On your second part of your question on the impact of individuals and consumers, absolutely. I mean, that's one of the core reasons why the President was opposed to a gas tax and was opposed to any tax on travel or vehicles, vehicle mileage because he felt that would fall on the backs of Americans who are returning to their workplaces who are driving their kids to school. And that was a bottom line or red line for him in the negotiations. As you know well, the price of gas is often linked, of course, to oil prices. That will again be a topic of discussion over the coming days, but I don't have anything to preview on that front.

(...)

2:09:50 p.m.  
38 seconds

BOB COSTANTINI: We saw that the President was exasperated this morning when he was asked several questions about Afghanistan and Bagram. Bear with me for a second. But 20 years ago we were a nation full of people, most Americans were gung ho, full of patriotism to go get those people who had attacked our country in 2001. 20 years on now, we're — we seem to be average Americans just shrugging their shoulders at the fate of Afghanistan. They have Afghanistan fatigue. Does the President feel that way. Does he have Afghanistan fatigue? And does he sense that in the American people?

(...)

2:11:28 p.m.  
39 seconds

COSTANTINI: But is there a sense of fatigue? Does he — do you — does he feel that way, do you think?

PSAKI: I would I think people are a little over reading into his response to a series of Q — a Q&A leading into a holiday weekend when he had already answered three questions on Afghanistan, and he just said this is the fourth question and then went on and answered a couple additional questions. The President could not be more proud of the men and women serving who have served over the last 20 years, and he is going to use every opportunity you can to thank them for their service, thank the families of those fallen service members who served proudly and bravely in Afghanistan, but this was a decision he made because he felt it was in the best interests of our national security in the United States.