

White House press briefing  
08/09/22  
3:12:55 p.m. [via CBSN]  
2 minutes and 24 seconds

ZEKE MILLER: On a different topic, the FBI has — serve — served a search warrant on the former President's residence in Florida. Was the President or anyone at the White House aware of that search warrant or has anyone at the White House or the President been briefed in the aftermath of that search warrant being executed?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: No. The President was not briefed, did not — was not aware of it. No — No one at the White House was given a heads up. No, that did not happen.

MILLER: Is the White House at all concerned given the domestic political climate, but also the signal that it sends to the rest of the world that the Department of Justice carried out this sort of operation on a former President that it could even be — create the appearance of politically-motivated prosecution?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, first off — and you've heard us say this times at this podium, you've heard the President say this the Justice Department conducts investigations, independently. And we leave any law enforcement matters to them. It would not be appropriate for us to comment on any ongoing investigations. I can say that the President Biden has been unequivocal since the campaign. He believes in the rule of law, in the independence of Justice — of the Justice Department investigations — that those investigations should be free from political influence and he has held that commitment as President. I also want to remind you all of what he said on January 7th, 2021 when he then nominated Merrick Garland to be the attorney general and I quote: "We need to restore the honor, the integrity of the independence of the Department of Justice in this nation that has been so badly damaged. And so, many former leaders of that Department in both parties have so testified and that — and stated that. I want to be clear to those that leave this Department who you will serve. You won't work for me. You are not the president or the vice president's lawyer. Your loyalty is not to me. It's to the law, the Constitution, the people of this nation, to guarantee Justice." So, I would refer you to the Department of Justice.

MILLER: And just lastly, does the White House or the President believe it would be helpful both domestically and the signal that it sends abroad for the Department of Justice to be more open about the reasons for that search warrant, the underlying evidence there?

JEAN-PIERRE: Again, this is not something I'm going to comment on today or from here, at all. This goes to the Department of Justice and that is who I would refer you to.

(....)

3:16:48 p.m.  
1 minute and 37 seconds

MARY BRUCE: And along this rate, I understand you're underscoring the independence of the Justice Department, but just politically and in terms of the optics of this, you concerned about how it looks for the Justice Department to be investigating and raiding the home of former President, who may very well be the current President's rival in 2024?

JEAN-PIERRE: Again, we're just not going to comment on any ongoing investigations from here.

BRUCE: And to Republicans who say it reeks of politics?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, I'll say this. You know, the president and the White House learned about this FBI search from public reports. We learned just like the American public did yesterday and we did not have advanced notice of this activity. President Biden has been very clear from before he was elected President and throughout his time in office that the Justice Department conducts their investigations independently. He believes in the rule of law and what we are — our nation's of — a nation of law. And he — again we defer any incoming on this particular incident yesterday to the Department of Justice.

JEFF MASON: Follow up on that, Karine. Republicans have said they will probe this raid if they take over the House or the Senate after the November elections. What is the White House's reaction to that?

JEAN-PIERRE: Again, I'm just not going to comment on any reaction to — to what happened yesterday. We are going to refer any incoming to the Department of Justice.

MASON: Okay, but that's not really about the Department of Justice. It's more about what might be coming your way if the election does not go your way.

JEAN-PIERRE: That is a hypothetical and I'm just not going to entertain it at this time.

(....)

3:20:01 p.m.

13 seconds

KAITLAN COLLINS: And on the President's agenda, how does he plan to use the string of wins that he's had lately and that Democrats had lately to turn it to a sense of momentum, not just for his own low approval ratings, but also to help Democrats in the midterm elections?

(....)

3:23:21 p.m.

32 seconds

STEVEN PORTNOY: Once more on this question of the general reaction to what has happened since yesterday. Does the President that the FBI's legitimacy and decision-making in the way that it handled this is on the line.

JEAN-PIERRE: The President has been very clear. I read his quote from when he — on January 7th, 2021 when he nominated Merrick Garland and how he felt the importance of not politicizing the Department of Justice, the importance of having that independence and so, I leave — I leave the quote that I read to all of you just moments ago, to you.

(....)

3:24:09 p.m.

3 minutes and 50 seconds

PETER DOOCY: Do you consider Donald Trump to be a political rival of President Biden?

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm not going to speak to that from here.

DOOCY: But he talks about Trump all the time, so do you consider him to be a —

JEAN-PIERRE: Ehhh, I don't talk about Trump all the time.

DOOCY: — ultra-MAGA, you guys were criticizing his handling of COVID last week.

JEAN-PIERRE: Ehhh.

DOOCY: You've mentioned his January 6 response a couple days ago.

JEAN-PIERRE: Ehhh.

DOOCY: So, can you say, based on all that. I didn't say anything about Mar-a-Lago. I'm just asking if you consider the President to be a —

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm saying from here I'm not going to comment on that.

DOOCY: Does the President still want to — think that he would be very fortunate to run against Trump in 2024 like he has said before?

JEAN-PIERRE: Again, I am not going to comment on —

DOOCY: Just — it's just —

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm not —

DOOCY: — a quote —

JEAN-PIERRE: — I'm —

DOOCY: — from the President: "In the next election, I'd be very fortunate if I had that same man running against me. Does he still think that?

JEAN-PIERRE: All I can tell you, Peter, is that the President intends to run in 2024.

DOOCY: Is there a concern here that, if you guys don't say more, then these Republicans, who are accusing this White House of weaponizing the Justice Department, weaponizing the FBI are — that's going to become the public sentiment if you guys don't say, once and for all, "we are not going that.

JEAN-PIERRE: First — first of all, we're just not going to comment on the Department of Justice investigation.

DOOCY: Okay, let me make it easier.

JEAN-PIERRE: We are just not going to comment on that.

DOOCY: Is this White House weaponizing the Justice Department and the FBI against political opponents?

JEAN-PIERRE: The President has been very clear from before he was elected — very clear on this — hold on —

DOOCY: It's just —

JEAN-PIERRE: — throughout his time in office.

DOOCY: — he's President now. I heard the quote. We will be playing the quote tonight at six o'clock. Is this administration weaponizing the Justice Department the FBI against political opponents?

JEAN-PIERRE: Peter, the President believes in the rule of law. The President believes in the independence of the Department of Justice.

DOOCY: That's — that's a yes or no. Just is —

JEAN-PIERRE: No, that's —

DOOCY: — the White House —

JEAN-PIERRE: — no, it's a yes — a no for you. I'm answering the question. You may not like it, but I'm answering the question.

DOOCY: — I'm just —

JEAN-PIERRE: and I'm — nope, nope, nope. I'm answering the question.

DOOCY: Just trying to figure out what's happening.

JEAN-PIERRE: And I'm telling you that we are not going to comment on a criminal investigation. The President has been very clear. I laid out what his thoughts were back on January 7th in 2021 about how we saw the Department of Justice and I'm just going to leave it there. We are not going to comment come from here from this White House on a criminal investigation that is currently happening.

DOOCY: Just one more on the Inflation Reduction Act. Who around here decided that Americans were crying out for more interaction from the IRS?

JEAN-PIERRE: I — I don't understand your question. You have to say more.

DOOCY: Do you think it is going to be popular when the 87,000 new employees hired by the IRS go around and start auditing people to pay for the Inflation Reduction Act?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, it's very clear. The IRS commissioner was very clear on this. He said that, on the record, that this only will — it will only apply to those earning over \$400,000. The commissioner said — and I quote — “these resources are absolutely not about increasing audit scrutiny on small businesses or middle income Americans. As we've been planning our investment of these enforcement resources, it is designed around Treasury directive that audit rates will not rise relative to recent years for households making under \$400,000.”

DOOCY: So, no audits

JEAN-PIERRE: So, this is — this is focused on those who are — you know — corporate, wealthy tax cheats that Republicans — congressional Republicans wanted to defend. That's who they wanted to defend. They wanted to defend those corporate tax sheets. This is not about that. This is not about people that folks that make less than \$400,000.

DOOCY: So, no new audits on anybody making under \$400,000 a year?

JEAN-PIERRE: No. Very clear. No.

(....)

3:41:25 p.m. [via LiveNOW from Fox]

1 minute and 1 second

SEBASTIAN SMITH: So, I'm not asking you to comment on the Justice Department side of this, obviously, because I know you're out. But politically, is the President — who's the country's leader — is he confident that he has a plan to address the way that a lot of Americans — maybe even a very large number of Americans — are being told and may now believe that Donald Trump is being persecuted, that the Deep State's coming after you, that the IRS and the FBI are corrupt. All this kind of stuff. This is really believed, apparently, by really a lot of people. He's the leader of the whole country, as he often says. Does he have a handle on this?

JEAN-PIERRE: Your question is still asking me to comment on what's happening, right? By me answering, it is still asking me a question to comment and on it. Oh, absolutely. So I'm going to stick to what I've been saying — is that this is a criminal investigation that's independent of — 0 to the DOJ and we leave any inquiry, any questions about what is happening to the Department of Justice.

(....)

3:47:00 p.m. [via Washington Post Live]

4 minutes and 14 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: The President campaigned on binding up the wounds of the country and restoring norms and I'm wondering two years in if the President believes that he has made progress in restoring the American public's faith in federal institutions?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, one of the things that we understand and — and the President understands — and I've been asked this question in different variations and it's pretty much the same. You know, when he — when he ran — he understood that we were in a political — politically polarized environment. He understand [sic] that it was going to be a lot of work to bring people together and I think the work continues. Even in his first 18 months, there's a lot of work to be done and, you know, but he has been able to do some things that people said he couldn't be — he couldn't do, right? The bipartisanship on the bipartisan infrastructure law. It brought the right and the — you know — the R's and the D's — Republicans and Democrats — together that was because of this president's leadership that he was able to do that, to deliver an infrastructure investment that was historical. He was able to — we were able to do that with the chips — Chips and Science act, bring the two sides together to get something done to make sure that we're leaders across the world when it comes to manufacturing. And so there are things that this president has done because of his leadership. Somebody was asking me about NATO. That is also important as well. It's — NATO's the strongest that it's been in modern times because of his leadership abroad. So, I think there's still more work to be done. It's not like turning the — the light switch on and so we're going to continue to do the work. So there's no — there's no yes or no answer. There is we're going to continue to work towards that.

WEGMANN: Gotcha. And then you've said repeatedly that the President learned of the news of the — the FBI visit to Mar-a-Lago the other day through news reports. Can you tell us anything more? Was he watching the news? Was he scrolling Twitter? Did someone in his staff flag it for him?

JEAN-PIERRE: I can tell you this. He was not aware of — of — of — of the — of — of the — what was it? The Mar-a-Lago raid. I don't know what you guys are calling it before it happened. So I can tell you that did not know.

WEGMANN: So, someone flagged it for him.

JEAN-PIERRE: He learned about it really like all of us did. I'm sure maybe someone on his team flagged it for him, but he was not aware. What I can tell you definitively and for sure, he was not aware of this, he was — we were — nobody in the White House was. We were not given a heads-up. And we did not know about — about what happened yesterday.

(....)

3:53:53 p.m.

1 minute and 17 seconds

ANDREW FEINBERG: Adjacent to the news of the day from yesterday, since the news of the search of former President Trump's home became public, there's been a lot of reporting, a lot of chatter extremists online about the possibility of violence. People talking about Civil War II, etc, etc. The President put out a domestic violent extremism strategy last year. Is the White House in contact with the Justice Department, DHS, or other Departments about preparing for possible violence as a result of this?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, we've been very clear and so, our message is this that the President and this White House — there's no place for political violence in this country. People have the right to raise their voices peacefully, but we would strongly condemn — as we have many times from here. The President has condemned any efforts to plan violent behavior of any kind and so, we would ask Americans to remain peaceful in this time. Again, this is something that we condemn. I don't have anything more to share about the particular policy that you're asking me about.

(....)

3:57:15 p.m.

42 seconds

SIMON ATEBA: I know you said you don't really want to comment on an ongoing investigation, but what time did he President learn about the raid on — the raid yesterday.

JEAN-PIERRE: I — I don't have anything more to share, Simon. I've — I've said all that I can about — the — the sh — the topic.

ATEBA: Yeah. And also, you said that the President believes in the rule of law. Does he believe in the rule of law when it comes to the former President or even his son?

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm not going — I'm not going to comment anymore on both of the topics that you just mentioned. The Department of Justice is independent with their criminal investigation. The President

has been very clear on that and we — I would refer to Department of Justice on those — those two topics that you just brought up.