

White House press briefing

08/04/22

3:40:22 p.m. [via ABC News Live]

2 minutes and 33 seconds

PETER DOOCY: Why is it that, over the last couple of months, President Biden's been so much tougher on Russia than he is on China?

JOHN KIRBY: I wouldn't agree with the premise of the question, Peter.

DOOCY: Well, I think just when Russia was getting aggressive around Ukraine, the president was out every couple of days telling Putin, "don't do it." And now, China is getting aggressive around Taiwan and we're not hearing anything like that from the President.

KIRBY: Oh, I beg to differ. I've been standing up here for a week, Peter, talking about our concerns about what China was preparing to do. We put out declassified information that we saw what the Chinese playbook was going to be. Look, I stood at other podiums not long ago and much in the same way we — we reacted then, we're reacting now in terms of being honest and transparent about what's going on and calling it out for what it is. And then today talking about exactly what we're going to do to make sure we can help preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific. So, I'm — I'm afraid I just challenge the premise of your question.

DOOCY: I know you said that there's not a call scheduled with Xi. Is there a reason why? Because President Biden's known him for decades.

KIRBY: Yeah.

DOOCY: He's got a lot of time up there in the residence this week.

KIRBY: He doesn't have free time. He's — he's — he's —

DOOCY: Is there a reason he can't just pick up the phone and call?

KIRBY: — he's been working all the way through his illness, quite frankly, Peter, so it's a little bit insulting. And, as for a call —

DOOCY: It's not insulting —

KIRBY: It is.

DOOCY: — to —

KIRBY: It is.

DOOCY: — to say that the — that someone who is isolating by themselves —

KIRBY: You suggested he has a lot of free time as if he's not doing anything and you know that's not the case, Mr. Doocy. Now, look, as for a call with President Xi, I don't have anything on the president scheduled to speak to. If ever the President felt like a call with President Xi was the appropriate way to respond or that it would — that it would have an effect and an outcome that he wants to achieve, he certainly would be willing to do that. He's talked to Xi now five times. It's not like he's afraid to pick up the phone and call President Xi. And if there's — if a call is the right answer, I'm sure that President Biden will do that. But I'm not gonna get ahead of the President on this. I do want to stress. I said it before, but — I — I do think the — your question begs me to say it again. The lines of communication are still open with Beijing and we're using those lines of communication. And I think you'll see that in days to come, as well. That's really important and that's one of the reasons why President Biden made that call a week or so ago is to make sure — and you saw that in Karine's readout, to make sure that those lines of communication stay open and they are.

(...)

3:49:03 p.m.

1 minute and 38 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: There is reporting that the Biden administration is lobbying against legislation that would designate Taiwan as a major non-NATO ally. Can you tell us if that's accurate, and as we move toward what president Biden has often described this as an era of autocracy vs. democracy, should we be strengthening ties with Taiwan by entering into such a designation?

KIRBY: I think we — with respect to this proposed legislation, I think we're going to avoid too much comment right now. We certainly appreciate and respect the rule of Congress, and frankly, the support across the aisle. This year and so many years in the past for — for support to Taiwan. But I don't think it behooves us to try to get ahead of some proposed legislation before it moves — it moves further on down the way. I will only add that the Taiwan Relations Act, which is the law of the land, does provide the administration a lot of vehicles and venues. And we get fixated on the Taiwan Relations Act in terms of the security perspective, and arms sales, and those — those have continued under this administration and they will continue under this administration. But if you read the act, there's an awful lot more to it than just — than just arm sales and we fully respect that law of the land. We'll follow that law of the land. It does provide, on its own, an awful lot of flexibility and authority for the administration to continue to support Taiwan, particularly in their self-defense and we're going to keep adhering to it.

(...)

3:52:35 p.m.

1 minute and 20 seconds

EDWARD LAWRENCE: So, given the aggression we are seeing from China around Taiwan, and the FBI director today saying that China is the biggest threat to the U.S. — the number one

threat to the U.S. in the next ten years, would the President then caution companies from expanding business or doing business in China?

KIRBY: We have been nothing but transparent with — with businesses about — private corporations — about our concerns regarding operations in or around China. But they're private companies and they make their own decisions, and we have to respect that.

LAWRENCE: What about supply chains? With the — with the activity going on around Taiwan, how is that affecting our supply chains and will we have problems with that?

KIRBY: I don't think we've seen any effects yet. I mean, we're only a few days into this, so it's something we are watching and certainly are concerned about. But we've also, I would add, thanks to COVID, we've done a lot of work — particularly in the last 18 months — to make more resilient our supply chains across a range of sectors. It doesn't mean everything is fixed. It doesn't mean it's perfect, but we've done a lot of work in that regard. So, we'll just — we'll watch and see how this goes. But there is a lot more resiliency in our supply chain capability now than there was, you know, a couple of years ago.

(...)

3:58:38 p.m. [via *Washington Post* Live]
35 seconds

SIMON ATEBA: Mr. — Mr. Kirby, can you clarify one —

KIRBY [TO JEAN-PIERRE]: Who's got — who's asking?

ATEBA: — can you clarify one —

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: Last one, [INAUDIBLE]

KIRBY [TO REPORTER]: Yes, sir.

ATEBA: — the White House —

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: You said that our policy towards China has been consistent —

KIRBY [TO ATEBA]: Hey, your name is Simon, right?

ATEBA: — yes. I really want to ask you a question.

KIRBY: Si — Smon, Simon, Simon.

ATEBA: I'm trying to ask you these questions —

KIRBY: Simon.

KIRBY: — if you allow me to ask you these questions —

KIRBY: Sir —

ATEBA: [INAUDIBLE]

KIRBY: — I'm going to —

ATEBA: [INAUDIBLE]

KIRBY: — I'm going to call on this man. Sir, listen, now. I've been polite to you, but I expect a little bit of respect in return.

ATEBA: [INAUDIBLE]

KIRBY: You know where we are? It's the White House press briefing room and you need to be more respectful.

ATEBA: [INAUDIBLE]

KIRBY: I'm going to call on this reporter.

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: Thank you. You described our policy towards China as consistent and clear, but the U.S. policy towards Taiwan —

ATEBA: [INAUDIBLE]

(...)

4:00:34 p.m.

13 seconds

KIRBY: Thanks, everybody. Appreciate it.

REPORTERS: Thanks, John.

ATEBA: [SHOUTING]

JEAN-PIERRE: Okay, alright. We'll continue.

(...)

4:03:19 p.m.

2 minutes and 1 second

DOOCY: Just a quick one. One quick one.

JEAN-PIERRE: I don't know.

DOOCY: With every —

[REPORTERS LAUGH]

JEAN-PIERRE: Usually, this goes on for a while.

DOOCY: I — I just have the one left. Based on everything that's happening in Asia right now, does President Biden consider China to be an opponent or a competitor?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look — and Kirby said this and we've been saying this for the past couple of days — right — more than a week and — I'm going to answer it this way because this goes to why this has come up, which is the Speaker going to Taiwan. You know, she has the right to go to Taiwan. She has the right to travel wherever she wants. She is the Speaker of the House. She is a member of Congress. We can — we will not ever tell her where to go and we've been really clear with China. We — we have said — no policy changes at all. The One China policy stands. And — and the President, just a week ago today, spoke to President Xi. It was the fifth time that they spoke. They have a — continue to have an open — an open dialogue and so, that is — I just want to make that really and, you know, they're the ones escalating here.

DOOCY: Just, with the relationship moving forward, though, would he consider China a competitor or an opponent of the United States?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, look, when we — when you think about — when you think about our economy, how we're competing around the world, around the globe, you think about the CHIPS Act, right, and the Chips and Science Act, one of the reasons we talked about making sure that that got done in a bipartisan way — we saw that happen just a couple days ago — is we want to be able to compete. We want to be able to compete with China and we want to be able to have those manufacturing jobs, investment in — in the United States and also strengthen our supply chain, make sure we strengthen our national security. So, you know, as — as it relates to that — in that — in that — in that realm, you know, yeah, we want to be competitive as a country.