

CNN's *Inside Politics*

04/27/26

12:14:51 p.m.

7 minutes and 12 seconds

MANU RAJU: In the hours after a gunman opened fire at the White House Correspondents Dinner, President Trump struck a conciliatory tone with reporters. He said he felt a lot of unity and love from journalists and Democrats in the ballroom, as everyone struggled to understand what was happening. But the next night, he went on *60 Minutes* and erupted when Norah O'Donnell read part of a letter authorities say the suspect left for his family. The letter lays out an array of grievances against the Trump administration.

[*60 MINUTES CLIP*]

RAJU: My excellent political panel is here, including Jeff Zeleny. So, Jeff, there was — it sounded like a kumbaya moment on Saturday night. Not so much anymore.

JEFF ZELENY: Look, we've learned many things in the Trump era. We know that things don't last for a long time. And I think anyone who saw the President's remarks in the Briefing Room at the White House on Saturday evening, talking about that moment of unity, knew it wouldn't last. I mean, I think the bigger point here is, as we go forward, the White House, as we know, is looking into Susie Wiles, White House chief of staff is conducting some meetings this week to see if protocols were handled as the White House looks ahead to the America 250 celebrations. Things are going to go back to the acrimony that is there with many presidents and many press corps. There's there's no doubt. But on this specifically because the suspect is still alive, he'll be having his first arraignment in court this afternoon. We're going to learn more about this. So, you know, I think it's no surprise the President was not thrilled with Norah O'Donnell reading that. But that gives us a bigger picture into motivations. And why perhaps he allegedly did this.

RAJU: Yeah. And he was asked — the President was on *60 Minutes* about the rise in political violence that we've seen here in this country.

PRESIDENT TRUMP [on CBS's *60 Minutes*, 04/26/26]: It's always been there. People are assassinated. People are injured, people are hurt. And I'm not sure that it's any more now than there was. I do think that the hate speech of the Democrats, much more so is very dangerous. I really think it's very dangerous for the country.

RAJU: Yeah. He's going after Democratic hate speech and downplaying the amount — saying that, you know, this has happened — this is — this kind of — these kind of incidents have always happened, but we really have seen the rise over the last decade or so on targeting both sides, political violence, targeting both sides of the aisle. Just you can see here on your screen a number of really troubling episodes that just shows the moment that we're in right now. But the president sees it differently.

ELI STOKOLS: Yeah. And it's not surprising that he would, you know, cherry pick the

democratic rhetoric in an instance where he was seemed to be the target. But it's glaring. You put up that graphic and you see all these examples. You know, you think back to Melissa Hortman being shot on her doorstep in Minnesota. The President didn't have much to say about that. And this is a President who, you know, all of this stuff is public. You can go back and pull the clips, glorify — has glorified violence among his supporters, has threatened violence against demonstrators in the summer of 2020 with the George Floyd protests. There's obviously January 6 and his role in instigating what was ultimately a very violent clash at the Capitol. So, you know, it's not surprising because we've seen it before. But his response to the rhetoric and singling out Democratic violent rhetoric and blaming only Democratic rhetoric is incredibly selective.

RAJU: And we've seen now today, we're also seeing the First Lady come out and publicly go after Jimmy Kimmel, who made this crack last week, Thursday, when he was speaking, pretending like he was giving a speech at the White House Correspondents Dinner

JIMMY KIMMEL [on ABC's *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, 04/23/26]: And of course, our first lady, Melania, is here. Look at — so beautiful. Mrs. Trump. You have a glow like an expectant widow.

RAJU: And so, this was the First Lady's response this morning on ABC. She said "Kimmel's hateful and violent rhetoric is intended to divide our country. His monologue about my family isn't comedy. His words are corrosive and deepens the political sickness within America." She called on "ABC to take a stand" and said that his — his behavior was "atrocious." Betsy, you cover the First Lady very closely. What do you make of her coming out like this so aggressively?

BETSY KLEIN: Well, I think it's definitely notable — and it's notable, too, that we didn't hear from her in the 48 or so hours after Jimmy Kimmel gave that monologue. And she was remarkably silent in the immediate aftermath of this shooting incident. The President had spoken for her, he said of his wife, it was a rather traumatic experience at the Washington Hilton. We know that security and safety has been top of mind for the First Lady, and this really marked the first time that she was beside her husband when he was aggressively evacuated by Secret Service.

RAJU: Yeah, it's a good point. Meantime, they're also making this case here for the White House ballroom. That's really been the new focus of this. The President's been pushing for this for some time. And now he says that this is the reason to have this kind of event. And we're seeing on Capitol Hill this being echoed. In fact, the Speaker just told reporters just moments ago that this needs to be to move ahead. But also we're seeing some of the rank and file members demand this all amid this government shutdown for the Department of Homeland Security.

ZELENY: Look, the President, in the very first opening minutes of Saturday evening after talking about the incident, he talked about the need for the ballroom. I mean, we have seen him again and again make the national security argument for his ballroom. There's perhaps, maybe some merit to his argument, but it also is — is spurring these wild conspiracy theories that have no basis in fact that this was a staged incident, so he could have carte blanche to build a ballroom. That's not true. But we have seen in this age of ours where algorithms are feeding people's preconceived notions about this stuff, that — that is what is feeding into this. But I have no doubt

at all. And as you know from Capitol Hill and the DHS is still unfunded, it is unbelievable.

RAJU: Yeah, 72 days.

ZELENY: 72 days. But this certainly will accelerate the conversation to build a ballroom.

RAJU: Or it could complicate it too.

KLEIN: Well, and at its heart, the legal case, there's been so much back and forth here is about not about whether the President can build a ballroom. It's whether he can build it without seeking congressional approval. They say they do not need to. The National Trust for Historic Preservation says yes, they must have congressional approval.

ZELENY: He would get the approval, don't you think? Now?

KLEIN: Almost certainly.

RAJU: I mean, it's maybe.

ZELENY: Among Republicans —

RAJU: Yeah.

ZELENY: — it's hard to imagine not.

RAJU: Yeah. I mean, it's hard — he has Republicans, but of course they need Democrats in the Senate, so that's going to be that complicated factor. And that could complicate reopening an agency that funds Secret Service.