

White House press briefing [via CNN]

04/26/26

10:34:06 p.m.

4 minutes and 51 seconds

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Well, thank you very much. That was very unexpected. But incredibly acted upon by the Secret Service and law enforcement, and this was an event dedicated to freedom of speech that was supposed to bring together members of both parties with members of the press. And in a certain way, it did, because the fact that they just unified us in a room – that was just totally unified. It was, in one way, very beautiful, a very beautiful thing to see. A man charged a security checkpoint armed with multiple weapons, and he was taken down by some very brave members of Secret Service. And they acted very quickly. And have just released for purposes of transparency, clarity. I've ordered it to be put out. You probably have it by now, put out on Truth and put out on many other platforms a tape showing the violence of this thug that attacked our Constitution, and also showing how quickly Secret Service and law enforcement acted on our country's behalf, really did a great job. One officer was shot, but saved by the fact that he was wearing a, obviously, a very good bulletproof vest. He was shot from very close distance with a very powerful gun, and the vest did the job. I just spoke to the officer, and he's doing great. He's great shape. He is – has very high spirits. And we told him we love him and respect him. And he's a very proud guy. He's very proud of what he does – Secret Service agent. And, we looked at all of the conditions that took place tonight. And I will say, you know, it's not a particularly secure building. And I didn't want to say this, but this is why we have to have all of the attributes of what we're planning at the White House. It's actually a larger room, and it's a much more secure – it's got – it's drone proof, it's bulletproof glass. We need the ballroom. That's why Secret Service, that's why the military are demanding it. They wanted the ballroom for 150 years for lots of different reasons. But today is a little bit different because today we need levels of security that probably nobody has ever seen before. But everyone owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to the courage of law enforcement, the law enforcement, and working with the DC police. And we just spoke with the mayor. And when we're finished, the police chief is going to take over and discuss it also from their viewpoint. But they also performed exactly as they were supposed to. And you see the attacker in different positions, but you also see the attacker totally subdued and under control. So, as you know, this is not the first time in the past couple of years that are Republicans been attacked by a would-be assassin who sought to kill in Butler, Pennsylvania, less than two years ago. You all know that story. And in Palm Beach, Florida, a few months after that, we came close. We really had – again, we had some great work done by law enforcement. But in light of this evening's events, I ask that all Americans recommit with their hearts and resolving our differences peacefully. We have to. We have to resolve our differences. I will say you had Republicans, Democrats,

independents, conservatives, liberals, and progressives. Those words are interchangeable perhaps, but maybe they're not. But yet everybody in that room, big crowd, record setting crowd, there was a record-setting group of people, and there was a tremendous amount of love and coming together. I watched – I watched, and I was very, very impressed by that. But we were – First Lady and I were taken very well care very quickly, very quickly rushed off the stage. Vice president JD Vance, who is here, was likewise, beautifully done. I was he was just saying how quickly everybody acted – law enforcement, Secret Service in particular in this case. But law enforcement – Marco had the same thing. Pete was there. Pete didn't want any help. He didn't want anybody to help. He doesn't want anybody to help him. But he did get some, didn't you? And I think you also said that it was very impressive. So, with that, I'd like to ask Todd Blanche to come up and say a few words and tell you it's already underway. The – the man is has been captured. They've – they're going to his apartment, I guess. He lives in California and he's a sick person, very sick person. And we don't want things like this to happen. I think it's very important that I say, though, and I told the representatives of the evening they did such a beautiful job. It was such a beautiful evening. And again, they're talking about free speech in our Constitution. That's what it's all about, not just White House correspondents. It's really – it was really based on free speech and our Constitution. But I said very importantly that we'll do it again within the next 30 days and we'll make it bigger and better and even nicer. So, I just want to thank everybody that was involved. I also want to thank the press, the media. You've been very responsible in your coverage. I will say I've been seeing what's been out. You've been very responsible. So, Todd Blanche, I'd like to say a few words and then we're going to have Kash and then you're going to go on and we can ask – I guess we can take a couple of questions. I want to thank the First Lady for that was a rather traumatic experience for her. There was a lot of action taking place up there very quickly. But again, the response time was really incredible. And we're going to reschedule. We're going to do it again. We're not going to let anybody take over our society. We're not going to cancel things out because we can't do that. We wanted to stay tonight. I will tell you. I – I fought like hell to stay, but they, uh, it was protocol. They said, please, sir, because they didn't know a lot of there was a lot of action going on and they didn't know – could there be probably a lone shooter, but we'll find out. We'll find out very quickly. They have it very well under control, so I want to thank everybody very much.

(....)

10:44:48 p.m.

6 minutes and 5 seconds

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Okay. We'll do a couple and then we go to the chief. Madam Chairman, I just want to say you did a fantastic job. What a beautiful evening. And we're going

to reschedule. [APPLAUSE] And after that, it's very tough for her to ask a killer question. Right. But you have done a fantastic job. Please.

WEIJIA JIANG: Mr. President, I appreciate it. As you mentioned, it all happened so quickly and I wonder, especially because unfortunately you have experience with these sorts of threats in that moment when you realize there was a threat and Service agents were telling us to get down. Can you describe what was going through your mind, how you were feeling in that moment?

TRUMP: It's very good question, actually. It was -- it's always shocking when something like this happens. It happened to me a little bit and that never changes. The fact we're sitting right next to each other, the First Lady on my right, and I heard a noise and sort of thought it was a tray. I thought it was a tray going down. I've heard that many times and it was pretty loud noise, and it was from quite far away. He hadn't breached the area at all. They really got him, but -- so it was quite far away. But it was a gun. And some people really understood that pretty quickly. Other people didn't. I was watching to see what was happening. Probably should have gone down even faster. Melania was very cognizant, I think, of what happened. I think she knew immediately what happened. She was saying, that's a bad noise. And, we were whisked away along with other people, but we were really whisked away. And again, the performance of the secret service and the police, all of the law enforcement, I thought was really good. So, it was very quick. There wasn't a lot of time to be thinking, because it was a matter of seconds before we were out the door and gone into an area we very much. And you wanted to too -- you very much wanted to continue it because I don't like to let these sick people, these thugs, these horrible, horrible people change the fabric of our life, change the course of what we do. So, we held out. You were there. We held out right till the end. But they didn't want to take a chance. And I understand it was protocol, but we're going to be doing one hopefully within the next 30 days or sooner. And I am ready, willing and able. And I was all set to really rip it. And I said to my people, this would be the most inappropriate speech ever made if I said -- so I'll have to save it. I don't know if I can ever be as rough as I was going to be tonight. I think I'm going to be probably very nice. I'll be very boring the next time, but we're going to have a great event. And you did a fantastic job. Thank you very much. [TO DOOCY] Peter, go ahead.

PETER DOOCY: Thank you. President Trump, there's a report in the New York Post that this assailant assembled his weapon somewhere on site at the hotel. What do you think about that? And I ask respectfully, why do you think this keeps happening to you?

TRUMP: Well, you know, I've studied assassinations, and I must tell you, the most impactful people, the people that do the most. You take a look at the people, Abraham Lincoln. I mean, you go through the people that have gone through this where they got them, but the people that do the most, the people that make the biggest impact, they're the ones that they go after.

They don't go after the ones that don't do much because they like it that way. And when you look at the people that have either, whether it was an attempt or a successful attempt, they're very impactful people. Just take a look at the names here. The big names. And I hate to say I'm honored by that, but I've done a lot. We've done a lot. We have we've taken this country and we were a laughing stock for years. And now we're the hottest country anywhere in the world. We've changed this country, and there are a lot of people that are not happy about that, so I think that's the answer, Peter.

DOOCY: And after Butler, your team for a while rethought outdoor events.

TRUMP: Yeah.

DOOCY: Do you think that you now need to rethink indoor?

TRUMP: Well, then you just don't do events. No, I can't do that. I have to – what – you know, it is what it is. We have to do it. The room was very, very secure. You know, he charged from 50 yards away, so he was very far away from the room.

DOOCY: And what did you think when you saw the video of how fast he was running?

TRUMP: He was moving. He was really moving. And the reaction time was great. Boy, those guys, they had their guns drawn, literally, by the time he was there, they were shooting. They were I thought they were very impressive. I thought they were very impressive. And if I didn't, I'd let you know. You know, I'm not going to be – I would not stand for that. No, I thought they were very impressive.

KAITLAN COLLINS: Thank you, President Trump. Thank you for updating us on the suspect earlier. Were you aware of any threats or is your team aware of any threats beforehand? And do you believe you were the target of this tonight?

TRUMP: I guess, I mean, these people are they're crazy. They're crazy. And you know, you never know. It was very far away from me. You had to go through a lot. We had – we had resources all over. We had resources sitting at tables, literally in disguise, sitting maybe at your table, who knows. But we had – we had people all over the room. So, he had a long way to go. That was really a first line of defense. And they got him. And they really, you know, they acted incredibly. No, we have – we've had no – there was no notification. We had no idea. Go ahead, Kevin.

COLLINS: Do you have political motivations from this?

TRUMP: Well, you never know. Now we'll be able to tell you that maybe by tomorrow or the next day. You know, he's in custody and they're asking him a lot of questions. I guess they're going over, Todd – and they're – they're already at his apartment. He lives in California. And they'll be there over there, so they'll be able to tell you. Thank you, Kaitlin.

(....)

10:52:06 p.m.

2 minutes and 17 seconds

DANNY KEMP: Is there any indication that this – this shooting was could have been linked to the war in Iran?

TRUMP: I don't think so. But you never know. We're going to know a lot. We'll – we have the best people in the world working on it. And we're going to know a lot. [TO CAI] Please.

SOPHIA CAI: Mr. President, there's a lot – there's – you as well as some of us who have covered Butler, experienced another horrific day two years ago.

TRUMP: Yeah.

CAI: What – what felt similar? You know, you had the First Lady with you today. What felt different? And you have another two plus years in office, are you concerned about something like this happening?

TRUMP: Well, I can't be concerned. I can only get great people. They did the job – a much better, in my opinion, a much better job than butler. Butler had one weak spot that we all know about. Somebody should have been up there, but even Butler, we had a – our sniper, a sniper on our side within 4.2 seconds from a distance of about 400 yards, one shot, and he was gone. And if he didn't do it now, you know, he's David – his name was David. I say, hello, David. Every time I see him. David. I like you very much, David. But think of that now. If he doesn't hit him and he hit him right between the eyes from 400 yards without any notice, nobody knew. He heard a sound. He looked over and there was actually a tree that was somewhat in his way. You know the story very well. And he aimed, he fired. And if he didn't do that – beyond me, you would have had a lot more people killed. We lost one great person and two people very badly hurt. They're okay now, but no, that was so – in a sense, you know, they – it was pretty amazing the job they did. But – but – but they did have that one weak spot, as you know, they should have had that covered tonight. They had everything covered very quickly. And he was fast. He was running full blast. And they got him before they got any further. I was very far away. You know, he was – he hadn't anywhere close to breach the doors of the ballroom. The ballroom was sealed. And everybody in there. That's why once those doors open, they didn't want to do – tonight, if the doors were opened, we could have probably done it tonight. But I think we're much better off rescheduling.

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10:56:53 p.m.

4 minutes and 2 seconds

GARRETT HAAKE: To that end, I mean there's been so much political violence not just aimed at yourself, but at other members of, you know, members of congress, state house speakers, you name it. Is that just the cost of doing business to do politics in America anymore?

TRUMP: Yeah.

HAAKE: Well, what does that say about our country?

TRUMP: You know, we're not the only country you look at. There's great violence with all countries. I was talking to somebody from another country today, and they have numerous assassinations of political figures all over the world. You look at South America – in South America. It's like some of the numbers are just horrific. It's dangerous, dangerous stuff, whether it's here or someplace else. No country is immune, no country. Good question.

HAAKE: Is it possible to turn the temperature down, at this point?

TRUMP: Well, probably if I decided to just not do much, you know, if I let everybody rip us off and take advantage of us. Look, we're leading the world in trade now. We're leading the world in the military. We're the greatest military in the world. They rebuilt it in my first term, and now we use it because we have no choice. We can't let, as an example, Iran – we can't let them get a nuclear weapon, that everything will be peanuts compared to that. If they ever were given a nuclear weapon and they'd use it too. Marco and I were talking about it today. They would use it without even hesitation. We can't do that. It was a shame. I said, oh boy, look at the numbers. We just broke 50,000 in the Dow. We just broke 7,000 in the S&P. They said we couldn't do it in seven years, five years, four years. They were saying maybe in five or six years. And we did it in one year. And I called everybody together. I called all of these people and others and they said, uh, we have to take a little journey. I say, to do this. We just had the great number. We just broke 50,000 wasn't supposed to happen during my term, wasn't reachable, did it in one year. And I said, we're going to have to make a journey to Iran. They they're going to have a nuclear weapon if we don't do it. We had the B-2 bombers take them out. I terminated in the first term the Obama agreement, the Iran nuclear agreement, which was a disaster. That was a road to a nuclear weapon. They would have used it. They would have used it 100%. So, you know, when you do things like that, you become a target. If I wasn't doing that, I guess I'd be a lot less of a target, but I'm honored to be. Okay. One more question. [TO NELSON] Go ahead. Yeah. Go ahead please.

STEVEN NELSON: Thank you, President Trump. Thank you, President Trump. Do you know how the gun was brought into the hotel? And also, how does this event impact you as the leader of our country? Do you think it will change your leadership?

TRUMP: I like not to think about it. I lead a pretty normal life, considering, you know, it's a dangerous life. I think I'm – I think I handle it as well as – as well as it can be handled. I think a

lot of other people – you know, you read stories where they become basket cases, to be honest with you. I’m not a basket case. I – I take it really take it as it is. I do it for the country. I’m not doing it for any other reason. I have a First Lady who’s doing a terrific job. She loves the country and she recognizes it better than anybody. She’s told me numerous times. She said, you are in a dangerous job, but that goes along with her, too. I mean, it’s dangerous for her too. We sat there tonight. We heard that noise and it was either a tray or a bullet. I thought I was hoping it was a tray, but it wasn’t. And again, we had some very brave people doing a great job. So, we’re very proud of them and happy with them. I just want to thank everybody. They will be able to give you all that information as to the names and everything else. Most of – I think we released the names already. Most – most of you would have it -- his name. We appreciate it. I see so many beautiful tuxedos and beautiful dresses. It was a little different evening than we thought, but we’re going to do it again, and we’re going to – we have a great chairman who – who we’re so proud of. And we have to make it better. We’ll make it safer, I guess, right? But we’re going to make it even better. Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you.