

White House press briefing

09/15/22

2:09:08 p.m. [via *Washington Post* Live]

2 minutes and 45 seconds

MARY BRUCE: On the situation along the border, crossings are up. Drownings along the border are increasing. We've been to one town recently where the morgue is overwhelmed by — by migrant deaths. Are you confident and do you feel that the situation at the border is under control? Are you doing enough?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: So, what we have — what we have been doing is — is doing the work that wasn't done by the last administration. We are fixing a broken system. It is not like turning the light switch on. It is going to take some time. But I'll say this. More individuals encountered at the border will be removed or expelled this year than in any previous year. That is something — of the work that DHS is doing and how we have been moving forward in making sure we are doing our part here. We have made — we have made more than 3,000 in the first three months of launching an aggressive campaign to combat the multi-billion dollar human smuggling industry. So, we have seen the work that we have done and how it's been effective and, again, we are — there is a process in place to manage migration flows, that includes expelling migrants as required by court order under Title 42, transferring them to ICE custody or monitoring migrants through the Alternatives to Detention program as they await further processing. So, there is a process in place. What these Republican governors are doing, again, is a political — they are using people — they are using desperate people, people who are trying to come here because they are fleeing communism themselves as a political pawn and it's horrible and it's shameful.

BRUCE: The bussing aside, how do you explain this influx?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, again, we understand that we have work to do. We understand that and we have been doing the work to do that. We have taken unprecedented action over the past year and a half to secure our border and rebuild a safer orderly process system. In the last year and a half, we have installed new border technology and have set up joint patrols in Mexico and Guatemala to catch more human traffickers. We have already made 3,000 arrests as I just mentioned. We have secured record levels of funding for the Department of Homeland Security and we have put in place dedicated immigration judges so asylum seekers can have their cases faster and we have expanded labor pathways including H2-B — H2-B visas. So, we have been doing the work. We know that — we know that it's going to take some time. But again, we are — removed more individuals or encountered more individuals at the border — they will be removed or expelled this year than in any previous year. And so, that is — tells you a little about the facts of what we've been doing.

(...)

[KJP tells Kaitlan Collins he hasn't talked to him yet about more busses/Martha's Vineyard flights]

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2:26:02 p.m.

3 minutes and 35 seconds

KRISTEN WELKER: And I want to ask you: On the topic of immigration, the Vice President said to my colleague, Chuck Todd, over the weekend, “The border is secure.” She also caveated that to say we also have a broken immigration system and talked about the need to fix that, but does the White House stand by those comments that the border is secure?

JEAN-PIERRE: What we stand by is that we’re doing everything that we can to make sure that we follow the process that’s been put forth. That’s why we have historic funding to do just that, to make sure that — you know, to make sure that — to make sure that the folks that we encounter at the border be removed or expelled and again, the facts are: More individuals encountered at the border will be removed or expelled this year than in any previous year. But that’s the work that’s —

WELKER: Is the border secure, Karine?

JEAN-PIERRE: — that we have been doing.

WELKER: Is the border secure?

JEAN-PIERRE: I’m just going to refer back to the Vice President. We agree with her. She is saying that there’s a lot of work to do, right? She also said that in that very statement. We agree that the border is secure, but there is still more work to be done.

WELKER: But I guess, you know, the question becomes how you can make that argument when DHS has said it’s bracing for these potentially 2 million migrants to come, which would be a record, in the coming months.

JEAN-PIERRE: So, you know, we’ll say this: Rebuilding the immigration system, especially one that was decimated under the previous administration, won’t happen overnight. We’re not going to flip a switch and get that done. That’s what I said at the beginning. We know that there’s work to be done, but we’re doing the work to make sure that — that we remove and expel folks who are coming here who are being encountered at the border. So, as the actions I’ve listed out show — as I’ve listed out show, we’re committed to getting it done and getting it done right. We need to do it in a humane way. We need to do it in a safe way and as we have repeatedly said, a long-term solution can only come from a comprehensive legislation that brings lasting reform to a fundamentally broken system. We understand that and that’s why we continue to call on Congress to also act, so we get it. It’s a — it’s a — it’s a fundamental, long-term issue. It is a broken system. But we are also doing the work. And, you know, I have to say, the work that — what we’re seeing Republicans doing, elected officials using — using migrants as a pawn is not the way to move forward on this. That’s not how we’re going to get this done. If they want to help us, then they should help us by voting for funding that will get the Department of Homeland

Security funding that they need to fix the system, or by helping pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill. So just one thing I — one more thing I want to say: According to NPR, the migrants said a woman they identify as “Perla” approached them and lured them into boarding the plane, saying they would be flown to Boston where they could get expedited work papers. The migrant said she, Perla, “offered us help — help that never arrived.” That’s not how you treat people. That is inhumane. That’s not how we should be doing things. There is a process in place. Yes, is there more work to be done? Yes, absolutely. But there is a process in place and that’s what we should be — that’s what these governors should be doing.

(....)

2:37:14 p.m.

2 minutes and 1 second

APRIL RYAN: On what you call this political stunt with the asylum seekers, let’s specifically get into the locations: Martha’s Vineyard, the Naval Observatory. Can you talk to the issue of — you said Boston. It’s an island that they sent the asylum seekers to — an island that is known to be, in some instances, a Democratic haven. Former presidents, former Democratic presidents vacation there, own homes there, et cetera. Could you speak to that, as well as the Naval Observatory?

JEAN-PIERRE: What I could say, and I’ve been very clear: It is a political stunt. That’s what we’re seeing from governors — Republican governors in particular and it is a cruel, inhumane way of treating people who are fleeing communism, people who are — who are — and we’re not just talking about people. We’re talking about children. We’re talking about families who were promised a home, promised a job, put on a bus, and, you know, driven to a place that they do not know and it is a cruel thing to do. According to local reports, Governor Ron DeSantis sent a hired videographer on the plane to Massachusetts in order to capture footage of them being dropped off. Remember, there were children on this plane. So, I cannot speak to anything outside of what we’re seeing — right? — which is — it is indeed a political — a political play. It’s cruel. It is a cruel way for elected officials — the people who have power, the people who are elected by their constituencies — to behave in this way and — and we should call it out and other Republicans should call it out. Republicans should be — their colleagues should be calling out the cruel way that they are playing and what they’re doing with their cruel political games and again, these are — these are families that are including children.

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2:45:43 p.m.

6 minutes and 40 seconds

JACQUI HEINRICH: Do you think that Americans believe that the border is secure?

JEAN-PIERRE: What I can tell you is the record and the process that we have been using to make sure that we do our best to secure the border, we do our best to make sure that we fix a broken system that was left behind by the last administration and that’s what we’re — we’re

going to continue to do. We understand it's not like flipping a light switch. This does not happen overnight. This is an immigration system that is fundamentally broken, and it's going to take some time. But we also need Congress to take action. We need Congress to act and to work with us on fixing this immigration system and what we're seeing from Republican governors is not the way to do it. It is, again — and I'll keep saying it — it is inhumane. It is cruel what they're doing to children and to families and if they want to work with us on securing the border, on fixing the immigration system, we're happy to do that.

HEINRICH: Isn't there some risk, though, that voters might feel like they're being lied to? When you — we're seeing images of — you know, in El Paso, they've released a thousand migrants on the street because the processing centers are overwhelmed there. You know, how is that humane? How is that safe, as you guys talk about so often, when it's overwhelming border cities? And they're asking the — the Biden administration to reimburse them for charter buses to get them out of the area, because they're — they're totally overwhelmed.

JEAN-PIERRE: So, again, it is a broke- — a broken system, the immigration system and it was — it was decimated by the last administration. That is a fact; it was decimated by the last administration. What the last administration wanted was a border wall that was ineffective and used — a use of taxpayers' dollars and — and that's what we saw from the last administration.

HEINRICH: [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE: But just recently, CBP reported that that new wall along the southwest border was breached over 3,000 times — that new wall and between fiscal year of 2019 and 2021, it's required \$22.6 million in repairs. That's what we're trying to deal with with a decimated system that was certainly not helped by the last administration. Look, we understand. I'm not saying that there's not more work to do. We are saying there's more work to do. We are saying that the system is broken, but we are saying that as well, we have — we have done — we have done a lot of work here to fix this system and again, more individuals encountered at the border will be removed or expelled this year than in any previous year. That is — those are the facts.

HEINRICH: Do you have a message for the migrants though who are saying that the border is open? I mean, today we talked to a few who arrived in D.C. They said that the border is open. "We know it's open because we come, we enter, no problem." We haven't heard a message from the administration in a few months telling people not to come. We've heard you guys talking about trying to make it a more orderly process, but you're not telling people not to come.

JEAN-PIERRE: So the Department of Homeland Security — Secretary Mayorkas has been very clear. He was on TV recently talking about this, talking about the work that they do. And so, I will leave it to the Department of Homeland Security to speak to that, specifically. But, again, this is a broken system and we are — we want to see Congress act. We want to see bipartisanship to fix the immigration system. We are fixing — trying to fix a system that was decimated by the last administration and, again, we are calling for Congress to take action.

HEINRICH: And one other question on inflation. The President dismissed the inflation report

and the stock market selloff on his way out of town yesterday. And then he said that test driving an electric car that cost more than double the average American's yearly salary made him feel optimistic. Is there — do you have a response to critics who say that this administration is “out of touch”?

JEAN-PIERRE: But can you say that one more time? The President dismissed —

HEINRICH: He dismissed the inflation report. He said he wasn't worried about it. We're talking about one tenth of one percentage and then he said he wasn't concerned about the stock market selloff, because he said the stock market doesn't represent the broader economy and then he went to Detroit and test drove a vehicle, an electric car, that's just out of price range for the average American.

JEAN-PIERRE: So let me — so, I get your question now. So the President's number-one priority — economic priority has been lowering costs for the American people. You think about the Inflation Reduction Act, which was only passed by Democrats; Republicans refused to — to get on board and pass it in a bipartisan way. It lowered costs for — for Medicare recipients — capped — capped that at \$2,000, a year when our seniors are paying \$2,000 or more a month and then you have Republicans as well who want to put Social Security and they want to put Medicare on the chopping blocks, so that is the work that we are doing as Democrats. We're trying to do everything that we can to lower costs. We're trying to do everything that we can to make sure that, you know, families keep their Social Security, unlike Republicans; and families have Medicare, unlike what Republicans want to do, which is take that away. Look, the question that the President was asked about the day before yesterday, which shows more progress — that data — the CPI data, which is what he was — he was speaking to — shows more progress in bringing global inflation down in the U.S. economy. Overall, prices have been essentially flat in our country these last two months. That is welcome news for American families. But no doubt — no doubt, we have more work to do, and we understand that and so, we are seeing some encouraging signs, including in — inventory is up, used vehicle price is down, and a cooling housing market, which is important. It will take more time and resolve to bring inflation down, which is why, again, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act — “we,” meaning Democrats, not Republicans — to lower costs of healthcare, to lower costs of prescription drugs, to lower cost of energy and, you know, the President's economic plan is creating good jobs and bringing manufacturing back to America. We've seen more than 600,000 manufacturing jobs return to the U.S. in the — in the last 19 months of this administration.