

White House press briefing
08/31/22
3:10:37 p.m. [via CBSN]
1 minute and 2 seconds

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: You know, the President thinks that there is an extremist threat to democracy. The President has been as clear as he can be on that particular piece when we talk about democracy, when we talk about our freedoms, the way that he sees it as the MAGA Republicans are the most energized part of the Republican Party. The — that extreme — this is an extreme threat to democracy, to our freedom, to our rights. They just don't respect the rule of law. You heard that from the President and you know they are pursuing an agenda that takes away people's rights, so — which is what the President said last week on Thursday. You all heard him. This is what the President said yesterday and that's what he's going to continue to say and there's the thing. The President's not going to shy away to call out what he can clearly see is happening in this country and, you know, again, MAGA Republicans are this extreme part of the party and that is facts and that's what he's going to continue to lay out.

(...)

3:13:50 p.m.
12 seconds

JEFF MASON: The President weighed in pretty forcefully about threats to the FBI, FBI agents. Is he satisfied, is the White House satisfied that FBI agents are getting the protection that they need as a result of these threats?

(...)

3:17:33 p.m.
7 minutes

MJ LEE: Just back to yesterday's speech from the President. He, obviously, was critical of senior lawmakers he said for saying things to the effect of if such and such happens, there will be blood in street. He was obviously also very clear that any threats, attacks on the FBI, law enforcement agents, that those were not acceptable. Given all of that, I'm just wondering if the President would be open to having direct conversations with some senior lawmakers, some of whom he has known for many years, to tell them to cut it out?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I don't have calls to preview or any conversation on this specific subject. As you know, we try to keep conversations with lawmakers private, so nothing there to preview or to add. Look, you know, we have long been clear when the Department of Justice independence — sorry that the Department of justice and the FBI, you know, as I just said, like, we need to — we need to not attack our brave and women who protect the country and who protect our communities and you just heard me lay down what funding the President has put forward and announced to do just that, so, you know, the President was just reemphasizing that violence or

threats of violence has no absolutely place — no place in our society, which we should all agree on regardless of the point of view. It doesn't matter which side of the aisle that you're sitting on we need to denounce that. And so, when you are inciting violence or when you are making comments the way that we've heard over the weekend from some leadership and some members — members in elected office, that's a dangerous thing and the President's not shy away from calling out — calling out those types of comments.

LEE: I guess, without just previewing specific conversations that may have happened or could happen in the future, you know, if he believes this rhetoric is potentially harmful or dangerous to law enforcement, you know, does he feel he has a responsibility to do everything you can? Actually, he made that very clear yesterday by, for example, again, reaching out to some of these members directly and hearing the conversation.

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, MJ, I hear your question, but all you have to do is do turn on the TV and hear from the President directly on how he feels about what he's hearing and he's been very clear about that. And again, he's not going to shy away, he believes and I have set a couple times at the podium at this point is, as President, he has the obligation to speak out against threats against our democracy against violence. It is — he believes, as President, you have the strongest platform, if you will, the strongest voice and that's what he's going to continue to do. Again, he's not going to step away from it. He's not going to shy away from. I think any of those legislators or any of those elected officials — all they have to do, after they've seen the clip over and over again from your network and others about what the President has said yesterday and how forceful he was, how passionate he was and that's — that's going to continue.

LEE: And just one more.

JEAN-PIERRE: One last one.

LEE: — quick on tomorrow —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

LEE: — just given that, you know, you all have billed this as being related to the battle for the soul of America which is something he obviously ran on back in 2020. The threats to democracy that he obviously, saw as being real two or three years ago, does he believe those forces are still at large now or does he believe that there is some progress since he came into office?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, he believes that it continues. He believes that we need to continue to fight for democracy. He has been very clear, look at the extreme wing of a party — the MAGA Republicans — it's not stopping. It is continuing and we heard it over the weekend as you're asking me about the President talking directly with legislators and this is — this is an important time and he is — again, he's not going to shy away from it. He's going to continue to lift that up in what he sees and what he's going to call out and, you know, he believes that there are a majority of Americans who disagree with that, who disagree on the attack of core values as a country and he's going to speak directly to them tomorrow. That's what you're going to hear. [TO

CORDES] Go ahead Nancy and then I'm going to come to the back and then I'll come around.

NANCY CORDES: Thanks, Karine. Over the past week or so, we've have heard many Republicans arguing the President ran as a uniter and now he's calling MAGA Republicans, which is a very large swath of the American populace semi-fascists. He is arguing that they're a threat to democracy. Does the White House believe this is a fair criticism by Republicans, that this is not unifying language?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I will say this, Nancy. Sadly, there are more examples than I can count on how we have seen recently armed attacks on federal law enforcement. There are just a couple of things I just want to say here. You have Representative Paul Gosar — has posted videos depicting him attacking the President and members of Congress. You have the Representative Majority — Marjorie Taylor Greene has publicly expressed support for shooting prominent Democratic elected officials and suggesting physically assaulting transgender school officials. You have Representative Madison Hawthorne — has said falsely if election systems continue to be rigged and continue to be stolen, then it's going to lead to one place and that's bloodshed. And just last week, governor Ron DeSantis suggesting that Dr. Anthony Fauci should be physically assaulted and former President Trump has done the same many, many times. And many of your colleagues coming to talk about they have reported on this dangerous trend that we're seeing and for example, *The New York Times* headline from this month: "As right-wing rhetoric escalates, so do threats and violence." And so, these are things we have to call out. Again, I was talking — I can't remember who just asked me the question I was talking about soul of the nation, that is something the President has talked about since 2017 when he wrote that article in *The Atlantic* and he's called it out then. He called it out January 6. He called it out Inauguration Day. He called it out last week. He called it out yesterday. So, there has been a consistent callout from the President about what he is seeing from this extreme part of — of this party — of the Republican and historians I would argue would — would say the same.

(....)

3:28:22 p.m. [via *Washington Post Live*]
2 minutes and 44 seconds

EDWARD LAWRENCE: Yeah, so, the International Energy Agency summer report shows that the Russian revenue from oil exports increased 40 percent from last year. It seems that the sanctions are not cutting off revenue to the Russian President.

JEAN-PIERRE: So this is exactly why — I think you've heard us say this before — President Biden, and the G-7 leaders have directed relevant members of their team to explore mechanism to set a global price cap. You heard us talk about that when the President was in Europe, most recently in Germany and this would be for Russian oil and — and starving Putin of his main source of cash and forcing down the price of Russian oil, to help blunt the impact of Putin's war on the pump, so it will be discussed further this week at the G-7 Finance ministers meeting. This is happening on Friday. The U.S. has already taken strong action on — on — action to ban Russia oil and us allies have announced plans to wind down their own imports of Russian oil.

But, again, Putin, as you've heard us say, has continued to try to find new markets for Russian oil. This is the most effective way we believe to fit — to hit hard at Putin's revenue and doing so will result in not only a drop in Putin's oil revenue, but — but also global energy prices as well.

LAWRENCE: But why not signal a policy change for long-term support to open oil production here the U.S. or natural gas pipelines here in the U.S. to undercut the Russian supply of oil on the global market?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, look, we think that working with our allies and making this announcement — this price cap on Russian oil is going to be very effective. Again, you've heard directly — heard the President, speak about this very recently. We'll hear more will Friday how this is going to work and it is not just us. It is also a partnership with our allies — the G-7. So, again, we believe this is going to be a — a way to really hit Russia financially and so, that's kind of the process that we're going to take moving forward and also, as you know, we've taken — we've also taken actions already that we think has had an effect. But again, as we know, as I just stated, Russia is always looking at other markets, which is why doing this particular piece. We think will be effective.

LAWRENCE: But those other markets are Chian and India. Is the President then going to use his relationship to stand upto China and India and say, stop buying oil from Russia.

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, we've been also very clear about that, I don't have anything more to add. But again, we think by doing these price caps is going to hit Russia — it — in a way that is going to be the most effective. So, again, the G-7 finance ministries are meeting on Friday to talk more about that and we'll have more to share.

(...)

3:31:12 p.m.

2 minutes and 40 seconds

PHILIP WEGMANN: When it comes to voters, how does the President differentiate between the ultra-MAGA folks who he sees an extremist threat to democracy and the average GOP voter?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, can't talk about voters from here —

WEGMANN: The average individual.

JEAN-PIERRE: No, I — I get you. Not gonna — I just need to say that, right. Just to — just to be clear. I mean, the President has been — has been really clear about the leadership — right — the MAGA Republicans in leadership. They are ones who have the platform. They're the ones who — again, the extremist part of the Republican Party. They're the ones who, you know, folks listen to in their own party and by inciting violence, by trying to take away — they're the ones who are the legislators and trying to take away our rights, trying to take away our freedoms, and that's who the President is speaking to, right? He's being very targeted in that way and calling that

out and saying you know, we can't allow our democracy to be attacked in this way and they have a responsibility, right? They have a responsibility in how they're their business on behalf of their constituents.

WEGMANN: So, for folks sitting at home, when the President is talking about preserving the soul of the nation and those threats to democracy, he's not referring to those individuals. He's talking about Republican leadership?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, let me be — be very clear. It's not just Republican leadership. It's not just that blanket, right? He is talking about, in a — in an — in an extreme portion — an extreme part of — of the party. He's been very, very clear about that. He was just in Maryland as you all know. And he talked about, Governor Larry Hogan and talked about how he is a conservative Republican who does not — who is not in that bucket, right? He was very clear and he was very purposeful in saying that and being respectful to conservative Republican who are not part of that extremely. So, again, want to be very clear here. This is not a blanket statement. This is calling out what we have seen for some time since 2017 as the President wrote about in his article — right — when you are — when you are supporting an authoritarian figure, as we have seen, who is leading — currently leading the former — the former President, you know, and — and — and saying the — inciting the violence that you are or wanting to take away our freedoms, you know, we need to say something. He's not going to shy away from that.

(...)

3:39:33 p.m.

4 minutes and 9 seconds

PETER DOOCY: There's a big problem now that rainbow fentanyl, which is designed to target children, has been found in 18 states. What specifically is the President doing about this?

JEAN-PIERRE: So we just talked about the day — the Overdose Awareness Day that — that we are observing today. I just laid out, what the Second Gentleman and others are doing within within this administration and you know, we are going to continue to focus on the steps that we're taking, that we have taken. You have the \$80 million that DHS just announced today on drug prevention and the President has taken many steps. He's made this a priority to make sure that we attack a very dangerous — very dangerous drug — serious drugs in this country.

DOOCY: But 300 over doses a day now. We know how the fentanyl is coming into the country. It's coming right across the southern border. The DEA administrator says so. So, when is the President going to do something more to stop this?

JEAN-PIERRE: So I will say that you have seen a 200 percent increase of fentanyl seizures, which means that we are — we are doing the job of catching a drug traffickers. 200 percent. Hold on. 200 percent increase. Just again. Seizures —

DOOCY: An American's life expectancies are going down at a rate not seen in a century and part

of that is being driven by drug overdoses, so what is the President going to do to stop this?

JEAN-PIERRE: And we — we agree. We see those same numbers as well, but the fact that, you know, we are securing the border, that we are securing record levels of funding from DHS, so they can stop illicit drugs from entering into the country, this — the fact that it's not just drug traffickers that we're dealing with as well. We're stopping — stopping financiers. This is what's happening with this and under this administration.

DOOCY: It's not being stopped. 300 overdoses. This is being designed to target children.

JEAN-PIERRE: I —

DOOCY: — children. Drug cartels in Mexico —

JEAN-PIERRE: — I hear you.

DOOCY: — want to kill American kids. What is the President doing about it?

JEAN-PIERRE: I hear you. I just — I just laid out 200 percent of increase of drug fentanyl seizures. That is a dangerous drug that we are taking off the street. We are going to continue to focus This is an important, important priority for this President. And I just want to talk about how you're saying that there — you know, there just — the border — right — and how the border — whatever you just stated — just want to clear this up. Migrants who —

DOOCY: People are coming in. Fentanyl's coming in. People are dying.

JEAN-PIERRE: — hold on. So, migrant — migrants, who attempted to enter the country illegal — legally are taken into custody by Border Patrol agents. That is how it works. That is the process that we are taking. They are then either expelled, by the court order under of Title 42, transferred to ICE. Custody, or monitored through alternatives to detention program as they await further processing. We have made 3,000 arrests in the first three months of launching an aggressive campaign to combat the multi-billion dollar human smuggling industry. When it comes to — when it comes to what's happening with drug overdose, this is something that the President cares about. This is something that the President has laid out a plan to make sure that our kids, our babies, our — you know, young Americans here in this country are not continuing to suffer from that, are not continuing to be given or access to drugs. This is something that's incredibly important to this President, so to say that we're not doing enough Peter, is just falsely categorically wrong, especially on a day that we are observing what needs to be done and — and we have announced — DHS has announced \$80 million to prevent that, so we are doing the work. And here's the thing, Peter, if — look. If Republicans want to help us, stop overdose and stop our kids getting overdose because of these dangerous drugs, because of these fentanyl that we're seeing in the streets, we're happy to work with them, but they're not. I'm moving on, Peter.

DOOCY: I have just one —

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm moving on, I'm moving on.

(...)

3:51:40 p.m.

54 seconds

JENNIFER JACOBS: On the event yesterday in Pennsylvania, the President explicitly campaigned for certain people and, correct me if I'm wrong, I believe it was an official White House event, not a campaign. Can you share some context on your thoughts on that because he was very explicitly saying please elect certain people.

JEAN-PIERRE: So, the President can say a lot — can go a lot further than I can from here. He does not have — he is not bounded by the Hatch Act the way that we are and so — so I'll say that first and I don't have much more to add because I've always — even myself, I try to be very, very careful from here. But again, he is in a different category than we all are here and — and I'll just leave it as that.

JACOBS: And it was an official event, correct?

JEAN-PIERRE: It was. It was an official event. Tomorrow night will be an official event as well.

(....)

3:54:53 p.m.

19 seconds

KATHRYN WATSON: With all the attention on the former President's handling of classified information, not asking you to comment on that specifically, but can you say with certainty to the American people that President Biden, in his time as President, has not mishandled, improperly stored, done anything improper with classified information?

JEAN-PIERRE: No. And I'm going to move on.

(...)

3:55:17 p.m.

56 seconds

KAYLA TAUSCHE: On the speech tomorrow, President Biden said in his victory speech in November 2020 that he sought this office to restore the soul of the nation. So, where does the White House believe the country is in that restoration process?"

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, he — he has said this before that it's going to take some work. You've heard him say that. You've heard us say that. But what he's not going to do is shy away — again

— from calling out extremism that he is seeing these MAGA Republicans. He is not going to shy away from that. Is there more work to do? Absolutely. Do we have to continue to protect our democracy? Yes, we do. That is the reality that we're in — protect our freedom, you know, protect our rights and that's what he's going to continue to do day in and day out and you're going to continue to hear that from him, not just Thursday, not just yesterday but that message is going to continue.

(...)

3:57:50 p.m.

3 minutes and 7 seconds

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: Can you talk a little bit about — in regard to tomorrow's speech, can you talk a little bit about the timing? You've said a bunch of times that this is a theme he's discussed for many years, so — so why now is the time to do it in such a primetime fashion?

JEAN-PIERRE: Because he thinks our democracy's at risk. Because, I mean, you know, when you talk about taking away our freedom, June 24, the decision from the Supreme Court justice on the Dobbs decision, that was a decision to take away our constitutional right. That was an important — important moment for our country. It put women's lives at risk and it's not just, you know, reproductive rights. It's going to be other rights as well as we heard from Supreme Court Justice Thomas. He made that very, very clear and then after that, we heard from leaders of the Republican Party saying they wanted a national ban. So, we have seen recent efforts to take away our rights as Americans from an extreme — again — an extreme part — of their party. Those MAGA Republicans that you'll continue to hear us talk about and so that is continuing and it hasn't stopped. And I just listed out what recently — what recently leadership leaders in Congress have said, about attacking law enforcement individuals who are protect us [sic], you know, attacking their own colleagues from the other side of the aisle. That's dangerous. Again, the President's not going to shy away from speaking up, from speaking out, and he is — it is very important for him to speak directly to the American people as I have said and this is kind of goes into Phil's question. He believes a majority of Americans want to protect our democracy. He believes majority of Americans wants [sic] to protect our to protect our freedom. That's where he believes the majority of the country is, but we have to keep talking about it. We cannot shy away from it.

ORDOÑEZ: Can you talk about — give any color of how he's preparing for the speech? I mean, the guide in the schedule today seemed not so full. I mean, is he spending much of his day, you know, going through drafts with staff? Is he practicing it? What kind of — what's kind of the process, if you don't mind?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, as you know, as you know this is an important speech for the President. We're talking about a theme to your point that he's talked about since 2017. So, yes, he's working through the speech with his — with his senior, advisors, with his staff. He's continuing to do the business of the American people by meeting with staff on issues, on items that are critical and policies that we continue to work through to make sure that we do the work and continues —

always going to continue to do the work of the American people. But yes, to your point, he's going to look at, he's going to look at draft. He's going to write his speech and you'll hear directly from him tomorrow.