

White House press briefing

03/07/23

1:56:45 p.m.

3 minutes and 39 seconds

COLLEEN LONG: On immigration: So, we're hearing that this idea to detain families in detention, again, is one of a lot of policies that are currently under consideration as Title 42 restrictions are going to possibly end on May 11. So I wondered if you can rule out family detention or what can you say about the idea that, you know, families may or may not be detained — migrant families may or may not be detained at the border.

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: So I'm not going to go in on rumors that are out there or conversations that are happening at this time. The department, as you know — as you just noted, Colleen, the Department of Homeland Security is certainly to — is certainly continuing to prepare for the eventual lift of Title 42. No decisions have been made. But we've been very clear on how we're looking — how the President wants to move forward. And he's been clear from the start, from the beginning of his administration: by putting forth a comprehensive immigration reform and his approach has been making sure that we expand legal pathways for asylum seekers, limiting illegal immigration, addressing root causes, and also increasing border security. That's how the President has seen the process moving forward. That has been his approach and what he wants to do is build a system, build an immigration system that is secure, that is orderly, and that is humane and that's how we're going to move forward as we — as we, you know, look — look towards Title 42 eventually lifting. As you know, it's going to be as soon as May 11th. And that's going to be the President's focus. [TO BRUCE] Go ahead, Mary.

MARY BRUCE: I understand no decisions have been made, but, you know, the President, shortly after he came to office, put an end to this policy of detaining migrant families as a candidate. He said, "We should not be locking people up." You aren't ruling it out either, so why is this even being considered as a possible option now?

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm just not com- — I'm just not going to comment on rumors that are out there. I'm not saying it's being considered. I'm not saying any —

BRUCE: But you're not saying it's not.

JEAN-PIERRE: But I'm not saying it is, and I'm not saying it is not. I'm saying that I'm not going to speak to rumors. There are rumors out there. Clearly, the Department of Homeland Security is working through ways on how to move forward once Title 42 is lifted. I'm just not going to get into speculations. I'm going to let them do their work and what I will say, and I just laid this out for Colleen: We have laid out over and over and over again putting forth policies on how the President sees the process moving forward, right? He is going to use the tools that he has before him to make sure that we deal with an immigration system or we build an immigration system that's, again, safe, orderly, and humane and we've increased — expanded legal pathways for immigration. We have tried to limit — worked very hard to limit illegal immigration into this country by — also by making sure that the border was secure. Again, this is something that

Republicans could work with us on. He put forward an immigration policy — a comprehensive immigration policy — on day one, but what we're seeing on the other side is political stunts. That's what they want to do. We're not looking to do political stunts; we're looking to deal with a real issue.

BRUCE: I imagine the President is looking for a way to tackle this issue that is safe, orderly, and humane. Is there ever an instance in which he thinks detaining migrant families can be safe, orderly, and humane?

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm just not going to get into — again, that's diving into speculation that out — that's out there, conversation — rumored conversations. What I can lay out to you is his approach and it's been — we've been very clear on our approach these past two years.

BRUCE: Is there — just one more. Is there a hope here that by — that the threat of family detention may be a deterrent?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, this is a rumored conversation that I'm just not going to weigh in even by answering that question. I'm just not going to weigh into rumors that are out there.

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2:14:24 p.m.

JUSTIN SINK: Secretary Raimondo suggested that banning TikTok was a bad idea politically because you'd, "literally lose every voter under 35." The administration's review of TikTok has been going on for more than two years now, which is — which I think many critics have said suggests some level of foot dragging is — are these two things related? Is the political concern what is preventing the administration from taking action?

JEAN-PIERRE: No, I mean, this is not about a political concern. This is about making sure that we do the right thing for the American people. But I — you know, again, we're working with Congress to address concerns posed by apps like TikTok. I don't have anything else to share. I know there's legislation that's being thought about or going to be put forward. But we're going to continue to work Congress on that. I just don't have anything more to share. We've been — I was asked this question yesterday. We've been very clear on where we stand on this particular issue.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: Thanks, Karine. On immigration, among the plans or the strategy for border security, how much does deterrence work — and using deterrence policies work into the strategy for the administration?

JEAN-PIERRE: Can you say — can you say more?

ORDOÑEZ: I mean, a lot of administrations in the past have used deterrence as part of their

border security — border security strategy. How much is deterrence and sending a message and then using policies that would deter migration going to be part of the administration's policy moving forward from Title 42 — after Title 42?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I mean, if you look at what the President has put forward in the past — and, I mean, in the past several months with — you know, since the beginning of this year, when he expanded the parolee program, right? That was a way to give an opportunity to folks who are seeking asylum to find a way to get to apply or to come to the U.S. in a — in a — in a legal — in a legal way, right? When you think about what we were able to do, how we expanded that parolee program for Nicaragua and Cubans and Venezuela — Venezuelans and also Haiti — Haitians, it was a way to provide an opportunity to do that, right? So then —

ORDOÑEZ: But I'm talking about border security though.

JEAN-PIERRE: No, but I — but I'm — but that was a deterrence from coming to the border and a way for them to stay at home and — and find a way and use the app to come to — into the U.S. and so, that is a way — an incentive, an option, a path, if you will — for them to use to — to — to figure out how can they — how can they do this in a legal pathway, so those are humane ways of doing this. Those are ways of making sure that we're dealing with border security. As far as, you know, the word "deterrence" and — and policies specifically to that, like hard — hard policies specifically to that: Look, the Presi- — the President has been very clear on his approach. He wants to make sure that we do this in an orderly way, a humane way, and do it in a way that is — that still expands legal pathways but also deals with illegal migration. Don't have anything more specifics on that — on the "deterrence" language that you're asking me about. What we're — what we're going to do is put forth policies and use the tools to do just that: to build that system, that border system that was, by the way, decimated by the last — by the last administration.

ORDOÑEZ: So, in terms of that, of the system being decimated, now you've had two years to rebuild the system. You've been working on the eventual end of Title 42 since the beginning of the administration — working with groups on a plan. How confident should Americans be, come May, that the system will work? And that — how confident should they be that the — the administration is prepared and the system won't be overwhelmed?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, let me just give you a few data points on what we've been able to do — right? — which is migration from Honduras. If you look at migration from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, where our root causes work is focused on, is down by 71 percent since 2021. That is the work that this administration has done. I just talked about migration from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Haiti. That is down by 90 — more than 95 percent since we expanded the parole program. That was just — parolee program — which was just a month or two ago and that was, again, the President is using the tools that he has in front of him to deal with a real issue. Again, Republicans are not doing anything. They're doing political stunts. And the President is actually taking action. Now, he put forth a piece of legislation on his first day in this administration — a comprehensive immigration policy legislation. We would love to move that forward. But until then, we have to use the tools that we have in front of us to get this

done.

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2:20:08 p.m.

2 minutes and 36 seconds

PETER DOOCY: So cartels kill Americans on this side of the border with drugs, and now they're killing Americans on the other side of the border with guns. Why is President Biden so comfortable with cartels operating so close to the U.S.?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, let's be very clear. Let me take on the drug part here because — since you brought this up. Because of the work that this President has done, because of what we've done specifically on fentanyl at the border, it's at historic lows — historic levels that we have been able to record a number of personnel working to secure the border because of what we've been able to do, seizing that fentanyl. We've done it in a historic way. That's because of what this President has done. I just talked about 23,000 federal agents that have been able to be — that we've been able to hire and put at the border to secure the border. On top of that, historic sanctions going after traffickers and other financiers are helping disrupt fentanyl supply chains throughout their flow to the U.S. and we'll — we — we're really expanded access to treatments like — that are saving lives, if you think about it, which prevent overdoses, expanding as — as are fentanyl test strips and through the removal of the X-waiver, anyone registered to prescribe controlled medications can now prescribe lifesaving medication to treat addiction. So, again, we are seizing fentanyl at record historic levels because of what the — because of the — of what the President has done to secure our border and, look, we've also coordinated — made sure that we're coordinated our — our relationship with Mex- — with Mexico to deal with what we're seeing as it relates to violence, as relates to cartel. That is something — a relationship that we've continued to build with Mexico, an incredibly important partner. You saw that when he went down for the summit in Mexico City. So, the President is dedicated to this and is doing the work that we're actually seeing at the border, again, when you — we think about fentanyl.

DOOCY: But to the violence aspect of it: Now Americans are being slaughtered. Would President Biden be taking the same approach if it was al-Qaeda or ISIS operating just across the border from an American city?

JEAN-PIERRE: The President takes this very seriously. He takes this very seriously. The FBI and other agencies have been on top of this from day one. And so that's what he's going to continue to do. When it comes to Americans' lives and when it comes to their — the safety of Americans, the President is always going to make sure that that is a top priority.

DOOCY: Would President Biden ever consider using the U.S. military to disrupt cartel operations?

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm — I'm just not going to get into the military and how it's being used.

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2:24:15 p.m.

TARINI PARTI: Just another follow-up on immigration. Not asking about the detaining migrant families at all or any rumors around that. But just given what we've seen from the White House in recent months, including the new asylum rule, is this basically an acknowledgment that without legislation from Congress, the policies that the President previously opposed, he now thinks are necessary in conjunction with some of those legal pathways that you mentioned?

JEAN-PIERRE: So let me just — there's a couple of things that I want to say about that. A lot of people have compared what the President is doing as either extending what Trump did or being very Trump-like, and I just want to make sure that that is not — that is not what is happening here. What we saw in this last administration — the administration before us — was a gutting of the immigration system. That is what they led with, and that's what they did and a couple of things that we had to fix in this administration these last two years: Trump tried to deport DREAMers; we went to court to protect them. Trump ripped babies from their mother's arms; we're reuniting those children with their families, with 600 families reunited thus far. Trump funneled billions of dollars from military to build a useless wall, and what we did is we stopped that wall construction and returned the money to support military schools and also equipment. Trump banned asylum, forcing more people to try to enter unlawfully. We've expanded legal pathways for immigration, and unlawful migration is down. I just gave two pieces of data to show that. Trump tore down America's refugee system and what we are doing — we're rebuilding it and have a set of goal of resettling up to 125 — 125,000 refugees this year alone. Trump cut off critical assistance to stabilize the Western Hemisphere, and we restarted that assistance to help address the root cause — causes, like economic collapse, that are driving people to flee. Migration, again — and I mentioned this stat already — migration from countries where — where we — we're seeing root causes — where there — our root causes work is focused — is focused down by 71 percent since last year. So, that is — so, that is what we have been able to do in this past two years and how we have been able to try to fix something that the last administration has decimated.

PARTI: But given the pieces that are still in use or have been revived, is — is that sort of an acknowledgment that they are now necessary or deemed necessary —

JEAN-PIERRE: No, absolutely not.

PARTI: — by this administration?

JEAN-PIERRE: No, absolutely not. From day one, the President has put forth a bill that would expand legal pathways for imm- — for immigration, increased border security, making sure that we limit illegal immigration. The President is using the tools that are before him to try to deal with an issue that we're seeing here. We have said over and over again: If Republicans in Congress would come and work with us to deal with this issue, we can get it done, we can get it

fixed, instead of the political stunts that they're doing.

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2:30:07 p.m.

1 minute and 37 seconds

IKE IJIOCHI: Last night, Tucker Carlson cherrypicked video surveillance from the January 6th insurrection, severely downplaying the events of that day. He said the mob was orderly and meek and that they were tourists instead of insurrectionists. What's your response to Carlson and to Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who granted him access to that video?

JEAN-PIERRE: Anybody who watched that video would strongly disagree [sic] — disagree. Anybody who watched that video in a — with their own eyes, in a real way, and saw what happened on that day would — would disagree with what was just stated. The President has been very clear: January 6th was the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War and we should be focused on making sure that never happens again and so, we are certainly — we agree — I know Minority Leader and — and — Senator Schumer have already said this, and would hope that keeping the Capitol and Congress safe and secure remains congressional leaders' number one goal. And that should be our focus, and that should be what should be considered here and, again, it was one of the darkest days of our democracy. And all you have to do is watch those videos and see how horrific it was, see how sad it was, see an attack on the Capitol, which should not be happening in 2020. And we got to get down to the bottom of what happened. Again, it was an attack on our democracy and I'll just leave it there.

IJIOCHI: So is Speaker McCarthy irresponsible for handing over the video?

JEAN-PIERRE: I answered your question. I answered your question.