

White House press briefing [via ABC News Live subfeed]

04/11/24

2:11:46 p.m.

22 seconds

DARLENE SUPERVILLE: Was there any reaction from the President to O.J. Simpson's death? Do you know if they ever crossed paths? If so, how? When?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: So, I'll say this. Our thoughts are with — with his families during this difficult time — obviously, with his family and loved ones, and I'll say this. I know that they have asked for some privacy and so, we're going to respect that. I'll just leave it there.

(...)

2:17:14 p.m.

1 minute and 52 seconds

KAYLA TAUSCHE: I also just want to ask about the State Dinner because regulators in the Biden administration have sued both Amazon and Apple, alleging anti-competitive behavior that has caused public harm. So, why were executives from those companies invited to the dinner last night?

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, when it comes to the state dinner, we invite an array of folks to come in and — and obviously, you know, it's — it's an important night of — especially when another country comes. It shows bipartisanship. It shows the strength of that alliance that the U.S. has with that particular country. The — the list varies, you know, and we — it's always — it's always different types of people that come to — to the —

TAUSCHE: The Justice Department said just —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

TAUSCHE: — less than a month ago that Apple uses its control —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

TAUSCHE: — over the iPhone to engage in a broad, sustained, and illegal course of conduct —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

TAUSCHE: — saying that that lawsuit should send a strong signal to other companies.

JEAN-PIERRE: And —

TAUSCHE: What signal is the White House sending?

JEAN-PIERRE: — I hear your question. That’s the Department of Justice to decide, I do not —

TAUSCHE: But the White House chose —

JEAN-PIERRE: — oh, oh —

TAUSCHE: — to invite them to dinner.

JEAN-PIERRE: — no, I’m not saying that the DOJ invited — invited people to the White House state dinner. I saw what I’m saying. I’m saying DOJ move [sic] forward with that particular case — that particularly legal action. I can’t speak to that. We always invite an array of — of people. We bring people from all corners of different industries here to the White House. That’s what we do, and I just don’t have anything else further to share. And we, you know, I think it’s important that — that — that we do that, but I can’t speak to a DOJ legal case. They took —

TAUSCHE: The President doesn’t think that those companies did —

JEAN-PIERRE: — I —

TAUSCHE: — anything wrong?

JEAN-PIERRE: — that is legal action being taken by the Department of Justice. I can’t speak to that. They have their reasons of moving forward on that. I — I can’t speak to that. We invite a diverse group of people when it comes to events, not just state dinners when it comes to events here from — even different sides of the aisle. That’s what — that’s what this President has done. I can’t speak to what DOJ and their legal action. I just can’t speak to that from here.

(...)

2:30:48 p.m.

3 minutes and 51 seconds

JACQUI HEINRICH: I just wanted to clarify one of your earlier answers. Did the administration sent a direct warning to Iran not to attack Israel?

JEAN-PIERRE: We’ve been very clear. I — I’ve — we’ve been — I mean, you heard from the President — right — and laid out our commitment to Israel and make sure Israel’s security — that continues. And so we’ve had those conversations. I’m just not going to go into back and forth publicly.

HEINRICH: Well, the reason that I think it’s important to know is because we — you just shared earlier that, you know, the U.S. was quick to tell around directly that we had nothing to do with the strike in Damascus. The President hasn’t minced words on his feelings about Netanyahu. But we haven’t gotten a very clear answer on whether it was communicated directly to Iran, “don’t attack our ally.”

JEAN-PIERRE: I just said. We communicated to Iran. I just said that. I said, we're not going to go into a public back and forth on this, but I said we communicated to Iran.

HEINRICH: Okay.

JEAN-PIERRE: And we said had no involvement. That's what I said — right — on the strike in Damascus and warned Iran. We warned Iran, so I said that at the top and I'll say —

HEINRICH: I've got another question for you.

JEAN-PIERRE: — okay.

HEINRICH: On the issue of inflation, there was a report in *Politico* on Tuesday that the former chief of staff, Ron Klain, was teeing off on the President's, um, you know, talking about bridges all the time when he's on the campaign trail and not talking enough about the prices that people are paying. We didn't get any statement today on the PPI index. You know, why aren't we hearing more from the White House about the issues that people are facing at grocery stores and paying rent?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, in the State of the Union, the President made very clear about what he understands what the Americans are facing. And he's talked at almost every — every event that he's had crisscrossing the country after the State of the Union about lowering costs, how important it is and how there's more work to do. You hear that. In New Hampshire and North Carolina, he spoke about his work to lower healthcare costs. In Las Vegas. He discussed his plan to build and renovate — renovate two million homes to lower housing costs. In Madison, he announced his student debt relief plan. He also spoke with Senator Sanders just last week about his progress lowering costs for prescription drugs and inhalers. This week, he spoke about plans to lower costs for childcare, home health care, elder care. He talks about lowering costs almost every event. I just laid out the events that he did in March and in early April about how he's making sure that the number one economic concerns that Americans have are lowering costs and just like Ron — Ron said this. He said that the President has been — he believes he believes in what the president has been doing in crisscrossing the country and talking about the state of the union and talking about how we're going to continue to cut costs for Americans and making sure that we do not give big tax giveaways to corporations. That's what Republicans are talking about. They put out their — their budget and their budget is to cut Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, That's what they want to do, and we're doing the opposite. We're trying to protect that and lower costs for Americans.

HEINRICH: Is it all inappropriate for the President to be commenting on what the Fed might or might not do with interest rate cuts?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, the President on last [sic] — unlike the last one has been very clear about giving the Fed the space to make independent decisions about how they're going to move on forward on their monetary decisions. The President has always been very clear about that, and he'll continue to do so and in his comment yesterday, he was also clear, he said, "we don't know

what the Fed is going to do” and he was simply reflecting on public interpretation of recent data, but he also said we do not know what the Fed is going to do, and we’ve always given them the space to make those decisions — those monetary decision independently and make sure that, again, they have the space to do that.

(....)

2:40:01 p.m.

5 minutes and 40 seconds

ANDREW FEINBERG: You said earlier that the President is doing everything he can on getting humanitarian aid into Gaza. I have to respectfully suggest that that’s not true, because it took until seven aid workers were killed last week for the President to even suggest that he would change U.S. policy and possibly condition humanitarian — condition defense aid on the humanitarian situation in Israel. So, how can you stand there —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

FEINBERG: — and say the President is doing everything he can when, for weeks and weeks and weeks now, even as NGOs and aid groups warned that famine was imminent, he continued to refuse to pull on that lever and link defense aid to humanitarian aid.

JEAN-PIERRE: So, first of all, the President has done airdr- — we’ve done airdrops. We’re going to do this pier. We’ve talked about, for the past several months, how we need to do more and how we’re going to uptick our efforts to get that humanitarian aid into Gaza. We understand what’s going on. We understand that the dire — it — what it — the dire needs there are. And so, the President has — we’ve announced we’re going to do this pier, right? We’ve done — done this airdrops. And so, we have had the conversation with the Prime Minister multiple times, with the Israeli government almost every day on what needs to be done and we’ve had those conversations with them and so, now we are seeing an uptick. That is important. That is indeed what we want to see. We’ve also been working on doing this hostage deal. The President has been working around the clock. So, I take — I take offense to what you’re saying because it isn’t true. The President has been working on this hostage deal for months now — for months now.

FEINBERG: Respectfully, the hostage deal that —

JEAN-PIERRE: No, wait — for months now and that is a way to make sure that there is a temporary ceasefire that could pr- — hopefully lead to something longer, get those hostages home, and get humanitarian aid and so, that is what we have been also focusing on really diligently —

FEINBERG: But — but —

JEAN-PIERRE: — for the last t- —

FEINBERG: But with all due respect, Karine —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

FEINBERG: With all due respect —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

FEINBERG: — my question was on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the famine, which has been something that aid groups —

JEAN-PIERRE: But that's the same —

FEINBERG: — have warned about for weeks.

JEAN-PIERRE: The hostage deal includes humanitarian aid getting into Gaza.

FEINBERG: But —

JEAN-PIERRE: That's what he's been working on — this humanitarian aid to get into Gaza — and, also, get those hostages home.

FEINBERG: But why — why is it — because it sounds like —

JEAN-PIERRE: But you're saying that we haven't done anything.

FEINBERG: No. No. I —

JEAN-PIERRE: No, but — no, but it's what you're saying.

FEINBERG: You said the President has done — has been doing all he can.

JEAN-PIERRE: He's been working 24/7, around the clock —

FEINBERG: I have — I have —

JEAN-PIERRE: — to do what he can —

FEINBERG: — no doubt.

JEAN-PIERRE: But —

FEINBERG: But he has not — he has not until recently even suggested that he would condition military aid, which Israel needs, on them allowing food and humanitarian aid into Gaza, which the people of Gaza need. That has been — I hate to use the term —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

FEINBERG: — a red line every time I or any of my colleagues have asked —

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm — I'm not —

FEINBERG: — in this briefing room about this.

JEAN-PIERRE: And you've heard from the National Security Advisor. I'm not going to get into red lines from here. Here's what I can say: The hostage deal includes getting the humanitarian aid in. We've been working on that. We've been working on getting that hostage deal done. We're going to continue to do that. You've heard us say that we've worked around the clock to get those hostages home — which, by the way, includes American hostages as well — and getting that aid in. We know how dire the situation is — is in Gaza. We are very aware of that and we've had conversations almost every day with our counterparts in the Israeli government. We've had conversations, more than a dozen, with the Prime Minister and so, it is important — it is important to get that aid in. We understand that. We understand that, and we're going to have those conversations every day to make sure that it continues.

FEINBERG: Thank you. And one un- — one more, unrelated.

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

FEINBERG: Earlier this week, the former President met with Lord Cameron, the British Foreign Secretary. He has, in recent weeks, met with Viktor Orbán, the leader of Hungary. He has said he's spoken to Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia. There is a long history of Republican presidential candidates meddling in foreign policy to undermine their Democratic opponents. Without getting into Hatch Act territory — you know, telling people to vote for or against someone — is the administration concerned that this private citizen could be working against U.S. interests in the interests of his own political ones?

JEAN-PIERRE: And you're talking about his meeting specifically with —

FEINBERG: With — with foreign leaders: Lord Cameron, his talking with MBS, Viktor Orbán, and others possibly.

JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, a- — look, as it relates to other — other leaders and those types of meetings — specifically, let's — let's talk about David Cameron. The UK noted earlier this week it is common for officials from other countries to meet with representatives of different parties. That includes the United States, as we routinely meet with political leaders of different parties as well. For instance, we hosted Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid yesterday — at the beginning of the week — at the beginning of the week. And so, it's not uncommon. I am going to be really careful here, because you're talking about a presidential candidate. I'm going to be really mindful. I used David Cameron as an example, but I'm going to be really mindful. I'm not speaking beyond that.

(....)

2:49:10 p.m.

2 minutes and 52 seconds

EDWARD LAWRENCE: I'm gonna ask you about inflation. So yesterday in the Rose Garden, the President said that when he came into office, inflation was skyrocketing, but it was 1.4 percent in January of 2021 and that was the 11th consecutive month at that time under two percent. So, it was the President misleading Americans?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, when the President took office and you know this, there was a pandemic, it was closing down businesses, closing down schools, uh, and so, it was drastically disrupting the supply chain. Let's not forget about that uh, and — and so that's what was going on and that caused inflation around the world to increase. We know that and — and then further increasing inflation was the — the — Russia's war — Russia's war in Ukraine. And, in fact, many other countries are even worse off because of that — because of what we've seen with Russia's war. So, the President took historic action to deal with the disruption of the supply chain. Let's not forget what he did with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And so, we have made progress in lowering costs. We've made progress in dealing with inflation, but that's what was happening when we walked in: the pandemic, the disruption of the supply chain. All of these things were happening when the President walk — took office.

LAWRENCE: But the President didn't say the supply chain was being disrupted. He said inflation was skyrocketing.

JEAN-PIERRE: But that's what he was referring to, right? That's what was going on. Those were the things that were happening right before us. The pandemic — it was taking thousands of lives a day when he — he took office, schools were closed — or majority of schools were closed, businesses were closing and we had a supply chain that was disrupted. And so, that's what the President was speaking to and laying out and then, inflation, down the road became even more — increased even more because of the war that Russia had taken on into Ukraine.

LAWRENCE: But...the Fed's supply chain measure actually went down in — in November at that time. So — so is the President being honest about inflation?

JEAN-PIERRE: The President has said — what he said what he saw when he was — when he took — when he took office. The pandemic was happening, right? It disrupted the supply chain. We know, you know what happens when the supply chain is disrupted. You know what that leads to. And so, that's what he was speaking to and not only that — we — he had to — we also saw a war in Ukraine that Mr Putin — an aggressive aggression that Mr Putin was — was putting into Ukraine — set forth. And so, the president had to take historic action — take aggressive action in dealing with disruption in the supply chain. He had to — he released a Strategic Petroleum Reserve, so that we can deal with the supply chain and he continued to take action to lower cost. And that's what we've seen, whether it's health care costs, whether it's dealing with junk fees, whether it's prescription drugs, lowering those costs. That's what the President took

action in. But we saw what was happening when the President took office. We did.