

Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan En Route Brussels, Belgium

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June 13, 2021

Briefing Room

• Press Briefings

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Brussels, Belgium

8:05 P.M. BST

MS. PSAKI: Thank you for joining us on Air Force One, on our trip to Brussels. And we have joining us our National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who will give us a preview of NATO, take some questions, and I'm also happy to take some once he's done.

MR. SULLIVAN: Thanks, everybody. President Biden is heading to Brussels for his first NATO Summit with the overriding objective of sending a clear message to Allies and adversaries alike that Article 5 is a sacred guarantee; that the United States regards NATO as the foundation for our security — not just in the Euro Atlantic, but worldwide — and that we will be there for our Allies. We will have their backs just as they've had our backs.

He'll cover a range of issues during the session with the leaders, including, of course, the immediate issue of the drawdown in Afghanistan, where we're proceeding on an in-together, out-together basis, and coordinating very closely with our Allies as we draw down our remaining forces.

He will also consult on ensuring security for an embassy presence that can continue to provide support to the Afghan National Security Forces and to the Afghan government, as well as humanitarian and civilian assistance to the Afghan people, especially to its women and girls.

He will discuss cyber as an increasingly important dimension of NATO's work. NATO will finalize a national cyber — or, I'm sorry, not a "national" — will finalize a cyber defense strategy for the first time in seven years, which will upgrade the defense, political, and intelligence dimensions of cyber across the Alliance. That will not be a public document, but he will have the chance to consult with Allies on it. And in the communiqué that will be released, there will be a strong commitment to NATO's emphasis on cyber deterrence and collective defense, as well as Article 5 applying on a case-by-case basis to cyberattacks of significance.

Of course, he will discuss the emerging challenges posed by China, not just in the Indo-Pacific but elsewhere, in terms of technology and cybersecurity and information warfare and in other regards, as well.

And China will feature in the communiqué really in a more robust way than we've ever seen before.

Q Can you repeat that? Sorry. Just didn't hear the last line.

MR. SULLIVAN: China will feature in the communiqué in a more robust way than we've ever seen before.

What we will see coming out of this is a commitment by leaders to a new Strategic Concept process that will result in the release of a new Strategic Concept at a NATO Summit next year, in 2022. The last Strategic Concept was done in 2010, and, among other things, referred to Russia as a "constructive partner," and really didn't talk about China at all. So it's time for an update to that Strategic Concept for NATO. And he will consult with Allies and partners at the summit about this.

There will also be a Climate Action Plan. The Secretary General, with the support of the President and others, wants NATO to be the premier international security organization working on the intersection between climate and security. And, obviously, the climate dimension of everything — all of our militaries do and all of our security systems do — is growing and intensifying. And NATO will be front and center in all of that.

And then, of course, there's the consultation on Russia. He'll have the opportunity to speak to all of the Allies about what he intends to talk to Putin about. He'll do that behind closed doors. So, they get both to hear from him about his intentions with respect to the summit, and he gets to hear from them as well, so that he will go into Geneva with the full support and solidarity of all of our NATO Allies.

He will meet on the sidelines of the summit with the Baltic presidents, who are a powerful example of democratic governance on NATO's eastern flank. And he will speak with them about a range of issues, including the challenge and threat posed by Russia about issues related to cyber and emerging technology, on which they are leaders; about China and the growing challenges it poses as well; and, of course, about the recent air piracy in Belarus.

And he will also meet with President Erdoğan of Turkey, where they will cover the range of issues in our bilateral relationship, as well as a number of important regional issues, from Syria, to Libya, to the eastern Mediterranean. They will also have the chance to consult on the big powers — China and Russia — as well.

So I think I will — I will leave it at that. I guess I would just close by saying that if you think about the G7 as really centering on the most significant nonmilitary challenges of our time, and President Biden coming out of the G7 Summit with the democracies united behind an affirmative agenda to deal with those challenges, he heads into NATO really to focus on the security and military dimension of this. But that security and military dimension itself is changing, and cyber and emerging technology will play an important role in that.

And so by the time we're done tomorrow, in Brussels, when you combine the G7 and NATO, it's just a really powerful platform upon which America can conduct its foreign policy in the years ahead.

So let me stop there.

Q Talk about China a little bit. What role should NATO have in countering China?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think there are three things that I particularly focus on. One is that NATO has a role in information sharing about the nature of the security challenges that China poses. It imposes challenges to individual Allies in both common and distinct ways. And so, a broader, common picture of that challenge will be very important.

Second, of course, is that, increasingly, in the area particularly of emerging technology, China is growing much more sophisticated in its warfighting capabilities and methods, including in the nuclear sphere. And so, NATO has to play a role in developing interoperable capabilities to be able to deal with a challenge from China that is going beyond the region and extending much more broadly.

And then, thirdly, NATO is, first and foremost, the center for security and military coordination and collective defense, but it is also a forum for democratic values. It is an alliance of democracies.

And so, NATO speaking out powerfully about the common purpose and common strength of democracies is an important part of a collective effort to be able to meet the China challenge over the decades ahead.

Q Jake, on the — at the G7, did he hear anything about the origins of COVID? Any intel shared with him that he didn't know before? Did any of the Allies have anything new to share with him about that?

MR. SULLIVAN: So, they all pledged to — not only does the communiqué talk about a WHO-led phase two investigation that should take place in China and get to the bottom of things in China, including the original data that was withheld in the first study, but all of the countries also pledged that they would have their national systems try to share analysis and information in the weeks and months ahead, both with that international investigation and with each other.

So I think there was a common sense that we've all got to dig deeper ourselves, as well as supporting this international effort, and then pool our knowledge so we can get the best, most clear, most evidence-based picture of what actually happened with the outbreak of COVID.

Q So there wasn't consensus on whether it was lab-based or hu- —

MR. SULLIVAN: No.

Q So no one — no one really knows?

MR. SULLIVAN: No.

Q Jake, on cyber, two things. Can you talk a little more about what invoking Article 5 might look like, in terms of a cyber incident?

And then also, the President was asked today about this idea that was floated from the Kremlin about trading cyber hackers. Are there hackers in America who have been doing — committing cyber crimes in Russia that we should be — walk us through that really means.

MR. SULLIVAN: So, what the President was responding to in the affirmative was not the specific proposal of the exchange of cyber criminals. He was not saying, "I'm going to exchange cyber criminals." What he was saying was that if Vladimir Putin wants to come and say, "I'm prepared to make sure that cyber criminals are held accountable," Joe Biden is perfectly willing to show up and say cyber criminals will be held accountable in America, because they already are. That is something that we do — is when we know that someone is committing a cyber crime, whether against a domestic target or a foreign target, we take action against them.

And so to the extent what Vladimir Putin wants is a common commitment that no country — neither Russia nor the United States nor anyone else — will harbor [sic] — will harbor cyber criminals, whether ransomware attackers or otherwise, Joe Biden is all in for that.

He's not saying he's going to be exchanging cyber criminals with Russia. There's no cyber criminals who have committed crimes in Russia that he's looking at and thinking, "I'm going to exchange them." I think that was overread or misread in the press coming out of —

Q That's not what he said, right? I mean, he did — he did talk about specifically exchanging —

MR. SULLIVAN: If you go back and look at the transcript, I think you will actually see he didn't talk about exchanging cyber criminals.

Q What did he mean then?

Q Like, "prisoner swap" — he didn't say that.

MR. SULLIVAN: What's that?

Q He didn't say "prisoner swap."

MR. SULLIVAN: He didn't say "prisoner swap." What he was talking about was accountability and the idea that responsible countries should hold — should be held accountable to not harboring cyber criminals, and to bringing cyber criminals to justice. He's prepared to do that in the United States. He'd like to see Vladimir Putin do that.

This is not about exchanges or swaps, or anything like that.

Q On Northern Ireland —

MR. SULLIVAN: Oh, sorry, just on cyber, really fast, and Article 5: This would be on a case-by-case basis. And the notion is that if someone gets hit by a massive cyberattack, and they need technical or intelligence support from another Ally to be able to deal with it, they could invoke Article 5 to be able to get that. So —

Q And that's being proposed tomorrow?

MR. SULLIVAN: That's the concept. That's — that will be in the communiqué coming out of (inaudible).

Q Jake, on China, when you're bringing this up with NATO, in the past it's mostly been focused about Russia, or in more recent past, Macron has talked about concerns about the United's focus is turning to the east, and not locally. How do you bring the Europeans along more? I mean, even in — even in the G7, in the communiqué, with forced labor, in that paragraph — correct me if I'm wrong — it does not have China in it, but it is mentioned in the communiqué. So how do you bring them along in these next steps, in the NATO —

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I think forced labor is a great example of how we are all converging around a common strategy, and that strategy is ultimately about action.

And so the communiqué doesn't just say "forced labor" generically, it says "forced labor" with specific reference to solar, garments, and agriculture. And so where is the world solar made? What are the main products coming out of Xinjiang? You have cotton, you have garments, et cetera.

So the basic notion in the communiqué was: Call out Xinjiang in terms of its human rights abuses and then establish a neutral principle that all democracies can stand behind. We are going to take concrete action and countermeasures against forced labor in these areas. And when you actually apply that in practice, that will have an impact on Xinjiang.

So, from Joe Biden's perspective, the idea here is not to score rhetorical points. The idea is to get agreement around a common set of principles and a common strategy. And if you go through the communiqué and look at the areas where they got that convergence, they are all the central pillars of how we believe we should be dealing with the challenge of China: supply chain resilience, technology standards, an infrastructure alternative, as well as robust, specific, explicit language on human rights and on China's non-market practices.

So that's how we think about G7 and why we actually think this communiqué is a significant move forward from where the G7 has ever been before, and reflects a growing convergence that wasn't there a few years ago.

But it's also how we're going to approach NATO. You're not going to see, like, paragraphs and paragraphs about China in the communiqué. And the language is not going to be inflammatory. It's going to be clear, straightforward, and direct. And also, we're not going to try to over-crank the extent to which tomorrow is about China by any stretch. Tomorrow is about collective security and defense, and climate will be on the agenda; cyber will be on the agenda; Russia will be on the agenda; terrorism will be on the agenda; and this Afghanistan drawdown will be a significant issue.

But, yes, China will be there in a way it hasn't before. And I think President Biden's view is: Explain how we see things in a transparent and clear way. Don't try to push towards confrontation or conflict, but be prepared to try to rally allies and partners towards what is going to be tough competition in the years ahead. And that's true in the security domain as it is in the economic and technological domains.

Q Jake, on Northern Ireland — sorry — did the President say anything in his conversations with Prime Minister Johnson about whether a U.S.-UK trade deal would be at risk if he doesn't protect the Good Friday Agreement? Did he ask Boris Johnson not to renege on Brexit — on the Brexit pact? Or can you share a little bit about what the President told Boris Johnson about —

MR. SULLIVAN: All I'm going to say: They did discuss this issue. They had a candid discussion of it in private. The President naturally, and with, you know, deep sincerity, encouraged the Prime Minister to protect the Good Friday Agreement and the progress made under it. The specifics beyond that, I'm not going to get into.

Q On Afghanistan, does he intend to touch on the Kabul issue and particularly the security at the airport —

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q — maybe with Mr. Erdoğan?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q (Inaudible) come up with a solutions (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: He will discuss embassy presence with a broad range of allied embassies, and he will discuss security arrangements, specifically including with President Erdoğan. And I'm not going to go into further details because those discussions are, you know, best to take place privately and with some degree of sensitivity.

Q Jake, the event — I'm sorry, you didn't ask a question.

Q Can you take us inside the conversations at the G7 as much as you can, about China? I mean, how much convincing did it take to get everybody on board on the China language? And what was the, sort of, inside-the-room pitch that the President made to other world leaders on this? And did it look any different than what he said in public?

MR. SULLIVAN: I guess the way that I would look at this is: This is not — it's been framed up a bit as "Joe Biden walked in to convince everybody else on China." And I think that's not quite accurate. Each country has its set of concerns that it emphasizes vis-à-vis China. And what the President sought to do was bring all of that together into a common picture of what we need to do collectively as democracies to respond.

So, there isn't a — you know, whether it's Germany or it's Italy, or it's France, or it's the UK or Canada, to — on different issues, they have different levels of conviction about the depth of the challenge. But when you add it all up, actually, the whole became greater than the sum of its parts, because there is a broad view that China represents a significant challenge to the world's democracies on a number of different dimensions, and that we need a common agenda that is mostly affirmative but also has elements where we are going to stand up and counter and compete. And words like "counter" and "compete" were words coming out of the mouths of every leader in the room, not just Joe Biden.

So it wasn't like he had to sit there and make a legal case to try to bring people around. I think the role that he felt he could play was to take the different perspectives and try to stitch them together into a coherent and common whole.

And, honestly, from the transition — when there was fundamental questions about whether we were going to be deeply at odds with our European partners over China, and when the European Union signed on to the investment agreement with China — to today, when we released this communiqué and, at the end of this, you have seen, as I said before, a significant convergence on these issues, including to the point where that investment agreement is actually currently suspended.

So, you know, we believe where we're sitting today is not the end of the story, but it is a good platform upon which to build.

Q Can I ask you about the next chapter of that story? I mean, it seemed to go well at the G7. You know, everybody was friendly. You know, you didn't have the tensions that you had in the — a few years ago. What's the next step? I mean, how do you take that and go next to — whether it's policy or concrete, how do you take what symbolism (inaudible) those relationships and move forward?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah. I mean, ultimately, actions speak louder than words, and the proof will be in the pudding for all of us, including the United States.

So I would say the metrics over the course of the next year are, number one: Can we actually get Build Back Better World off the ground with meaningful financing behind it and a real impetus? I believe the answer to that question is, yes, there's real energy and enthusiasm behind it, but we got to do it. Can we turn the commitments on forced labor and ending overseas financing of coal into genuine outcomes by the end of this year or into early next year on forced labor? I believe the answer is yes, but we're going to have to prove it. We're going to have to prove it on actually delivering these vaccines and on the broader, comprehensive COVID agenda.

So what we have is a good program of work. It's a program of work that reflects a common strategy. That is an affirmative strategy, but also has an element of ensuring we compete with a position of — from a position of strength with China. And now we've got to actually execute on it.

So one year from today, at the next G7 — I'm not sure where that is. Do you know where the next G7 is?

MS. PSAKI: I don't know where the next one is. We'll have to get back to you on that.

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, we'll have to get back to you.

We actually now have a metric against which to judge ourselves. And I'm not going to hide from that. If we haven't achieved it, I'll move the goalposts next year. Okay? But for now — (laughs) — no, that's a joke.

Q What does “meaningful financing” look like for B3W? I mean, you said hundreds of millions of dollars, but there's — sorry, hundreds of billions of dollars, but there's a \$41 trillion infrastructure gap. So that's a pretty big gap in your own —

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah. I mean — but that's like saying BRI is a drop in the bucket because it's between 500 and a trillion.

It's true that there is infinite demand. But the fact is that, you know, we need to look at what are immediately bankable projects; where is there absorptive capacity; how do we get this money out the door in a way that actually is going to produce the physical or digital or health infrastructure.

So I think, in the first few years, the idea that we'd be mobilizing this amount of money and proving out concept and building momentum will take us a long way. And that \$40 trillion goes out — first goes out to 2035. And, second, we're not going to stand here and pretend like we're going to fill the entire \$40 trillion gap. We're going to try and make a real dent in it between now and 15 years from now.

Q Jake, can you clarify what the President said when he talked about there being a dilemma for Russia as it relates to Libya? Presumably he was referring to Syria. Is there more clarity?

MR. SULLIVAN: Syria.

Q He meant Syria, then?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, he did.

Q And then, there was reporting today about how when these G7 leaders work together, that there were concerns that China may be spying on these conversations. Can you talk about, like, what that reveals about the concerns that still exist (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think that was a garble, to be honest with you.

Q That was a what?

Q A garble?

MR. SULLIVAN: Who said — who said that? That was the thing about —

Q The cell signal around the room where the leaders was meeting was blocked at times.

Q Was blocked to protect those conversations.

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, I think — honestly think this was a garble. I think it was — like many beautiful coastal spots in America, Cornwall has spotty cell service, which I experienced considerably. I don't — like, I do not believe or know — I wasn't in that session, so I can't say for sure.

Q It was in multiple sessions that cell service was blocked.

MR. SULLIVAN: Oh, no, I was in — I was in multiple sessions, and I was on my phone. So —

Q We got jammed. We felt like we were being jammed at one point. Yeah.

MR. SULLIVAN: I don't think this is correct. I will check on it for you guys to be sure. I'm not trying to hide the ball here. But I was in four of the six sessions and on my phone on all of them. So, I don't know about cell service being blocked.

Q Did you see the statement from the Chinese —

MR. SULLIVAN: You look skeptical, but I'm telling you, I was sitting there —

Q Because even one of your briefers told us on — one of the senior administration officials said that the cell — that Internet was blocked during the meetings. But you're saying —

MS. PSAKI: I don't think that was actually the exact phrasing. I mean, he didn't have access at times to Internet, and is having a hard time getting access to his computer and his notes.

MR. SULLIVAN: I genuinely don't think Internet was blocked, but I don't know. If it was, it was only for the sessions I wasn't in, because I will show you the receipts of all the emails I sent. In fact —

Q The point was: We're asking what it reflects on the Chinese relationship.

MR. SULLIVAN: When I was — I would frequently have to look up and make sure the President wasn't looking back at me while I was on my phone during. (Laughter.) Anyway, that's off the record. Just kidding. I don't know (inaudible).

Q Did you see the statement from the Chinese Embassy in London saying that China would not pay attention to a group of small countries?

MR. SULLIVAN: Which group of small countries is that?

Q Talking about the G7?

MR. SULLIVAN: (Laughs.) That is sad. So, if their claim is that all of the other world's largest economies count as small countries, then they have a massive problem of perspective.

Q Is this — is (inaudible) at G7, NATO — can you connect it to the priority of being foreign policy for the middle class?

MR. SULLIVAN: NATO?

Q Well, both — the G7 and NATO.

MR. SULLIVAN: I mean, G7 —

Q (Inaudible) very strong priority (inaudible).

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah — so, G7, at its core, is about sustainable, equitable economic recovery that will deliver for the American middle class. The global minimum tax is — was one of our top priorities in terms of delivering for the American people. The dollars that will put in our fist to be able to invest back in workers and communities are substantial. So that's one big outcome in that regard.

Even something like Build Back Better World actually interacts in a really interesting way with the American Jobs Plan, because as we invest in and develop clean energy technologies or water infrastructure that we're building out in the United States, investing this money overseas through Build Back Better World will actually give export opportunities for American-made products and technologies. And we're very mindful of that and would be proud of that as a — as a feature of Build Back Better World.

And then, all of the work on supply chain resilience so that we're never again dependent on another country in a crisis and so that we have sufficient manufacturing capacity at home for critical materials, sensitive materials — that's going to deliver jobs and economic growth for the middle class.

So those are just three — three examples.

Q You mentioned — you mentioned briefly Erdoğan, but could you give us a little more sense as to what the agenda is tomorrow in that — in that bilateral?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah, so they will talk about Afghanistan and, in particular, how we ensure that our embassies can stay in a safe and secure way in Afghanistan to be able to do all the things that we want to do in providing for the Afghan government and security forces and people.

They will talk about Syria and humanitarian access, among other issues in the counterterrorism space. They will talk about the eastern Mediterranean. They will talk about Libya. They will talk about political and economic issues that are more challenging. And then they will — that have been challenges in our relationship, including human rights-related issues.

And they will talk about the — as I said in my opening laydown, Russia and China. You know, Russia, obviously, is both at odds with Turkey in some places and working with Turkey in others. So it'll be an interesting chance for him to compare notes with Erdoğan before seeing Putin.

Q Is he prepared to talk about their meetings (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q The S-400s — will he bring that up as well?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes, he will. The S-4- — yeah, the air defense system in —

Q The (inaudible).

MR. SULLIVAN: — in Turkey. Yes.

Q Okay.

Q And can you give us any idea of what he might say on the S-400s?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm following the Biden Doctrine, and I will, you know, let him have that conversation with Erdoğan.

Q On the Afghanistan interpreters who helped the U.S. military, was there any discussion amongst the Allies in any of the G7 meetings or pull-asides about what to do about —

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes. He spoke with several leaders — I guess not several. He spoke with a few leaders — particularly like the Germans, who have troops as part of the drawdown now in Afghanistan — about interpreters, translators, others who have supported not just us, but NATO and their countries about what we're going to collectively do to make sure that we meet the obligation we have to get them out.

So was there any conclusion on that? Is there more of a plan now than you had before going into the G7 on what to do on (inaudible)?

MR. SULLIVAN: For them, it was an opportunity at the leader level to communicate to each other and then to be able to communicate down to their systems, send a pulse through their systems. This is a massive priority for our President, as well as for the leaders of these other countries.

Q And then, on ransoms, was there debate amongst the Allies at the G7 meetings about whether or not they should say something about whether to pay ransoms? Was that a topic of discussion?

MR. SULLIVAN: Not really. Too much to talk about.

Q On Russia, today in the news conference, (inaudible) say that there is no guarantee that he can change Vladimir Putin; Vladimir Putin is Vladimir Putin. Do you come into this with — like, can you — can you sort of assess the level of optimism or confidence that anything can be done to change the behavior of this man, given the experience that the President acknowledged in terms of sanctions not really having a real impact on his behavior?

MR. SULLIVAN: I think there are two fundamental elements to how we think about dealing with Russia. One is: Are there areas where, in our common interest, we can work together to produce outcomes that are — that work for the United States and for the American people?

And the other is: How do we send a clear message about those harmful activities that we will not tolerate and to which we will respond?

On the second: Of course, we can't make guarantees about what Russia will do, but we can make pledges about what America will do, which is we will respond if those harmful activities continue.

On the first: We will see where we get. There's the question of strategic stability. There's the question of Syria and humanitarian access. There are issues related to the Arctic. There are other places where it would be in our interest to find a basis to work with Russia.

Q If a country attacks us by cyber, does the United States respond by cyber? Can the United States respond by cyber?

MR. SULLIVAN: The way that I've consistently characterized our response when it — when it came to SolarWinds and to other cyberattacks of that scope and scale is that we are prepared to take responsive actions that are seen and unseen, and I'll leave it at that.

Q Can you say anything more about U.S-UK travel and whether — I know that there was a working group on this, but, at the leader level, was there any discussion about opening up? And how soon might we see that?

MR. SULLIVAN: They did discuss it. You know, the President expressed his deep understanding that the UK would love to have its citizens travel to the U.S. as soon as possible. But he also communicated that this ultimately is a decision for the public health experts to make according to their guidance, and that's what the point of getting our experts together is: so that the UK experts can share all the information necessary to help hasten that decision.

Q You said the U.S. can take actions that are “seen and unseen.” So in reaction to what the FBI has now said was crimes committed by cyber criminals within Russia, has the U.S. taken any unseen actions in that window of time since its response?

MR. SULLIVAN: I'm not going to say anything further on that except to point out that we do see a difference between SolarWinds, on the one hand, and ransomware attacks on the other hand. Ultimately, we don't judge Russia — the Russian government — was responsible for the ransomware attacks, but we have said it is — it is Russia's sovereign obligation to deal with it, and we have communicated that to them. And that is a continuing dialogue between our countries.

Q When the President said that — what President Putin said to NBC News, he said that he had no knowledge of these ransomware attacks. Do you take President Putin at his word that he would have no knowledge of this in any form?

MR. SULLIVAN: I can't — I can't speak to that one way or the other.

Q Was a date set for Angela Merkel's visit to the White House then?

MR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q Do we know what that is?

MR. SULLIVAN: July 15.

MS. PSAKI: I think we announced it.

MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: All right. It's Jerome's last trip, so —

Q Right here.

MS. PSAKI: I know he's not the President, but he's the National Security Advisor, so we have to celebrate you.

Q Seven years of White House, so, yeah.

MR. SULLIVAN: Amazing. All right. Well, hopefully, you know, we'll end it with —

Q We're thinking of maybe having drinks on Monday.

Q Yes.

MR. SULLIVAN: Let's do it.

Q Monday? That's tomorrow.

Q Yeah. It's probably a good time (inaudible).

MS. PSAKI: Send us the details.

MR. SULLIVAN: Right, because the very exciting U.S.-EU Summit is the next day —

MS. PSAKI: That's right.

MR. SULLIVAN: — which I know all of you guys (inaudible).

Q All the more reason to —

Q That's why we're doing it Monday.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

Q Thanks, Jake.

MS. PSAKI: Anything I can do for you?

Q Jen, anything on if he's inviting the Queen to the White House? It seemed like he invited the Queen.

Q Did he invite the Queen? Or was he just sort of speaking colloquially?

MS. PSAKI: I will have to talk with him about that. That wasn't a prior planned offer.

Q I understand.

You guys have now had a little bit of time to review the infrastructure package that the Republican — that the bipartisan group of 10 senators proposed at this point: \$1.2 trillion over eight years, I think. Do you have any comments on it right now? Is it sufficient?

And what do you say to Democrats who say that you're effectively wasting your time by continuing to do this without just pursuing your own policy goals?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I've talked to the President about this. He's staying in close touch with his senior team back at the White House.

Before he left, he asked the Jobs Cabinet and members of his senior White House team, including, of course, Ron Klain, but also Steve Ricchetti, Louisa Terrell, and others to stay closely engaged with members as they continue to discuss multiple paths forward and multiple options for getting his ideas passed into law.

We're still taking a look, still having conversations with these — the members of this bipartisan group. I would — on the second part of your question, though, I would say that the way we see it is that we're looking to see where we can find common ground on infrastructure and on areas where there's overlap and agreement. We are still moving forward with a budget process, which is another path and a simultaneous path to get a range of these ideas passed into law, as well as corporate tax reform.

So, in response to folks who are saying we're delaying, we're not. We're moving on both tracks at the same time.

Q And has he talked to Manchin or Romney specifically about their infrastructure proposal?

MS. PSAKI: He has asked his team to stay in close touch with members — a range of members — and he has been updated by them at least once a day, sometimes twice, since he started the trip.

Q But he hasn't spoken to them directly yet, that you know of?

MS. PSAKI: He has not had those — he has not had those engagements on the trip. He's been — he's been busy.

Q Can you pull back the curtain a little bit in advance of the Putin summit about how he is being prepared, prepped on this? Obviously, the National Security Advisor has been with him throughout, but, like, how does one prepare for these visits? Obviously, they have interactions in the past.

Q And the First Lady said he was “overprepared.”

Q Said he was “overprepared.” Right.

MS. PSAKI: (Laughs.) Well, what I think she meant by that — I also know she said — which I agree with, from having many conversations with him — is that foreign policy, national security, you know, engaging on the world stage is an area that has been a central focus of his 50 years in public life and public office.

And so, he, of course, has engaged with President Putin before, as you well know. And, you know, he certainly knows what to expect. His view is that this is not a meeting about trust, it's not a meeting about friendship — it's a meeting about figuring out where we can find common ground, and also being straightforward and candid about areas where we have concern.

So, really, he has actually been spending some time preparing for each of these rounds of meetings. You know, as we were just talking about the G summit — the G — the G7 with Jake, there was a lot that happened during that summit, from COVID, from the cyber ransomware, China.

A lot of the discussions over the — the majority of the discussions over the last two days, on a staff level, were about the summit and those meetings. And the majority of meetings he'll have tonight and tomorrow morning are about NATO.

So this is a very packed trip. And certainly he'll spend time preparing with his team, talking about where there are opportunities to engage on the path forward with President Putin. But I would also just reiterate he's been preparing for this moment for 50 years.

Q Are you concerned about vaccines not reaching 70 percent by July 4th? Does that say anything about divisions in America?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say: Look, at the end of the day, it is — at this point, what the government can do is we can provide the resources, we can incentivize, we can provide the funding, the vaccine supply, and work with states and localities to do everything we can — and in the private sector — to incentivize people to get shots in their arms. It is ultimately up to individuals to do that.

What you've seen is that a number of states have met and surpassed that goal, right? Many have not yet. But we've started — kicked off this one-month campaign to do everything we can to reach it. And we'll see where we get. We've got some time.

Q Jen, in Israel, the Knesset just approved the new coalition which would end Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year run, I think. Can the White House comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: We will have a statement shortly that should be out to all of you.

Q Has the President spoken to the new prime minister?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe he has yet, but he will soon. And we'll get you with the statement and a readout if that happens, whenever that happens.

Q What's the President's message to the American public about the Delta variant and how concerned they should be? I mean, he tweeted about it the other day.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you say anything more about, you know, what the administration is doing specifically to address that?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, the spread of the Delta variant and the prevalence of it is one of the reasons why we are making clear to people who have not been vaccinated — specifically people under 40; it's a big gap, as you all know, between the percentages of people over 40 versus under — of what — how high the risk is from the Delta variant. It spreads, it's very transmissible, and this should be another incentive for young people to get vaccinated.

So we are working to elevate that as a concern because we want people to be aware of the risks.

Great. Thanks, everyone.

Q Thank you, Jen.

8:41 P.M. BST

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