

White House Press Briefing (via ABC News Live)

07/15/21

1:31:20 p.m.

2 minutes and 18 seconds

RACHEL SCOTT: Can I just ask just one quick follow-up on inflation? We heard from the Fed chair Jerome Powell. He's testifying on Capitol Hill this week, he noted that inflation has notably increased, but he believes that it will remain elevated in the coming months and — before moderating. Um, we've heard from Republicans who say the administration has sort of flooding [sic] the economy with cash. Even Democrats like Senator Joe Manchin, I talked to him yesterday, he says that he has concerns about inflation. Is the White House underestimating the impact of all of this government spending that you've had on inflation?

JEN PSAKI: Well, our experts believe and the data shows and the Federal Reserve chair — who operates independently — conveyed yesterday that most of the price increases we're seeing are expected to be temporary due the consequences of restarting an economy shutdown during the pandemic, and we're seeing that in certain industries more than others as prices go back to where they were pre-pandemic, and that certainly was — we had an expectation that would be an impact. So areas like spike in car prices due to supply chain challenges on the — on the restart, or spike in hotel room costs as the hospitality industry gets going. These are — a number of these are transitory, or they're impacted by other factors, including supply chain issues, which were working with Democrats and Republicans to help address through the chips legislation. But I want to be clear. We take. — understand the threat that inflation poses. We will be vigilant as responses are needed — are needed. As it relates to legislation, we're continuing to advocate for the way to keep prices in our economy down is to increase the supply of goods that consumers want to buy and keep the cost of producing and getting them to market lower. That's exactly what the President's bipartisan infrastructure framework and the Build Back Better plans will do. And I would also remind you all it's an eight year investment in better roads, bridges, and transit system, so this is not an immediate influx in the next few months of funding. It's over the course of several years because this is a long term issue, and it will also if — as we — as we work to pass the Build Back Better reconciliation package, increase the availability of childcare, more workers went to the workforce, increasing our output and helping to keep prices down. So we are quite mindful of it. We do monitor it. I would also note the Federal Reserve, who's independent, has also projected that the inflation numbers will come down to about 2.2 next year from where they're projecting for this year, which is something we also watch closely.

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1:37:49 p.m.

3 minutes and 52 seconds

PETER DOOCY: Now that you've had a few days to think about it, does this White House still think the protests in Cuba are happening because people are upset about a rise in Covid cases there, or is there some thought may be given to the possibility that they're protesting because they are sick of communism?

PSAKI: Well, Peter, first I would say communism is a failed ideology, and we certainly believe that. It has failed the people of Cuba. They deserve freedom. They deserve a government that supports them, whether that is making sure they have health and medical supplies, access to vaccines, or whether they have economic opportunity and prosperity. And instead, this has been a government — an authoritarian, communist regime that has repressed its people and has failed the people of Cuba, hence we're seeing them in the streets. But I would note that the ideology of the government, which has failed, has led to a — a — fail — a lack of access to economic opportunity, to medical supplies, to Covid vaccines, so all of those pieces are true.

DOOCY: And there are protesters now. In this country who are chanting as these protests in Cuba are going on: “Where is Biden?” So, where is he? What is he doing to protect these people who are rising up against the leaders of this failed experiment?

PSAKI: Well first, he has certainly advocating [sic] for and speaking out — as we put out a statement — multiple statements. Maybe one of you will ask him a question about Cuba today. I will — I will leave it to all of you to determine that. But one he is made clear that he stands with the Cuban people in their call for freedom from both the pandemic and from decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba's authoritarian regime. There is an ongoing review of our own policies, and as we look at those policies, one of the big factors is ensuring we are not doing anything to pad the pockets of a corrupt, authoritarian regime, and that is certainly a factor as he's considering. But we're looking closely at how we can help in a humanitarian way, how we can help support the voices of the Cuban people, and there's an ongoing policy review in that regard.

DOOCY: And we'd be happy to ask him about it later if he calls on us. But one — one more — [ROOM LAUGHS]

PSAKI: Anyone can ask anything they want.

DOOCY: — one more for you —

PSAKI; But go ahead.

DOOCY: Why is the Secretary of State Blinken trying to address human rights in the U.S. by inviting experts — U.N. experts from Cuba and China here?

PSAKI: Well, first, I would say, um, that the secretary put out an extensive statement on why he is holding — why he believes that we need to play a role in lifting up and pushing countries to do better on human rights, on ending systemic racism in their countries. And certainly, human rights is always going to be a priority for the Biden administration and for this State Department. As the secretary said in his statement, he believes responsible nations must not shrink from scrutiny of their human rights record. Rather, they should acknowledge it with the intent to improve it, and also push and lift up and — and put — shine a light on other countries that need to do better. And that is the role we're playing here from the United States.

DOOCY: But you just rattled off all these problems with Cuba. They've got dissenters disappearing down there. In China, they've got a million religious minorities in internment camps. Why are they going to come here and tell us how to improve our country?

PSAKI: I certainly don't think that's the format of the event, but lifting up and elevating human rights, systemic racism, the — uh — the — uh — the steps that have been taken — the poor treatment of Uighurs as I think, referencing here in China and — and pushing other countries with a spotlight on them to do better, is certainly a role we can play from the United States.

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1:48:24 p.m.

1 minute and 19 seconds

BRIAN KAREM: One to follow up on inflation. Inflation surged to 5.4 percent in June. It's the largest jump since 2008. You all say it's temporary but today, Axion is reporting that JP Morgan Chase CEO is saying: "I don't think it's only temporary" and that it's a little worse than the Fed predicts. There's a disparity there. How are you going to address what they think may be permanent?

PSAKI: Well, let's say first, that many outside experts, including the Federal Reserve, even if JPMorgan or Jamie Dimon or whomever it is —

KAREM: It's Jamie Dimon, yes.

PSAKI: — disagrees, have projected that the — that the rise of inflation is transitory and have projected a lowering of inflation next year. We also have seen in the data that some of the issues — and I outlined this a little bit earlier, like the spike in car prices, which we know has a bigger issue — has another issue involved in it, which is the supply chain issues which we're trying to separately address or hotels and some of the, um, of the industries that related to travel that have seen increases because the economy is turning back on. So, we certainly will refer to economic experts out there, the Federal Reserve, and many others who have projected the transitory nature of this as well as what we see as a number of the factors that are leading to the impact currently.

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1:50:21 p.m.

1 minute and 13 seconds

FRANCESCA CHAMBERS: Just to stay on inflation for a moment. What is the White House's message to average Americans, including those who are limited income, those who are experiencing higher prices right now for food and clothing and other goods and services? You mentioned that it's expected to die down next year. But — but what is your message to them in the meantime? Is it simply just to wait it out?

PSAKI: That's certainly not what I've ever said, but I will say our message is that we understand the threat that inflation poses. We will be vigilant about any responses needed. It's important for Americans to know and understand that these impacts are temporary, and some of these price increases are — are as a result of the economy turning back on, and experts will tell you that, whether it's the hotel industry or the airline industry going back to pre-pandemic prices. I'll also note that the President has taken a number of steps, including ensuring that the vast majority of the American people were getting \$1,400 checks, getting the child tax credit out to people's bank accounts today because he knows that Americans need a little extra help, still need a little extra help as the economy turns back on, so he's committed to helping working people, and it's also important for people understand the transitory nature of inflation.

[Also asked about Cuba and Haiti]

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1:53:47 p.m.

41 seconds

LAUREN BARRON LOPEZ: Okay, so the — Florida's governor and some FCC commissioner in Miami — representatives are calling on Biden to green light a plan that would allow the deployment of higher altitude communication balloons to beam internet into Cuba. Um, is this something the administration plans to do? And, if not, why not?

PSAKI: Well, the lack of internet access as you know, which is why you're asking is a huge issue in Cuba and one that is very challenging for the people of Cuba so they can gain access to accurate information, they can correspond with family members and others. We are certainly looking at that to see what can be done to address but in terms of that specific proposal, I don't have an assessment of that. I can see if there's more specifics on it.