

White House press briefing [via CBSN]  
04/25/22  
3:26:10 p.m.  
55 seconds

CECILIA VEGA: And just a quick one on the breaking news: Twitter agreeing to let Elon Musk purchase — make his — go through with this purchase. Do you have a response to that? And does the White House have any concern that this new agreement might have President Trump back on the platform?

JEN PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to comment on a specific transaction. What I can tell you as a general matter: No matter who owns or runs Twitter, the President has long been concerned about the power of large social media platforms, what they have — the power they have over our everyday lives; has long argued that tech platforms must be held accountable for the harms they cause. He has been a strong supporter of fundamental reforms to achieve that goal, including reforms to Section 230, enacting antitrust reforms, requiring more transparency, and more. And he's encouraged that there's bipartisan interest in Congress. In terms of what hypothetical policies might happen, I'm just not going to speak to that at this point in time.

(....)

3:31:10 p.m.  
3 minutes and 28 seconds

JACQUI HEINRICH: I don't believe the White House so far has commented on the death of Bishop Evans, the 22-year-old National Guard Specialist who drowned trying to save two migrants. I wanted to give you the opportunity to say some words on that.

PSAKI: Yes. Thank you for that, Jacqui. And the news of the confirmation that his body had been found was confirmed just a couple of hours ago. I would note that, of course, our heart goes out to his family and to his loved ones. To confirm all the specific details, he went missing on Friday, following his selfless efforts to rescue two migrants who appeared to be drowning who were trying to cross a river in Mexico that went to the United States — went into the U.S., of course. We know that National Guard personnel, including — including him, risk their lives every day to serve and protect others. And again, our hearts go out to his family. I don't have any — in case you may ask, I don't have any updates at this moment in terms of the President's outreach, but if — if that is something I can update you on this afternoon, I will let you know.

HEINRICH: Does the White House feel any responsibility for his death, given that there's reporting that he lost his life allegedly trying to save two migrants who were smuggling drugs? This is a problem that, you know, the administration has been facing for some time and is obviously, as we've been discussing, getting some criticism on. Is — does the White House feel at all responsible? And what — what more can you offer to people who, you know, are on the border, in border communities, who are experiencing loss and trials like this?

PSAKI: Well, of course, we are mourning the loss of his life and we are grateful for the work of every National Guardsman. I would note that the National Guard worked for the states, and so he is an employee of the Tex- — Texas National Guard, and his efforts and his operation were directed by there, not by the federal government, in this — in this effort, in this apparatus. We've — we've long stated that our immigration system is broken. There needs to be more done to invest in smarter security, to have a more effective asylum processing system. And we would welcome any efforts to — for any elected officials to work with us on that.

HEINRICH: A lot of the border communities often, you know, say that they have requested more from — from the federal government — more manpower to help manage these kinds of — these kinds of issues. Is that being looked at? Is that being — is that being —

PSAKI: Can you give me a more specific request or a specific person or —

HEINRICH: Well, you mentioned that, you know, this — this Specialist was a National Guard. Obviously, you know, the state is in charge of that. States are in charge of that. But there have been requests from the Texas governor, from — you know, to send more — you know, to help people who are in this position at the border, who are now trying to deal with an influx of migrants that they know is going to only increase, as you just mentioned, after Title 42 is lifted. You talked about having a humanitarian, you know, sort of, system in place to deal with people coming across and increase vaccinations and that kind of thing. But in terms of, you know, law enforcement presence at the border.

PSAKI: Well, I would just say — if we just dial it back a few years to, kind of, what we inherited here — the former President invested billions of dollars in a border wall that was never going to work or be effective, instead of working towards comprehensive immigration reform. As part of the President's proposal he put forward on his first day in office, he proposed investing in smarter security at the border — something he'd be happy to work with governors on. And — and certainly we're open to having that conversation whenever they're ready to do that.

(...)

3:36:50 p.m.

1 minute and 16 seconds

ANDREA SHALAL: Just a couple on Twitter. I wanted to go back and try again. Are you concerned about the kind of purveyors of election misinformation, disinformation, health falsehoods, sort of, having more of an opportunity to speak there on Twitter? Is there, you know, any message that you would convey to Elon Musk as the new owner?

PSAKI: Well, I would just —

SHALAL: And, you know, I would maybe just add to it that, you know, public — publicly traded companies have different levels of — there's different levels of scrutiny that are possible of publicly traded companies. So, are you concerned about, you know, a billionaire taking control of

a company that — where there's already a lot of concentration of power?

PSAKI: I would say that our concerns are not new. We've long talked about and the President has long talked about his concerns about the power of social media platforms, including Twitter and others, to spread misinformation, disinformation; the need for these platforms to be held accountable. While I know you tried again — I appreciate that — I still don't have a specific comment on this specific transaction and at this point, we don't have any sense of what the policies will look like.

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3:42:06 p.m.

1 minute and 13 seconds

M.J. LEE: [J]ust on inflation, given that it continues to be such a big concern for so many people. The President obviously doesn't have the luxury of wandering outside the White House. He can't, you know, go fill up this car or go to the grocery store. Can you give us a sense of how he sort of is updated every day, or how he gets a sense of how much does milk cost more today than a week ago? Just how does he sort of keep up to date on how much more expensive things are for the average American?

PSAKI: I can assure you that the President sees himself as the kid from Scranton, more than many people who work in his administration, and he is often the person who reminds people and members of his policy team in meetings what the impacts of rising food costs or gasoline costs or other issues are. He does request and receive regular updates from his economic team. And often, when he returns from weekends at home in Delaware, he comes back with conversations he had with people as he came out of church or, you know, as he — people he's known for a long time in his community, and they often tell him about how these — how the rising costs impact his life. So I would say that he stays abreast of these changes and of these increases in costs and the impacts through economic data and briefings, but also through his own conversations whenever he can have them.

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3:52:33 p.m.

20 seconds

LISA DEJARDINS: On Hunter Biden: The *New York Post* is reporting — looking at White House visitor logs, there were 19 visits to the White House while the President was Vice President by Hunter Biden's business partner, including one with the Vice President. Could you help us understand why that business partner had access and what those meetings were about?

PSAKI: I don't have any information on that. I'm happy to check and see if we have any more comment.

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4:04:58 p.m. [via NBC News Live Event]  
49 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: Jen, the Surgeon General has said that misinformation about COVID amounts to a public health crisis.

PSAKI: Yeah.

WEGMANN: I'm wondering: Regardless of ownership, would the White House be interested in working with Twitter like it has in the past to continue to combat this kind of misinformation? Or are we in a different part of the pandemic where that kind of partnership is no longer necessary?

PSAKI: Well, I think we engage regularly with all social media platforms about steps that can be taken that has continued, and I'm sure it will continue. But there are also reforms that we think Congress could take and we would support taking, including reforming Section 230, enacting antitrust reforms, requiring more transparency and the President is encouraged by the bipartisan support for — or engagement in those efforts.