

White House press briefing [via Newsmax]

04/27/26

1:04:52 p.m.

21 minutes and 1 seconds

KAROLINE LEAVITT: As I told many of you on Friday afternoon, I thought that would be my last time taking your questions until after my maternity leave. But given the attempted assassination of the President and “top Trump administration officials,” as the depraved shooter noted in his manifesto at the White House Correspondents Association dinner on Saturday evening, I felt it was prudent to be here today to answer your questions and inform the American people about how the administration is responding to yet another attempt on President Trump’s life. Saturday was supposed to be a joyful evening celebrating free speech and the First Amendment with all of you members of the press. Instead, the night was by a crazed anti-Trump individual who traveled across the country to assassinate the President and as many administration officials as possible. This is the third major assassination attempt against President Trump in two years. No other President in history has faced such repeated, serious attempts on his life. First and foremost, the President, the First Lady and everyone in this White House are extraordinarily grateful to the brave law enforcement professionals who sprang into action to apprehend the would-be assassin and keep all of us safe. The President would especially like to express his gratitude to the men and women of the United States Secret Service, who acted with the utmost professionalism, courage and sense of duty. This includes the heroic agent who took a bullet to the chest. Thankfully, he was saved by his bulletproof vest. Minutes after returning here to the White House to the Oval Office, despite fighting Secret Service to try to stay and keep the dinner going on Saturday, ahead of addressing you here in the Briefing Room, President Trump was intent on speaking to this brave agent to ensure he was okay, and the agent assured the President that he was. As you know, I was seated next to President Trump and the First Lady when the shots were fired before Secret Service swiftly moved us to safety. Backstage, the President’s calm in the face of chaos, while yet another individual was trying to take his life, was really remarkable to witness, and it’s something I will never forget.

President Trump is fearless because he loves this country, and he is willing to put his own life on the line to deliver on the promises that he made to the American public, who elected him here into the highest office in the land. And while we are blessed to have a fearless President, we should not live in a country where such constant fear of political violence permeates our society every single day. We can and we should have fierce disagreement in this country. As you all know, we disagree often myself in this role and all of you in the news media, but those disagreements must remain peaceful. Debating, peaceful protesting, and voting are how we need to settle disagreements, not bullets. Nobody in recent years has faced more bullets and more violence than President Trump. This political violence stems from a systemic demonization of him and his supporters by commentators, yes, by elected members of the Democrat Party and even some in the media. This hateful and constant and violent rhetoric directed at President Trump, day after day after day for 11 years, has helped legitimize this violence and bring us to this dark moment. Those who constantly falsely label and slander the President as a fascist, as a threat to democracy, and compare him to Hitler to score political points, are fueling this kind of violence. The left wing cult of hatred against the President and all of those who support him and

work for him has gotten multiple people hurt and killed. And it almost did so again this weekend.

When you read the manifesto of this shooter, ask yourselves, how different is the rhetoric from this almost assassin than what you read on social media and hear in various forums every single day? The answer, if you're being honest with yourself, is that there is no difference at all. Much of the manifesto of the would be assassin is indistinguishable from the words that we hear daily from so many. For example, as the First Lady of the United States pointed out this morning, just two days prior to the shooting. ABC's late-night host Jimmy Kimmel disgustingly called First Lady Melania Trump 'an expectant widow' who, in their right minds says a wife would be glowing over the potential murder of her beloved husband. And having experienced what I did with the First Lady on Saturday night, I can tell you that she was anything but that. This kind of rhetoric about the President, the First Lady, and his supporters is completely deranged, and it's unbelievable that the American people are consuming it night after night after night. As President Trump said on Saturday night at this podium, we as Americans must recommit ourselves to resolving our differences peacefully and uniting around the shared values that make our country great. The deranged lies and smears against the President, his family, his supporters have led crazy people to believe crazy things, and they are inspired to commit violence because of those words. It has to stop.

And one more point. Saturday night served as yet another reminder of how important it is to fund the Department of Homeland Security. It is shameful that the United States Congress has kept this vital agency defunded for 73 days, the longest shutdown of a federal agency in U.S. history. The Secret Service is a vital component of DHS. It has been directly impacted by this reckless political gamesmanship. Everyone in this room who was there on Saturday night witnessed the heroes of Secret Service and federal law enforcement jump into action in the face of grave danger and uncertainty. Agents put their own lives in harm's way to protect the President, the — the First Lady, the Vice President, and members of the cabinet. One agent can be seen in video footage literally jumping onto the stage, not knowing where the attacker was or where the bullets were coming from at that point, to place his body in front of the President of the United States. These men and women are heroes. They perform their duties daily, and they have children and families too. And they do it. Despite the political turmoil surrounding their agency. Make no mistake, this defunding of DHS should be a national scandal. If Republicans defunded DHS and we saw in another attempted assassination on a Democrat President, I would hope that the media coverage would be relentless and unforgiving, and I hope that it continues to be now. With the World Cup, America 250, the 2028 Olympics and a Presidential election all ahead, the Democrats obstruction is placing an enormous and totally pointless burden on the Secret Service that can get more people killed. Enough is enough. There should be no further debate about this. Democrats need to do what President Trump has been calling on them to do for 73 days in a row, and fund the Department of Homeland Security. Period. This is a national emergency, and every member of Congress needs to put their country over party and get the Department of Homeland Security funded. With that, I will take a few of your questions today. Daniel, thank you for being here. Why don't you kick us off?

DANIEL BALDWIN: Thank you, Karoline. The President, Saturday after the assassination attempt, came here, he emphasized that law enforcement did their job in keeping everyone safe in

the dinner. House Speaker Mike Johnson came out and said he believes the President needs greater protection. What is the White House's message to the millions of Americans who wake up here today nervous, uneasy about the safety of the President at events like this and safety of their cabinet members?

LEAVITT: Well, we certainly understand their fears and their worries. As you heard from the President himself, he continues to have trust in the United States Secret Service, as I just said. These are great men and women who are doing their jobs and performing their honor, their — their duties honorably. As we all witnessed on Saturday evening, within minutes, the President, the First Lady, the Vice President, members of the President's cabinet were ushered out of the room. The perpetrator who sought to inflict massive harm. As we now know with the release of the manifesto on administration officials and the President himself was stopped at the security perimeter that was set up. He tried to charge through it, as you saw on video, and he was quickly neutralized by Secret Service. And thank God that he was. With that said, obviously, the White House is always asking the tough questions and ensuring the safety of the President. I understand there will be a meeting early this week convened by the White House chief of Staff, Susie Wiles, with top DHS leadership, members of the United States Secret Service, and our own operations team here to ensure the safety and the security of the President, as we do have many of these major events moving forward. So, we're always monitoring operations and procedures, always asking the tough questions to ensure the President is safe and the American people should be assured there is no higher priority for the President and his staff than the President's safety."

BALDWIN: And, Karoline, on Friday, you said that you thought that that gaggle out of the sticks would be your last one before your baby. Back in 2024, when the President had the attempt on his life in Butler, you cut your maternity leave short back then. You're obviously back here today after Saturday. Can you just elaborate a little bit why you felt it was important to be here, to brief the media and talk to the American people from the stand?

LEAVITT: Sure. It's sort of crazy timing when you put it that way. For both children with two assassination attempts against the President. I'm honored to work in this job. I view this job as the President's spokesperson in the White House, spokeswoman as public service. It's not just any job. I'm honored to do it. And I'm honored to work and speak on behalf of President Trump, who has faced unprecedented adversity and challenges. And I'm honored to work for him. And again, as I witnessed on Saturday night, just his dogged resolve and determination to get back on to the stage. And he was pushing Secret Service and law enforcement to allow him to address. And that — that really, I think, hopefully gives the country the type of strength that we need. And I certainly know, as his spokeswoman and I can speak on behalf of all of the staff here at the White House, the President inspires all of us to just keep going and keep fighting every day.

BALDWIN: Thanks, Karoline.

LEAVITT: Thanks, Daniel, and congrats to you on your new baby.

BALDWIN: Thanks.

LEAVITT: He's beautiful. [TO HASHNIE] Aishah.

AISHA HASNIE: Just from the rhetoric, you mentioned the First Lady and Jimmy Kimmel. Jimmy Kimmel's comments were, Mrs. Trump, you have a glow like an expectant widow. And he said this days before the shooting. But there does seem to be a normalization of rhetoric about assassinating this particular President. How can this administration try to put an end to this?

LEAVITT: Well, I think you heard it directly from the President on Saturday night, Aisha, that in his words, we need to recommit ourselves as a country to toning down the rhetoric and to unifying around what makes our country great. That's true of everyone who works in this White House. But as I said, it's also true of everyone who has a voice and a platform across this country, whether you're on television, a podcast host, you know, people listen. And when you have mentally disturbed individuals across the country who are listening to this crazed rhetoric about the President, day after day after day, it inspires them to do crazy things. And unfortunately, it's not just the media. It is the entire Democrat Party has made their pitch to voters across the country that Donald Trump poses an existential threat to democracy, that he is a fascist, and that they compare him to Hitler. I mean, these are despicable statements that the American people have been consuming for years, and so many mentally perturbed individuals are led to believe these words are truth and then are inspired to act on it. I have a whole host of examples that we can share with you after. It is pages and pages of major Democrat Party elected officials saying such as Rep. Hakeem Jeffries just this April this month said, "we are in an era of maximum warfare everywhere, all the time." Governor Josh Shapiro said "heads need to roll within the administration." Senator Alex Padilla said "people are dying because of fear and terror caused by the Trump administration." Senator Elizabeth Warren: "President Trump is making the country look like a fascist state." Senator Adam Schiff saying President Trump 'using a dictator playbook.' Senator Ed Markey calling President Trump "a dictator," saying that "this administration's actions are authoritarianism on steroids." Governor JB Pritzker: "Never before in my life have I called for mass protests, disruptions. These Republicans cannot know a moment of peace." You have Rep. Pressley saying, "We'll see you in the streets." Rep. LaMonica McIver, a Democrat representative on Capitol Hill: "We will not take this from shit from Donald Trump. He thinks he's a dictator. We are at war." These are Democrat elected officials calling for war against the President of the United States and his supporters. I could go on and on. But again, when you have people in positions of power that are saying things like this every single day for years, you are inspiring violence by people who are already mentally ill. And that's what we've seen against this President for far too long.

HASNIE: [What part] of this is disinformation and misinformation online? There will be bite sized clips that will go viral to the point where there are Americans in this country that believe that what happened Saturday night was staged. How does this White House tackle that with social media companies out there, whether it's X, Facebook, Instagram? How do they work with these companies to make sure that doesn't get out of control?

LEAVITT: It's certainly a good question, Aishah. I don't have tangible answers for you on what we're doing with social media companies, if anything at all. What I will say is it's very important to us that we get the truth and the facts about this case, in any case, out there as quickly as

possible to dispel some of that crazy nonsense that you do see running rampant online. And I think the Department of Justice and the FBI thus far have done a good job of disseminating the truth and the facts about this alleged attempted assassin, the perpetrator in this case, and I understand he'll be arraigned in court very soon. You will see that in the Department of Justice will be giving a briefing in an update later today. So, as far as we're concerned, just providing maximum transparency and hopefully people will — will believe the truth rather than the lies and conspiracies that so often do go crazy on social media. [TO SCOTT] Rachel.

SCOTT: Karoline, does the administration view this as a security failure or did the protocols work as they were designed?

LEAVITT: The President has said he believes that the protocols worked. Again, you had a perpetrator who tried to breach the security perimeter that was set up by Secret Service, and he was running as fast as he could and was immediately neutralized moments later. And again, having been right up there on the stage with the President and the First Lady, I can tell you it was seconds before we were told to get down, and it was seconds before we found ourselves in the hold backstage. It all happened literally within a matter of seconds. The President, the Vice President, and the First Lady being pulled to safety. That is not done if there's a lapse. So, Secret Service did their jobs well. They communicated with one another to remove the President and the vice President to safety as quickly as they could, and obviously to neutralize the shooter as well. And thank God they did, because if that man was allowed into that ballroom, it would have been a much different scene.

SCOTT: And just one more follow up on just how the white House could be rethinking security protocols going forward. I mean, we all remember after the attempted assassination in Butler, there were indoor rallies that were held after that. Is — is that out of the question? Changing any additional security protocols when it comes to how the President does these events that are outside of the White House?"

LEAVITT: I definitely wouldn't say changes are out of the question. I think, again, it's up to the White House here, and we view it as a great responsibility to ensure the maximum safety of the President and the vice President and the entire cabinet. And so we're always looking for ways to improve security. I think if you just sit here and say everything is perfect all the time, that's not a good way to operate. And so the white House will continue to engage with DHS and with Secret Service to find ways to improve and strengthen security. But as far as Saturday night is concerned, the President was satisfied with the response, and he's very grateful to the men and women who provided the response for him and his wife and members of his team. [TO NEROZZI] Diana.

DIANA NEROZZI: Thanks, Karoline. The President has talked about rescheduling the dinner within 30 days. Does he have a specific venue in mind, and would he consider hosting it at the White House?"

LEAVITT: Well, unfortunately, we don't have a room big enough here at the White House, which is another point to be made. And the President is absolutely right. It's why the White

House ballroom project is not just a fun project for President Trump like you will read in the media, it is actually critical for our national security that a larger, secure building on this complex, which is the most secure complex in the world, is built to accommodate not only large amounts of guests, but also the President, the Vice President, members of the cabinet. The line of succession in this country should be able to gather freely and safely without the fear of threats or political violence. And the White House ballroom will provide that. And so it's critical that we get this project done as quickly as possible.

NEROZZI: And then, on Iran —

PHILIP WEGMANN: Thank you, Karoline, two questions, if that's all right. First, on the security situation on Saturday, kind of a follow up here. Previous administrations have sent both the President and the Vice President to the dinner. But after the foiled attack on Saturday, if the dinner is rescheduled, would President Trump and Vice President JD Vance both plan on attending? And is it wise to have both of them in the same spot, given the presidential line of succession you mentioned a second ago?

LEAVITT: It's definitely a good question, and I know that it's one that will be raised. I can assure you the President intends to attend the event, as he has told all of you publicly. I don't want to rule in or out the Vice President's attendance, but certainly that's a conversation that will take place.

WEGMANN: Iran — Iran — Iran has proposed a mutual reopening of the Strait, leaving the nuclear discussion for later in the process. Given that the nuclear program has been a red line for this administration, would the President agree to that kind of phased negotiation?

LEAVITT: Well, only because it's been reported, I will confirm the President has met with his national security team this morning. The meeting may be ongoing, maybe not. I don't want to speak affirmatively because I was prepping to come out here, but the proposal was being discussed. I don't want to get ahead of the President or his national security team. What I will reiterate is that the President's red lines with respect to Iran have been made very, very clear, not just to the American public, but also to them as well.

WEGMANN: So, they're considering that approach?

LEAVITT: I wouldn't say they're considering it. I would just say that there was a discussion this morning that I don't want to get ahead of, and you'll hear directly from the President, I'm sure, on this topic very soon. [TO LAWRENCE] Ed.

EDWARD LAWRENCE: I want to ask you about the Fed chairman, but first, three assassination attempts in three years. Is this going to change the type of events that the President goes to?

LEAVITT: Well, again, that's going to be part of the conversations moving forward. But as you heard from President Trump, he does not want these deranged lunatics and these grave acts of political violence to change our American way of life. And I think it's a very brave thing for him

to say. It'd be very easy for him to just hunker down here at the White House where he knows he's safe. But the President wants to be out across the country. He wants to go across the country to meet with Americans. He wants to celebrate the 250th birthday of our nation's anniversary this summer. As you know, we're gearing up for a big UFC fight here on the South Lawn, so there's many exciting events I know the President wants to be part of and will be part of moving forward. He's undeterred in that way, and it's something that inspires all of us here to keep going.

LAWRENCE: Senator Tillis is now dropping his objection to allowing Kevin Warsh to be confirmed, because the DOJ has closed their investigation. Is the President satisfied that an inspector general report into the Federal Reserve is enough to look into these renovations?

LEAVITT: The President understands that the inspector general has greater tools at their disposal, perhaps even more powerful than a grand jury, to continue investigating the financial mismanagement of the fed building, which is a priority for the President. Look, he's a builder himself. When he sees something, has a lot of cost overruns, is taking too long, and in this case, ripping off the American taxpayer, he wants to get to the bottom of it. I understand Senator Tillis put out a statement saying he'll support Kevin Warsh's confirmation. That has been our position all along from day one. He is more than qualified for the job, and we look forward to working with the Senate on his swift confirmation process.

(...)

1:28:07 p.m.

1 minute and 6 seconds

OWEN JENSEN: Karoline, people were forced to dive under tables and fearing for their lives on Saturday night, including many of the people in this room, myself included. What is the President's message to those people who — who experienced that terrible trauma and maybe are still fearful today?

LEAVITT: I think he would say, as he sort of did on Saturday night, coming in here in his tuxedo, you know, we can't allow these crazy people to let us be afraid. We have to keep moving forward, showing up, doing our jobs, celebrating our country and doing what we know is right. But certainly, we'd like to see the rhetoric against this President and his supporters toned down, because it is inspiring these crazy people across the country to target not just the President, but those who work for him and those who support him, and it must end.

JENSEN: And is he following — is he following the arraignment of the suspect today?

LEAVITT: Yes, he is, and I know you all want to follow that too. It's so it's happening in a few minutes, so I'll let you all go. The Department of Justice is also going to be speaking momentarily following the arraignment. And I hope that pray that this is the last time I speak to you for some time until after my maternity leave. So thank you guys. See you soon.