White House press briefing [via ABC News Live subfeed]
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2:40:58 p.m.
5 minutes and 5 seconds

PETER DOOCY: I know you don't want to talk about campaign stuff, so I would just look for your in —

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: I really don’t.

DOOCY: — I would just look for your insight then —

JEAN-PIERRE: It’s not even when I don't want to. I can't. I can't —

DOOCY: — then how about your —

JEAN-PIERRE: — Peter!

DOOCY: — insight as the most prominent political communicator in the world. The White House press secretary.

JEAN-PIERRE: In the world?

DOOCY: In the world! White House press secretary.

JEAN-PIERRE: In the world?

DOOCY: Does a person generally want to debate when they are winning or not winning?

JEAN-PIERRE: I am not going to do political punditry from here, my friend. I'm just not going to do it.

DOOCY: So —

JEAN-PIERRE: I used to do that in my old job. Not gonna do it from here.

DOOCY: — should we see this sudden offer from the President to debate as a signal that you guys realize you need to change the subject after some really bad polling?

JEAN-PIERRE: You know, we went to — had a back and forth on polling yesterday. Um — and — I — you know, it just goes back to — very — the core of what I said to you, which is, look, this is a President that has had a pretty successful legislative — especially legislative tenure in the first three and a half years and has delivered on many things that are popular to the American people and we're going to continue to talk about it. We're going to continue to travel the country and talk about investing for America. We're going to continue to talk about how we need to do
more to lower costs for Americans. We get it. We understand how hard it is — the President talks about being around the kitchen table and how hard it is to make those difficult decisions sometimes every month on what you're going to pay for, so he gets that. Um — and I just don't want to get into polling any more details on polling. What I can say is the President is focused. He is laser-focused on making sure we do everything that we can to give people — Americans — a little bit of breathing room and that's what the president's going to continue to do. As it relates to the debate, you gotta talk to the campaign about it. That is a question for the campaign, and I'm sure they are eager — eager to answer your questions, Peter.

DOOCY: Then not a debate-specific question, but debate prep —

JEAN-PIERRE: Oh gosh!

DOOCY: — is something that traditionally can happen here at the White House. Who is going to stand in during the prep for Donald Trump?

JEAN-PIERRE: Who's going to stand in? Do you want to stand in for Donald Trump? Do you want to do that? I can connect you with the campaign. That might be fun for you.

DOOCY: Actually, so you're saying I can go debate Joe Biden behind the scenes?

JEAN-PIERRE: You know what?

DOOCY: For as long as I want? Actually, YES!!

JEAN-PIERRE: I think — I think that might be fun for both of you. It might be fun for both of you. I think — I think that might be fun. I don't have anything for you on that, but I appreciate the question. I appreciate you trying. Ah, alright. I got — I know we have to wrap up. [TO LAWRENCE] Go ahead, Ed.

EDWARD LAWRENCE: Yeah, thanks, Karine. I wanna ask you about how the President talks about inflation. So, two times over the past two weeks, the President said inflation was nine percent when he came into office. Is the President misleading Americans on that? Or does it — just not realize that inflation was 1.4 percent when he came into office?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, you know — and — and thank you for the question, because I know that this — we got a lot of incoming on this yesterday and look, I — what the President was — the point that he was making — uh — is that the factors that caused inflation was in place when he walked in — into the administration — when he took office. Let's — as you know, the pandemic caused inflation around the world to be — uh — uh — by disrupting our economy and breaking our supply chains — as you know, we had to act quickly on dealing with the supply chain. He put together a task force. You saw the President do that. And just a couple of examples. Here are one example. Semiconductor shortages already existed when he took office. That increased costs on everything from auto parts to washing machines. By some measures, it accounted for one third of inflation in late 2021. Many countries saw worse inflation than we did, and obviously — and we
have talked about this — we have been able to come out of that economic downturn in better in a better place than most of our counterparts across the globe. Reopening after the pandemic unavoidably increased inflation by unleashing pent up demand. Inflation increased quickly as we reopened. Annualized core PCP in the second term of 2021 was nine percent. And so, he was talking about the factors that were in place that led to — that led to that and look — and I said this earlier, going to say it again, we're going to do everything as we're talking about CPI, we're going to do everything that we can — this President is committed to doing everything that we can to fight inflation and that's what the President was trying to speak to.

LAWRNECE: But COVID started in March of 2020. So those factors were in place for about a year before the President took office.

JEAN-PIERRE: Look, I mean — look, the pandemic was happening, right? That caused inflation. That was happening. Supply chain was — was — was breaking our economy. That was happening and it wasn't just us. It wasn't just us. It was globally. And they were — and other countries, our allies and partners, were seeing worst [sic] inflation than we were and we are able to recover and we are in a stronger position as we've recovered, but he was talking about what was in place — what was happening — the factors that led and I talked about the second quarter of 2021. We saw that inflation was at nine percent. So he was speaking specifically to the factors that led to that.

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2:47:50 p.m.
1 minute and 48 seconds

JEFF MORDOCK: Republicans on Capitol Hill have been accusing the President of violating the Impoundment Control Act, which is an impeachable offense by withholding the bombs for Israel. Does the White House have a response to that? And what is the legal authority that the White House's citing for the President to withhold the weapons?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, look, I — uh — I will say this. Um — uh — the administration, as you saw, we put out a SAP just yesterday and that we just last night a statement of administration’s [sic] policy about this particular — the Israeli — uh — I'm sorry, Israel's Security Assistant [sic] Act. We said that we would veto that bill. The administration strongly opposes this attempt to constrain the president's ability to deploy U.S. security assistance consistent with U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. This bill raises serious concerns about infringing of the president's authorities under Article II of the Constitution, so that is — to answer a question, it's under Article II of the Constitution and that is our legal authority here. And with that —

MORDOCK: Do you have a response to the vio — the accusations that withholding weapons violates the Impoundment Control Act?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, I just said that we believe that we were in — it was in our legal authority to do so. We did and we've been very clear. This is one shipment — one shipment — as we talk
about the Rafah operations and are concerned about a major military operations and you've heard us, you know, I went back and forth with some of your colleagues about our commitment. You heard it from Jack — Jake Sullivan. Our commitment to Israel's security is ironclad. We believe that they should be able to defend themselves and that is going to be consistent. We're going to continue to say so and when it comes to something, a potential major military operation in Rafah, we're going to share our concerns publicly and privately as we have been doing for the past several weeks.