

White House press briefing [via Newsmax's *Newsline*]

12/11/25

1:22:36 p.m.

7 minutes and 5 seconds

ERIC BOLLING: As you point out, affordability crisis, I think it strikes me energy prices have been coming down aggressively since President Trump's second term, approaching \$55 a barrel for oil. Gasoline, as you point out, under \$3 a barrel nationally. First time in five years, by the way, that \$55 barrel oil is about half of the peak under the last four years and last administration— half price. Wholesale prices come down yet affordability crisis — a lot of the folks in this room, a lot of legacy media, some of the people in the front row seem to want to call this an affordability crisis right now, forgetting the fact that over the last four years prior, we hit nine percent inflation. Wages, as you point out, have more stagnant at best, sometimes have dipped. That's a real affordability crisis there. But they weren't really calling it that then. You point out how President Trump is changing the affordability in America, but how will he ensure that the legacy media doesn't flip the script and change it so that they're using affordability as their word, their idea, versus what the American people who know much better?

KAROLINE LEAVITT: Yeah. Well, it's a great question, Eric, and it's a point of frustration for the president and for myself. I will say that's part of the reason I just kicked off this briefing today, setting the record straight with facts about the economic mess that the president inherited from his predecessor, Joe Biden. And he's focused on digging our country and our economy out of that hole. Every day things are getting better, and they will continue to. And President Trump understands better than any politician in this city the pain that the American consumer has been feeling for years now because of the last administration's policies. You heard him in the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania this past week campaigning and talking to these voters, saying I was elected to fix this problem, and I am fixing it. Don't forget who created it and that's the Democrats. And I think when you hear the President talk about affordability, he's saying the Democrats are the greatest con artists in history because they are now trying to claim ownership of an issue that they created and every data point, and every economic metric does, in fact, show that the economy is improving. And so, I do wish more people would report on those facts. I do wish that more people would remind the American public how we got here, and why. It does not mean this President is discarding the feelings of the American people. He gets it better than anyone, which is why his entire administration has been focused on the issue of the economy and energy prices since day one.

BOLLING: If I may —

LEAVITT: Sure.

BOLLING: — follow up. It's reported that around 10,000 commercial driver's license operators have been pulled by your transportation secretary department. Will the President apply that same metric for the reason was they don't — operators weren't speaking or reading English to a level that was safely people thought they were safely be able to operate trucks on the roadways. It's estimated in California, around 40 percent of Uber drivers who were in Lyft drivers don't speak

English proficiently, and the number is 45 percent in Minnesota. Will this same rule or metric apply to the gig economy like Uber and Lyft?

LEAVITT: So, I don't have any announcements on further regulations, if you will, from the Department of Transportation with respect to this issue. However, I will just reiterate the Trump administration's position is that truck drivers, particularly those driving big rigs on our nation's roads and highways, who have a great responsibility to keep the American public and their fellow citizens safe, should be speaking English and should have an ability to read English — English proficiently. I think that's a very common sense policy to have, and we've unfortunately seen and the Department of Transportation has uncovered and is actively working to fix these state-sponsored commercial trucking, driving license, driver licenses, which were going to people who are not qualified to be driving these massive trucks on American roads, and they're endangering the lives of our fellow citizens. We've unfortunately seen many vehicle accidents across the country where people have lost their lives because of drivers that were just simply unqualified to be driving these trucks. So, I know this is something DOT and Secretary Duffy take very seriously. [TO DOOCY] Peter.

PETER DOOCY: Thank you, Karoline. Based on the way that things stand right now, is Operation Southern Spear about drugs or is it about oil?

LEAVITT: What I will tell you, Peter, is that the Trump administration is focused on doing many things in the Western Hemisphere. The President has taken a new approach that has not been taken by any administration for quite some time to actually focus on what's going on in our own backyard. And there are two things that are very important to this administration. Number one, stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States of America, which we know has killed hundreds of thousands of Americans. The President promised on the campaign trail that he would demolish the foreign terrorist organizations and drug cartels around the world, especially right here in our own hemisphere. And you have seen that he is delivering on that promise. With respect to the oil and what happened yesterday, the Department of Justice requested and was approved for a warrant to seize a vessel because it's a sanctioned shadow vessel known for carrying black market sanctioned oil to the IRGC, which, you know, is a sanctioned entity. So the President is committed to stopping the illegal flow of drugs into our country. He's also fully committed to effectuating this administration's sanction policy. And that's what you saw in the world, saw take place yesterday.

DOOCY: And because you said the President is trying to do a lot of things at once, he talks a lot about how he thinks the way to bring down prices for everything would be to bring down the cost of energy. Would he use this seized Venezuelan oil to try to help Americans with affordability here in the United States?

LEAVITT: Well, what I can tell you right now, the vessel has been seized, as you know, and the Department of Justice is did that in conjunction with the Coast Guard and the Department of War. The vessel is currently undergoing a forfeiture process. Right now, the United States currently has a full investigative team on the ground, on the vessel, and individuals on board the vessel are being interviewed, and any relevant evidence is being seized. With respect to the oil,

that's a different issue. As you know, Peter, the vessel will go to a U.S. port, and the United States does intend to seize the oil. However, there is a legal process for the seizure of that oil, and that legal process will be followed.

DOOCY: And my last one on this, if President Trump launches a bigger military campaign in the Caribbean, is he jeopardizing a possible Nobel Peace Prize?

LEAVITT: Look, the President has proven over the past year that he is more than worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize. I think he's been nominated for it nearly 100 times this past year, which is definitely a record. He's solved, I think, nine conflicts around the world we are up to now. He's actively working on Russia/Ukraine war, which is the big one as we speak and has been over the past year. With respect to any additional action in Venezuela. I'm not going to get ahead of the President or the United States military.

(....)

1:34:31 p.m.

2 minutes and 20 seconds

MIKE CARTER: On the next Fed chair, does the President have an expectation that his pick will lower interest rates next year to his liking?

LEAVITT: I think the President has been quite clear about what he believes the Fed should be doing, which is lowering interest rates. I know there was a quarter point reduction this past week, and the President was pleased to see that, but he thinks more should be done.

[TO WEGMANN] Philip.

PHILIP WEGMANN: On these advanced Nvidia H200 chips, why is the President willing to allow China to have access to one of America's chief technological advantages?

LEAVITT: Look, I will tell you just a couple of things. The President put out his own statement on this, which I do think highlights his exact thinking. What you see from the President on Truth Social is, most of the time, what you hear from the President behind closed doors privately. He told President XI that we will Nvidia will only be shipping H 200 products to approved customers in China to allow — under conditions that will allow for continued strong national security. The administration continues to maintain a strict export control regime, and we are ensuring that the Blackwell chip and other advanced technologies stay right here in America, and these H200 chips will only be sent to China after undergoing a security inspection here in the United States. [TO MITCHELL] Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH MITCHELL: Thank you, Karoline. New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani put out a video recently telling immigrants in New York City they have the right to stand up to ICE. Are you concerned this will inspire New York City residents to resist ICE operations? And what will the Trump administration do if this happens?

LEAVITT: The Trump administration is definitely concerned about the rise in violence and attacks and physical threats that we have seen against our brave men and women who wear the uniform. Again, these are agents who are just simply doing their jobs. They are enforcing our nation's immigration laws, and we've seen more than a 1,000 percent increase in violent attacks on them and their families. They've been doxxed. They've been harassed. Many of them have been physically assaulted and attacked, so we condemn that wholeheartedly. I know the administration has done a lot to protect our ICE agents, and the President stands firmly behind them in conducting these enforcement operations. And there's a lot of talk from Democrat politicians in New York. But the Trump administration will continue to do our jobs in every state, and that's to remove illegal aliens and public safety threats from American communities.

(....)

1:38:21 p.m.

1 minute and 45 seconds

KAITLAN COLLINS: But first, on affordability, since we were talking about the economy at the beginning, if the economy is as strong as the President has said it is, then why is he telling parents two weeks before Christmas that they should only buy two or three dolls for their children?

LEAVITT: Look, what the President is saying is that if we want products made right here in America, if we want them to be made from American small businesses, which is a large part of the reason the President has effectively implemented tariffs, then we're going to have better quality products right here in the United States. Maybe you'll pay a dollar or two more, but you will get better quality, and you'll be supporting your fellow Americans by buying American. And that's what the President was saying. Again, with respect to affordability, every economic metric, Kaitlan, and I wish you would report more on it does, in fact, show that the economy is getting better and brighter than where it was under the previous administration. I will repeat, inflation as measured by the overall CPI has slowed to an average 2.5 percent pace. Real wages are increasing roughly \$1,200 for the average worker. Gas prices are down in almost every single state across the country. Again, in 22 states, it's below 2.75. You look at the tax cuts, those are going to go into effect next year, so the best is yet to come. The President is digging our country out of the economic hole that the previous administration put us in and that's what he's talking about.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

COLLINS: But inflation is about what it was a year ago, as you know, and grocery prices have been up. So, we've covered the economy. But there's mixed signals in terms of what that looks like, but on the —

LEAVITT: And inflation is down from where it was as measured by the overall CPI. It has slowed to an average 2.5 percent pace.

COLLINS: It's never where it was at the highest at [INAUDIBLE] but now it's about three percent.

LEAVITT: This is down from what the President inherited. The President inherited 2.9 percent in January. Today, it's at about 2.5 percent. So, we're trending in the right direction with more to come. And I would remind you, when President Trump left office in his first term, inflation was 1.7 percent and the previous administration jacked it up to a record high nine percent. So again, in ten months, the President has clawed us out of this hole. He's kept it low at 2.5 percent, and we believe that number is going to continue to decline, especially as energy and oil prices continue to decline as well.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

COLLINS: Yeah, no one's arguing it wasn't high under Biden. They're just saying it's not virtually —

LEAVITT: Well, nobody reported on it being high under Biden.

COLLINS: — it's not virtually — it's not virtually —

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

LEAVITT: My predecessor was standing at this podium, but now you want to ask me a lot of questions about it, which I'm happy to answer. But I will just add, there's a lot more scrutiny on this issue from this press corps than there was —

COLLINS: Because the President has said it's non-existent. Non-existent.

LEAVITT: — well, and the previous administration said that too.

COLLINS: Right.

LEAVITT: My predecessor, stood up at this podium and she said inflation doesn't exist. She said the border was secure and people like you just took her at her word and those were two utter lies.

COLLINS: That's not true.

LEAVITT: Everything I'm telling you is the truth, backed by real factual data. And you just don't want to report on it because you want to push untrue narratives about the president.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

LEAVITT [TO MS NOW SEAT]: Go ahead.

COLLINS: On Venezuela — my follow-up question on Venezuela, Karoline.

LEAVITT: I'm not going to take your follow up.

(....)

1:51:30 p.m.

1 minute

KELLIE MEYER: Two quick ones on Venezuela. Does the President consider the seizure of the oil tanker an escalation or a step towards war with Venezuela?

LEAVITT: I think the President considers the seizure of the oil tanker as effectuating the administration's sanction policies, which I've already discussed previously.

MEYER: And does a potential invasion or potential land strikes in Venezuela align with the President's supporters, the MAGA base? Does it risk the potential for a prolonged war and U.S. Troops involved in that?

LEAVITT: Prolonged war is definitely not something this President is interested in. He's been very clear about that. He wants peace. He also wants to see the end of illegal drugs being trafficked into the United States, and taking the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans across our country and he's thinking about that every day here at the White House, with every drug boat that is taken out by this administration, we are saving thousands of lives by — by deterring those drugs and stopping those drugs from flowing into our country.