CECILIA VEGA: Should Americans be prepared for the likelihood to see American forces on the ground in the region in the event that Russian does invade?

JEN PSAKI: I'm not going to get ahead of the President's conversations with our transatlantic partners, which is going to happen later this afternoon and we’ll provide a list of who will be participating in that call as soon as those scheduling details are finalized. But I would say our objective here, Cecilia, is conveying diplomatically that this is the moment for Russia to pull back their military buildup at the border, that diplomacy is the right path forward here, but that we are going to continue to coordinate closely with our partners, our transatlantic partners on range of economic sanctions and steps that can be taken should President Putin decide to move forward.

(....)

MARA LIASSON: You mentioned that — that Biden was obviously deeply involved with the Ukraine in 2014.

PSAKI: Yeah.

LIASSON: I'm wondering if you could talk about what his takeaways are from that experience because a lot of the things that he’s saying this time — supporting allies on the eastern flank, sanctions, those sound like those same things that you guys tried to do in 2014 and it didn’t stop Russia from taking Crimea. So, what’s — why does he think this will be different?

PSAKI: Well, first, our objective at this point, Mara, of course, is to prevent them from moving forward —

LIASSON: Right.

PSAKI: — and to convey on the front end that we have been working in lockstep in coordination with congress, with countries, our NATO partners, with transatlantic partners, to prepare a arrange steps that could be detrimental to the economy. I would say that there are some — certainly things that we have watched and seen that we certainly saw back in 2014, a massive spike — more than tenfold — in social media activity pushing anti-Ukrainian propaganda, approaching levels last seen in the lead up to Russia's invasion in 2014. That is something that didn't have a lot of past precedent at the time, but, to us, we see that as indication of efforts to influence inside and outside of course, as well. We’ve also seen evidence, as we’ve noted here,
of Russia making plans for significant, aggressive move against Ukraine. So, I would say our objective or the President's objective is to, on the front end, always lead with diplomacy, have those conversations. We’re having them directly with Russian leaders. The secretary of state obviously met with his counterpart last week and we’re having those at a range of levels. The President’s speaking with President Putin tomorrow. But in the meantime, to prepare a range of options should they decide to move forward.

LIASSON: But why do you — why will your efforts this time be more successful than last time? Why do you think they will be?

PSAKI: We’ll we will see if they are. But the objective first and foremost is to prevent the move forward, the military progression that we saw happen in 2014.

(....)

1:32:42 p.m.
3 minutes and 59 seconds

NANCY CORDES: On Russia first, you said that the goal is to prevent Putin from invading, so what is President Biden willing to threaten in this phone call will happen if Russia invades, just beyond more sanctions?

PSAKI: Well, again, I think that it's not about threats. It is about conveying that the right path forward here is through diplomacy. In the meantime, on financial sanctions, we have consulted significantly with our allies and we believe we have a path forward that would impose significant and severe harm on the Russian economy. You can call that a threat. You can call that a fact. You can call that preparation, whatever you want to call it, but that is something we’ve talked about publicly and certainly the President would convey that as well.

CORDES: Is Biden prepared to warn that there's the possibility of U.S. military involvement if Russia invades Ukraine?

PSAKI: Again I’m not going to get ahead of the president's conversation but that is not our first objective. I would note that, in the past, if you look back at 2014, one of the outcomes here if they were to move forward is that the other countries in the eastern flank, in — many of them NATO partners will be looking for reassurance from the United States. That’s something that was a follow up to 2014. I'm not sure that is what Russia wants to see, but that would be a natural consequence if they were to move forward as well.

CORDES: And then on China, did the White House consider going a step further in barring U.S. athletes from participating in the games?

PSAKI: I’m not going to get into additional considerations. All I can convey to you is where we landed and the decision that was made and why.
CORDES: And why did you make that particular decision? Why not bar U.S. — why not go further and bar U.S. athletes from the games?

PSAKI: Because not sending a U.S. delegation sends a clear message that we cannot conduct ourselves with business as usual — that we are not in the state where this business as usual is appropriate at a time where there are human rights abuses that we have been outspoken about, that we have taken actions on. And we feel this sends a clear message. At the same time, we believe U.S. athletes, people who have been training, giving up a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, preparing for these Olympics should be able to go and compete and we look forward to cheering for them from home. Go ahead. Oh — go ahead.

JACQUI HEINRICH: Thank you, Jen. On that violent crime spike that we’ve been seeing, there have been smash and grab robberies, there was the pretty alarming murder in the wealthy Hollywood neighborhood last week, and then an attack — a violent robbery in Pacific Palisades on Friday. This is sort of similar to the crime spike that we saw over the summer and one of the president's biggest push is to address that was the DOJ strike teams that were sent out to those five cities. It was D.C., New York, Chicago, L.A., and San Francisco. Since those strike forces were assembled in July, have they accomplished anything?

PSAKI: Look, I think we sent those strike forces in part because of the spike in gun violence, something that continues to be a concern. And we sent them — the Department of Justice, I should say — sent them to work in order to work in partnership and in lockstep with law enforcement on the ground. We’ve also recently taken steps — the justice department, the FBI, and federal law enforcement have been working with local jurisdictions, especially areas like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and others where we’ve seen a rash of break-ins to offer their assistance and provide assistance through multi-jurisdictional task forces. We know that we’ve seen over the course of time — while we’ll let other people determine what the cause and effect is — we know we’ve seen an increase in crime over the course of the pandemic. We’ve seen that timeline. What the President’s been focused on doing is working to ensure there’s funding to support local cops, to support local jurisdiction, to ensure that a law enforcement at a federal level is a partner, both in the short and long-term to address either of these spikes in crime or — or gun violence, which is an ongoing concern and to ensure there’s adequate funding in the budget. So, that’s what we are working to do. The Department of Justice, I’m sure, can provide you an update on the strike forces.

(....)

1:37:16 p.m.
1 minute and 18 seconds

HEINRICH: And then, is there any concern that not having ATF nominee while all this is going on is somehow leaving a vulnerability or a gap in leadership?

PSAKI: Well, I think our collective view here is the blocking of a fully qualified, experienced former ATF agent from serving in that role certainly is something Republicans didn't have to take the step to do, but here we are. So, we have to nominate a new person. And when we’re — when
the president finds the right person, I'm sure he will be prepared to do that. Again, we could have had a nominee, someone who was qualified, ready, and prepared to serve in that role, confirmed and working.

HEINRICH: And real quick, I just want to ask about *The Washington Post* article — there’s another article that’s come out after a string of articles detailing dysfunction in the Vice president's office. And then the director of operations put out a tweet today talking about much he loved his job. There was a similar sort of social media push this summer following some negative headlines about ongoings in the Vice President's office. Did anybody ask the deputy director to put out a positive tweet today or was that all him?

PSAKI: I'm not aware of an ask for a positive tweet or a specific tweet. I would point you to the Vice President's office, but I work with a number of people in the Vice President's office who certainly are looking forward to continuing their jobs.

(....)

1:46:13 p.m. [via Washington Post Live]
1 minute and 7 seconds

STEVEN NELSON: The Biden administration today put out a big report about addressing corruption. I wanted to ask you two quick and hopefully pretty easy questions about that. Shortly after President Biden’s virtual meeting with the Chinese president, the First Son’s attorney said that he has finally divested from a Chinese investment fund controlled by state-owned entities. I was hoping you could commit to basic transparency about that transaction, including the name of the buyer, the dollar amount, and the timing. And the second question is my colleague Miranda Devine has a new book out called *The Laptop From Hell* and I was hoping that you could confirm that the laptop is indeed authentic and not Russian disinformation as you seemed to suggest on Twitter last year.

PSAKI: Well, on the first, the President’s son is not an employee of the federal government, so I’d point you to his representatives. And, as it relates to the book, I have neither had the time nor interest in exploring or reading the book.

NELSON: But the First —

PSAKI: Go ahead, Tina.

NELSON: — Son’s attorney —

PSAKI: I — I think I answered your question.

NELSON: Well.

PSAKI: You can go to the representative of the person who’s not an employee of the federal government. Go ahead, Tina.
NELSON: [INAUDIBLE]

PSAKI: I think we have to move on.

(....)

1:52:40 p.m.
18 seconds

APRIL RYAN: Back on MPP really fast.

PSAKI: Sure.

RYAN: Haiti is included in that. What is the update on the investigation that Mayorkas was having on that?

PSAKI: On the —

RYAN: Situation at the border.

PSAKI: — sure. I know that the Department of Homeland Security has put out comments on that. I don't have anything new to update you on in terms of the status.