

# Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, July 6, 2021

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July 06, 2021

## Briefing Room

### • Speeches and Remarks

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:04 P.M. EDT

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Tuesday. Happy July Fourth week. Okay, a couple of updates for you all at the top here.

After the President is briefed by his COVID-19 Response Team this afternoon, he will speak to the American people about the strong progress that the country has made in recovery because of its robust vaccination campaign, as well as the importance of every eligible American getting vaccinated, especially as the Delta variant continues to grow among unvaccinated people across the country.

By the end of the week, the United States will be nearing 160 million people fully vaccinated — which the President will touch on today as well — which is critically important, as fully vaccinated people are protected against the Delta variant.

He will also stress how the administration will continue its effort to work with governors, local leaders, and across the public and private sector to get more Americans vaccinated by making vaccines available in more healthcare settings and respond to hotspots.

The President will outline five areas his team is focused on to get more Americans vaccinated.

One: targeted, community-by-community, door-to-door outreach to get remaining Americans vaccinated by ensuring they have the information they need on how both safe and accessible the vaccine is.

Two: a renewed emphasis on getting the vaccines to more primary care doctors and physicians — something that we've seen as a very successful tactic with reaching groups with lower vaccination rates in the past few months.

Three: stepped-up efforts, which is complementary to my last point, to get vaccines to pediatricians and other providers who serve younger people so that adolescents age 12 to 18 can get vaccinated as they go for back-to-school checkups or get ready for fall sports.

Four: continue expanding efforts to make the vaccine accessible for workers. Access is an area where we've seen as a challenge and one where, as we've worked to address it, we've seen increasing rates. So that includes setting up vaccination clinics at workplaces and PTO or time — leave that employees can take off to get vaccinated.

And finally: expanding our mobile clinic efforts, meeting people where they are, and making sure we're taking the vaccine to communities.

Another COVID update: This week, both Guatemala and Vietnam will be receiving COVID vaccine doses from the Biden-Harris administration. Gua- — Guatemala will receive 1.5 million doses of Moderna, and Vietnam will receive 2 million doses of Moderna.

Also today, as part of the President's forthcoming executive order on competition — stay tuned — the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced it will engage in a series of rulemakings to increase competition in agricultural industries to boost farmers' and ranchers' earnings, fight back against abuses of power by giant agribusiness corporations, and give farmers the right to repair their own equipment how they like.

The President's executive order will follow through on a campaign promise by directing USDA to issue new rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act, making it easier for farmers to bring and win claims, stopping chicken processors from exploiting and underpaying chicken farmers, and adapting anti-retaliation protections for farmers who speak out about bad practices.

Second, the EO will direct USD- — the USDA to issue new rules defining when meat can bear "Product of the USA" labels so that consumers have accurate, transparent labels that enable them to know where their food comes from and to choose to support American farmers and ranchers.

Something I learned that I found a little outrageous — we'll see what you all think — is that under current labeling rules, most grass-fed beef labeled "Product of USA" is actually raised and slaughtered abroad, and then imported to the U.S. for processing.

The President and the USDA believe it is unfair for domestic farmers and ranchers to have to compete with foreign companies that are misleading consumers.

Third, the EO directs USDA to develop a plan to increase opportunities for farmers to access markets and receive a fair return, including supporting alternative food distribution systems like farmer — farmers markets, and developing standards and labels that consumers can choose to buy products that treat farmers and agricultural workers fairly.

These are just a few examples of actions USDA will take under the new executive order and in the entire federal government's mission, which will be — help move forward through this executive order to help increase opportunities for small and independent businesses to boost their earnings and to lower prices and increase options for consumers.

I think I have one more item. Yes. A number of you had asked me on the last trip I was on if we could do a little more to preview trips farther in advance, so I'm going to try to do that today.

As you all know, tomorrow, the President will travel to Crystal Lake, Illinois, which is located in the district of Congresswoman Lauren Underwood. There, he will visit McHenry County College, a community college that has a workforce development program and a childcare center — programs which his Build Back Better agenda invests in and the American Families Plan — we've talked quite a bit in here — has proposals in.

As the President presses for the bipartisan infrastructure framework, he's also pressing ahead on a dual track for the full breadth and scope of the Build Back Better agenda, which includes his climate — his critical climate priorities and the American Families Plan.

The President's Build Back Better agenda provides a once-in-a-generation investment in the foundations of middle-class prosperity: education, healthcare, and childcare. From making education more affordable and expanding key provisions like the Child Care Tax Credit, to providing economic security through programs like paid leave to families, the President will continue advancing his entire economic agenda to build back better.

Congresswoman Underwood, many of you may know, is a registered nurse, health policy expert, and committed advocate for expanding access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, which the Build Back Better agenda accomplishes by permanently lowering health insurance premiums for those who build coverage on their own, saving families an average of \$50 per person per month. As a result, 9 million people would save hundreds of dollars per year on their premiums, and 4 million uninsured people would gain coverage.

He'll also, of course, engage with elected officials on the ground. We'll have an update for you as the schedule is being finalized on that.

With that, Zeke, why don't you kick us off.

Q Thanks, Jen. First, with respect to the COVID speech this afternoon, the rate of new vaccinations in the U.S. has been continuously declining over the last several months as access has increased, as promotions, giveaways — all sorts of efforts on the part of the administration and private sector was to get people — to get vaccinated has, sort of, ramped up as well. Is there a point for the administration where, you know — where people (inaudible) — or simply the acknowledgement that people who have not been vaccinated are choosing not to, and then — that the administration will stop, sort of, you know, throwing money at them or giving speeches encouraging them to get vaccinated if that's their choice?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, let me say, Zeke, that we had always noted that, at a certain phase in the vaccination process or in our fight against COVID, when we had more supply than we had demand, which was about two months — a month and a half ago, that we — the

numbers would go down, in terms of the number of people who were vaccinated each day and each week.

More than 2 million people per week are getting their first dose, and millions more are getting their second dose. So our focus now is on doubling down on our efforts as we continue to vaccinate millions of people across the summer months. And that includes, as we've noted in here in the past, young people under the age of 27 who are being vaccinated at a lower rate than people who are 27 and older. And we believe that we need to continue to press to get more people in the country vaccinated, even as we're seeing rates in parts of the country that are over 70 percent — even some places over 80 percent. There's still more work to be done.

You are absolutely correct that it is ultimately up to individuals to decide if they were going — if they are going to get vaccinated. If you are vaccinated, you are — most of — the vast, vast majority of people are safe from the virus. If you are not vaccinated, you are not. That is also a message that we're going to continue to clearly communicate.

But, no, these programs will continue, and we're going to continue to press forward on approaches that we have seen work in the past.

Q And switching gears to this massive cyberattack that took hold over the weekend: Is the President's view, sort of, just philosophically, that it's the role of government to protect businesses and private citizens from cyber — aggressive cyber actions like this — or cyberattacks like this — ransomware and like? Or is it an issue of personal or corporate responsibility? What's the, sort of — is there a ratio the President needs to sort of — it is 80 percent, you know, on the government to prevent these, and 20 percent on the companies? What's the mix?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Zeke, I would first say that the attack over the weekend underscores the need for companies and government agencies, as well, to focus on improving cybersecurity. And we've talked a bit in the past about the importance of private-sector entities hardening their own cybersecurity, putting in place best practices that have been recommended by the federal government for some time.

But we are going to continue to be partners because it's important to, of course, protect our critical infrastructure, but also protect — do what — play what role we can, from the federal government, to ensure that impacts on smaller businesses, on mom-and-pop shops are minimized as well.

So we have engaged over the last several months, under the leadership of a range of officials, including Anne Neuberger, in a better partnership, more effective partnership with the private sector, providing resources from the federal government, and we'll continue that.

Q And finally, there's reports that Khalid bin Salman is in town, in Washington this week, potentially to meet with Jake Sullivan. Can you confirm that meeting? And then, also, is it a confirmation that the White House believes that he had no role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I can confirm that meeting. Let me see, I believe I have a little bit more information on it here. One moment for you, Zeke.

Saudi Arabia's Deputy Defense Minister will meet with — or is meeting with, I should say — Biden administration officials today, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. He's scheduled to meet with State and Defense Department officials as well. During the meeting, they'll discuss the longstanding partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia, regional security, and the U.S. commitment to help Saudi Arabia defend its territory as it faces attacks from Iranian-aligned groups.

As you know, we worked to declassify a report that names specific officials who we felt — or who our intelligence community, I should say — were involved with and knowledgeable of the horrific death of Jamal Khashoggi.

Beyond that, I can tell you that, of course, this could be a topic, but I'm not going to discuss additional details.

Go ahead.

Q Yeah. I just want to follow up on the Kaseya attack.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Have you had any communication at all with Russia about this attack? And I'm — I want to ask a few more questions. But President Putin and President Biden met and discussed cybersecurity. Were you under the impression that Putin would do more to prevent these kind of attacks?

MS. PSAKI: So, first, let me say — let me give you a little bit of an update. Since the meeting between President Biden and President Putin, we have undertaken expert-level talks that are continuing, and we expect to have another meeting next week focused on ransomware attacks.

And I will just reiterate a message that these officials are sending. As the President made clear to President Putin when they met, if the Russian government cannot or will not take action against criminal actors residing in Russia, we will take action or reserve the right to take action on our own.

Now, in this case, you know, their — the intelligence community has not yet attributed the attack. The cybersecurity community agrees that REvil operates out of Russia with affiliates around the world, so we will continue to allow that assessment to continue. But in our conversations — and we have been in touch directly — we are continuing to convey that message clearly.

Q So you've been in touch directly with — at what level of government have you been in touch with Russia on this specific issue?

And then, on the ransomware, the FBI has basically told companies not to pay ransomware. Are you aware whether, in this particular case, the ransom of \$70 million has been paid? And what advice are you giving to the company?

And, earlier today, the CEO said that the — you know, that critical infrastructure was never at risk. Is that — do you share that assessment?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, let me try to take each of your questions, and you can tell me if I missed one.

On ransomware, our — well, what was your first question so I can go in the order?

Q What level — where have you been in touch? Who have you been —

MS. PSAKI: A high level of our national security team has been in touch with a high level of Russian officials.

On your second question — repeat it again now.

Q Ransomware being paid, has been paid.

MS. PSAKI: Our ransomware policy continues to be the same as it has been for several months, which is that we do not advise — we advise against, in fact — companies paying ransomware given it incentivizes bad actors to repeat this behavior. In terms of whether the company has paid ransom, I would refer you to the company.

And in terms of assessments of the impact, we certainly would — we saw the company put out an extensive statement today about what the impacts were on our systems, and we certainly defer to them on the impacts.

Q Can I switch gears? We have a story — so, a company — organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Retail Federation are gearing up for a big lobbying campaign to, you know, lobby against the tax increases that you are proposing. And what they say is that increasing taxes doesn't create jobs. What do you say to that? And, you know, what are you doing to counter this pretty intense push by these lobbying organizations?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that the American people are aligned with the President's view that corporations and the wealthiest Americans can afford to pay a little bit more in order to pay for critical investments in our nation's infrastructure, but also in initiatives and programs that will help make our country more competitive and bring more women back into the workforce. And that's what the President is proposing.

I would also note that we've seen, in terms of public reports, that, of the wealthiest companies out there, a number of them didn't pay any taxes at all. And that certainly is not something that is viable, nor does the President think that is fair. And that sends a clear message that our tax system is not set up in a fair and equitable way, and that's something he feels we should address regardless.

So, that's his view in his proposal. We'll have to see how successful these lobbyists are at moving the public opinion and approval rating down from what it is currently, which is the vast majority of the American people agree with the President.

Go ahead.

Q Just one quick follow-up on ransomware, and then two other quick ones. From a response perspective, if this is attributed to REvil and they decide that it's based in Russia, is the President's view that the response will be proportional to just taking that actor offline or actually direct it at the Russian state instead for harboring? How do you guys approach that?

MS. PSAKI: It's a good question, Phil. I would say that I'm not going to be able to detail more specifics from here.

But I would note that — and I would reiterate — that the President's view and the administration's view is that, even as it is criminal actors who are taking these actions against the United States or entities — private-sector entities in the United States, even as — even without the engagement of the Russian government, they still have a responsibility. That continues to be the President's view and the administration's view.

In terms of what actions we may or may not take, we'll — I'll allow the national security team to work that through.

Q And then, can you — just two more quick ones. What's the level of frustration in the White House that you have a vaccine, the vaccine works, it is available to a degree it has never been available before, people are not getting the vaccine, and therefore the Delta variant is emerging in certain places around the country? Like are you guys, like, banging the table? Are you upset? How do you, kind of, go through that, knowing that there is a counter-weapon here to what's happening around the country?

MS. PSAKI: You know, Phil, I think, as the federal government, we don't have the luxury of feeling frustrated or feeling upset about individuals not getting the vaccine.

What our responsibility is, is to ensure we are applying best practices — whether that's working with doctors and pediatricians or addressing access, mobile vaccine clinics, or ensuring that people know that they can take time off of work, or even working with employers to make the vaccine accessible.

It is ultimately up to individuals, and we certainly recognize that as well. But we're going to continue to press as hard as we can to use the best — best practices to continue to increase the vaccination rates around the country.

Q And just one more quick one: OPEC Plus. I know you guys had a statement yesterday that you guys directly engaged with the various players even though you're not a part of the negotiation.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Can you elaborate a little bit on what that means?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We are closely monitoring the OPEC Plus negotiations and their impact on the global economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. As you noted, Phil, we're not a party to these talks, but, over the weekend and into this week, we've had a number of high-level conversations with officials in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other relevant partners.

We're encouraged by the ongoing conversation by OPEC members to reaching an agreement — the ongoing talks, I should say — which will promote access to affordable and reliable energy. And certainly the impact on prices here is a — hence, our great interest.

Go ahead

Q Thanks, Jen. I just want to follow up on Zeke's question to you on this, sort of, public-private role in response to cyberattacks.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q So we know the President signed these orders back in May — some of which were, of course, supposed to step up enforcement on private companies, at least as — those that work with the federal government. But it's been 55 days since he signed those orders, and, from our review, the orders from DHS haven't been put in place yet; they're still actually in the review process.

So is — these attacks are happening still, though. Is the government working fast enough on — even in this narrow lane where you say you can do some work?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, the — these — the increase in ransomware attacks far pre-dated the President taking office. And it is something that, from day one, he has made a priority and has asked his team to focus on where we can have an impact, how we can better work with the private sector, and what we can do across the federal government to help address and reduce ransomware attacks on our critical infrastructure but also on a range of entities in the United States.

Tomorrow, the President will convene key leaders across the interagency, including the State Department, Department of Justice, DHS, and other intelligence community — members of the intelligence community to discuss ransomware and our overall strategic efforts to counter it.

And what he had asked the team to do several weeks ago was to review and assess what our options are and how we can better, again, put in place partnerships with the private sector; best practices; what levers we have from the federal government, including disruption of ransomware infrastructure and actors, which we've seen some success in — I know the Department of Justice announced some steps just a few weeks ago; building international coalition to hold countries who harbor ransom actors accountable, which is a huge factor here as well because we're not the only country impacted, of course, by



ransomware attacks; expanding cryptocurrency analysis to find and pursue criminal transactions; and reviewing our own ransom policies to build cohesive and consistent approaches toward ransom payments.

So, this is a priority. He's meeting with a range of officials tomorrow, and we will continue to implement moving forward.

Q But would you say you're still in the review-and-assessment phase in this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first note that we have announced several steps that we have taken. I mean, the Department of Justice announced a step just a few weeks ago, and we are continuing to up our partnership with the private sector, which is a key part of best practices and ensuring we are reducing the impact the — I should say, the vulnerability — of private-sector entities. But there's more that can be done, and it warrants and requires an interagency process and discussion in order to move those policies forward.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. A quick follow-up on the ransomware.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q You mentioned that, after President Biden called on Putin to hold cyber hackers accountable, there have been expert-level talks. Is there any evidence that Putin has done anything to curb cyberattacks in Russia that he's communicated with the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I — again, I would say it's a little bit disproving a negative there because this is — what we're talking about here is a ransomware attack — attack from likely criminal actors. Again, it hasn't been fully attributed yet, so we're getting a little bit ahead, which I certainly understand, of where things stand.

There are these expert-level talks and negotiations and engagements. That's an important part of the next steps, an important part of what came out of their discussion.

And beyond that, I think what the message is that the President has sent clearly and what we're sending — continuing to send clearly is: Even with these criminal actors — we're not saying they're coming from the government or directed from the government — but even with those actors, they have a responsibility.

So, that's where the policy is, moving forward. I think it's difficult for me to disprove a negative.

Q Thanks. And on COVID, the five-step plan you outlined —

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q — still focus heav- — focuses heavily on access. And you've already mentioned the group of people who have access to the vaccine but simply don't want it. So, is the White House tweaking its strategy to reach those people, to change their minds?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say it's about changing their minds. What we've seen over the cour- — well, I guess it sort of is — but what we've seen over the course of time is that the most reliable voices are trusted actors in communities: medical experts, doctors, people's primary care physicians.

And so we're going to continue to utilize and resource the entities where we feel there has been success and where we've seen, through data, there has been success in the past. You know, you don't just give up just because you haven't reached every single person. We're going to continue to apply where we — what we've seen have been the best practices over the past several months.

Q And just one more on —

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q — COVID. If the number of cases continues to trend upward, are there any circumstances under which the White House would reimpose some of those restrictions as cases tick up? Or would that be up to the states?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the states are going to have to make evaluations and local communities are going to have to make evaluations about what's in their interests. And, as you know, there are much higher rates of vaccinations in some parts of the country over others, and we certainly support their decisions to implement any measures that they think will help their community be safe.

But I would remind you, we're at a point where we're almost at 70 percent vaccination rate for — well, for 20 — adults 27 and older, but almost for adults 18 and older. So, certainly, we don't see we're on track to implementing new, additional national measures.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you.

Q On ransomware, the company statement goes into a lot of detail about the kinds of victims among its client base —

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q — and points out that they are not related to critical infrastructure. Is that simply about informing people about what's there? Or is that to separate this attack from some of the — the outline the President presented to Vladimir Putin about, sort of, the “no-go” list of critical infrastructure that should not be interfered with from any Russian actor, be it criminal or state or whatever? Do you see that as an important tell?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say that, of course, there's a unique threat posed by cyberattacks that disrupt critical infrastructure, and there's no question about that. If there's a cyberattack that takes out an entire sector of the American economy, that would have an enormous, broad impact. And we recognize that.

I can't speak to the communication strategy of the company, of course, which I know you're not exactly asking me to do. But I will say that, regardless of whether a cyberattack impacts critical infrastructure, we take it seriously and we reserve the option of responding in a manner and mechanism of our choosing regardless.

But I think there's no question that, in terms of national security threats, if it's critical infrastructure and it's taking out the meat industry or, you know, suppliers who are supplying gasoline, that is something that is a different impact in terms of a national security threat.

Q How many ransomware attacks before the U.S. retaliates, though?

Q On COVID, is the President's briefing — and is he likely to address the issue of those who are questioning whether a booster shot is appropriate with the Delta variant? And also, is he also contemplating a position on mask wearing for transportation, like airplanes and trains and so forth? It's still in effect, but there's been some talk that might be lifted as more vaccinations take place.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. I would not anticipate — or you should not anticipate, I should say — that he would have any new announcements or guidance on either of those fronts today. We certainly rely on the advice of our health and medical experts if there — if any of those should change in the future.

Go ahead.

Q Jen, —

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, Jacqui. I'll come back to you.

Q So data from Israel shows that the Pfizer vaccine is less effective against the Delta variant in preventing infection — about 64 percent of the time. The administration keeps saying, as you just have during the briefing, that you're confident that people who are vaccinated are safe. But why is this still the assessment? And is there any concern that mask requirements were lifted too soon?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that that's preliminary data. And the vast majority of data from larger assessments and larger studies shows that it is quite effective. And that is the data from mass, larger studies that we're relying on. It's preliminary. We'll look at what the final conclusions say.

Q One more. Pope Francis is still in the hospital recovering from surgery. I was just wondering: Has the President reached out to him at all? Has there been any contact? Anything the White House wanted to say?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any contact to read out for you. Certainly, the President wishes him well and a speedy recovery, of course.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I wanted to go back to COVID. There's been a lot of discussion about the Delta variant, but then there's also been some international concern about the Lambda variant. The World Health Organization deemed it a variant "of interest" back in June. Public Health England placed it under investigation due to international expansion. And then, British scientist are describing mutations that another study also says could indicate less efficacy for the vaccine.

So what do we know about Lambda? Is it spreading in the U.S.? And have vaccine manufacturers talked to the administration at all about protections against it?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, first, public health officials continue to closely track and monitor all of the variants, as we've seen pop up over time, and are reviewing the latest data when it becomes available.

I'll certainly leave it to doctors to discuss this, but early data suggests that the vaccines continue to work against the variants, including this variant, and that's why we've been focusing so much on increasing vaccinations across the country.

As with every strain, getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself and others from any other COVID strains, but we will continue to assess data as more widely available data becomes available.

Q And then, how is the spread of new variants informing travel restrictions into other countries — from other countries to the U.S.?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, as you may know, there are working groups and — with Canada, with European — with our European partners, and we're working to continue to assess what criteria would need to be in place in order to reopen travel.

And we know that, in many cases, families are separated. We know that's a heartbreaking challenge that a lot of people are dealing with. And a lot of people are eager to travel, be with loved ones, or even do work travel. We understand that. We're eager to do that as well.

The United States has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, and that is something we also assess as we look at countries and are making those decisions about reopening travel. But these working groups are meant to have an open line of transparent communication with these countries about what steps need to be taken.

Q And then, how are these new variants impacting back-to-school plans, with a lot of children still too young to get vaccines? How is that — this new element sort of factoring in into all these plans?

MS. PSAKI: I would say: The good news is that there are a number of mitigation measures that have been recommended, of course, by the CDC that our Department of Education has been working to help local school districts implement. Whether they are

social distancing or mask-wearing requirements, ventilation — there's money that came from the American Rescue Plan to help fund this in areas and school districts where they didn't have the money available.

So, that is certainly what we expect, and we are looking forward to schools being reopened in the fall.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. I just have a few follow-ups on the OPEC Plus talks.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Could you tell us which administration officials have been engaging with the Saudi and UAE governments on this issue?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have more details about the individuals. I can see if there's more specifics to provide for you after the briefing.

Q And then on the U.S. engagement in the talks: I know that you've said the U.S. isn't a party to the talks, but have these officials engaged or encouraged a specific solution, such as keeping production levels where they are currently through the end of the year?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, we are engaged directly with them to hear updates on the conversations that are happening between the OPEC members. I can see — of course, and we are constantly monitoring the price of gas in this country, and we know the impact of oil prices around the world is having a direct impact on that.

In terms of additional specifics of the conversations, I'm just not going to have anything more to read out for you.

Q And then, lastly, is there — just gauging the concern level here at the White House — is there any chance that President Biden would personally get involved in contacting these governments?

MS. PSAKI: I'm certainly not predicting that at this moment in time. We have high-level officials who are talented and aptly engaged with their counterparts. And I will see if there's more specifics we can provide about who the individuals are.

Go ahead.

Q A couple things. On COVID, when we talk about vaccination rates, what is the end goal? Where does the administration decide things are done or things are as best as they can be?

MS. PSAKI: I think our health and medical experts, including Dr. Fauci, have made pretty clear that we're going to be continuing to battle the virus for some time.

Now, when you're vaccinated, you can return to many versions of normal: going to the park, going to restaurants, going to concerts. That is one of the many reasons to get vaccinated, including to protect yourself from the virus.

But our — we're going to take it week by week, month by month. Right now, we're continuing to press to get more people vaccinated. We know that the rates of young people under the age of 27 are not where they need to be or we want them to be. So we'll continue to utilize the best practices and work in partnership with health and medical experts and meet people where they are to get the vaccine out to more communities.

Q Sort of a personal question here, but over the weekend, the President was out kind of campaign-style — shaking hands with people, taking selfies, giving hugs, lots of personal contact. I'm just wondering: Given where COVID is in the country, is the assessment that we can go back to totally normal life, like hugging people, shaking hands with strangers, and that's all perfectly okay, given the rise of other variants?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I would say the CDC and our health and medical experts have provided clear guidance on this. And if you're vaccinated, then certainly you can go out there and engage with society, as the President has. And no one loves a good rope line like President Biden. So, certainly, he welcomes the opportunity to engage directly with many of the people who elected him to serve the country. If you're not vaccinated, then that is certainly a different circumstance.

Now, we also respect and want to convey — we respect the decision by a range of individuals, whether they're immunocompromised or they have concerns about health issues in their own family or themselves, to continue to wear a mask or whatever they may choose. But we go by the guidance of our health and medical experts, and they've certainly okayed the President being out there and communicating and shaking hands and glad-handing with the American people.

Go ahead.

Q Two questions: one on oil prices —

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q — and one on COVID. On oil prices: You've alluded a couple of times today to the sort of impact on actual gas prices; I think it's over \$3 a gallon now. A huge amount of travel over the holiday weekend. What is the President doing for regular Americans to try to keep the gas prices down, whether it be engaging with OPEC?

But also, is the President considering releasing from the Strategic Reserve? Are there other steps that the President can take to address what is obviously a painful situation? And how much does he — do you guys worry, on his behalf, that it will become a political issue that could be damaging to the President and this party in the coming election?

MS. PSAKI: In 18 months?

Q Well —

MS. PSAKI: Seventeen months. Okay. So, I would say first, Mike, that the President wants Americans to have access to affordable and reliable energy, including at the pump. And so that's why our team is constantly monitoring gas prices and directly communicating with OPEC parties to get to a deal and allow proposed production increases to move forward.

And the reason I've referenced it so many times is because I think there sometimes is a misunderstanding of what causes gas prices to increase, and so to convey to the American people that we're working on it and certainly the supply availability of oil has a huge impact.

I would also say that ensuring Americans don't bear a burden at the pump continues to be a top priority for the administration writ large. That's one of the core reasons why the President was opposed — vehemently opposed — to a gas tax and any tax on vehicle mileage, because he felt that would fall on the backs of Americans. And that was a bottom line, red line for him.

In terms of additional considerations, I just don't have anything to preview for you.

Q Okay. And then, on COVID: The one thing that you steadfastly have stayed away from is any question of mandating the virus — I'm sorry — the vaccine. And I guess the question is: At what point — Zeke Emanuel, I think, has a new op-ed out talking about how there needs to be more aggressive action taken; employers are going to need to mandate that their employees take the vaccine maybe once the FDA has fully cleared some of the vaccines.

Would this admin- — does this administration envision a point where — even if it's not a federal mandate that every American has to take it, do you believe that we're going to have to get to a point where schools and employers and colleges and other institutions are going to have to require people to take the vaccine in order to get to that next stage, to get beyond the sort of plateau that we've reached now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've always anticipated — and we're already seeing this happen — that some schools, universities, private schools, others will require and mandate the vaccine. And we leave it up to them to make that decision, as well as employers.

And we know that different companies and private-sector entities, or even learning institutions, are making decisions about how to keep their communities safe.

So, I wouldn't predict a federal mandate, as I'm not suggesting you're asking, but certainly we're already seeing that take place in communities across the country.

Q Would you encourage employers and would you encourage, you know, schools, colleges, to do that as a way of getting, kind of, a real acceleration of the vaccine adoption?

MS. PSAKI: We're going to leave it up to them to make these decisions.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. A question on Nikole Hannah-Jones, who passed up a position at UNC and will be teaching down the road at Howard. She said this morning that it took protest, the threat of legal action, all this, just get to a 9-4 vote. What does Biden make of the UNC process and her decision? And is this an example of the systemic racism that he promised to heal?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I have not spoken with the President about the decision on tenure by the institution in North Carolina. I will say that the students at Howard are quite lucky to have her as a professor and in their family.

But I think there's no question that there is — continues to be systemic racism in our country. We see that in a range of sectors, including in some learning institutions. But the President — that's why the President is continuing to make racial equity and addressing racial equity as a central priority and crisis that he would like to address and focus on as President.

Go ahead. Go ahead, right there. Sorry.

Q Oh, yeah. Thanks, Jen. On the Families Plan: Obviously, as Biden goes tomorrow to Illinois to promote his vision, the White House is still in negotiations about what is actually going to make into the package. Are there certain — as with the infrastructure plan — certain core priorities or red lines that he has around this package in a similar lane?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. So, you're talking about the reconciliation package, right?

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. So the President is — obviously there's a lot of work that needs to happen with Congress, and we expect, over the next week, there to be a lot of behind-the-scenes bill writing, negotiations, discussions on Capitol Hill — long nights, lots of coffee — over the course of the next several days, given that Leader Schumer has conveyed that he would like to see both the reconciliation package and the infrastructure bill on the floor in July. And we're in July now.

In terms of the President's priorities, he has outlined his blueprint in his budget. That includes the American Families Plan. It includes key components he'll talk about when he's on the road tomorrow in Illinois. It includes an extension of the Child Tax Credit. It includes paid leave. It includes universal pre-K; making community college a reality for Americans across the country.

It also includes prioritizing and pushing for components of the American Jobs Plan that did not make it into the infrastructure — final infrastructure bipartisan agreement. So that is key components of climate tax credits, key components that will help address our climate crisis, also a number of proposals on housing affordability and accessibility that the President would like to see in a final reconciliation process.



But we'll be closely engaged and closely discussing with members who are writing the legislation.

Q Jen, on race.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. Go ahead, April.

Q Back on the issue of race and the hypersensitivity around the issue: This President ran for office on the issue of race, from Charlottesville. With that said, there is now an effort on the Hill to strengthen the nation's oldest federal civil rights law of 1866. Is he involved in that? What is his conversation about this with senators, as well as congressional leaders? Has he talked about that with them? Or what does he feel about it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're very appreciative of the efforts by a number of the leaders who are working in discussions about updating the oldest civil rights law, as you noted. But in terms of specific conversations with the President, I just don't have anything to read out for you.

Q Is this important, at this moment, especially to strengthen the nation's oldest civil rights law, as voting rights is — I don't know what you call it — collapsed; as policing is held up; there's a call for reparations? There's so many things that the Congressional Black Caucus is trying to push forward with their agenda, as well as issues — these issues seem to be more civil rights and humanitarian versus policy.

Is this President concerned at this time about that? And does he think that this will bring more attention to those issues, also in light of KKK members and white supremacists marching in Philadelphia over the weekend on Fourth of July?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, April, that — as you know because you've covered it closely — one of the President's key priorities — one of the key pillars of his presidency — is racial equity and updating and addressing what he feels are systemic issues in how we govern and in society.

And I would say — to touch on a couple of the things that you've noted — one, on voting rights: You know, we, I expect, will have some more announcements to make later this week about the President's and the Vice President's schedule and opportunities they will take to continue to use their platforms and the bully pulpit to advocate for, push for, take — use every lever of government to move those — that initiative — or those initiatives, I should say, forward.

But, certainly, he will remain engaged closely with civil rights leaders about the range of priorities that you just discussed, as well as with leaders in Congress. Even though things are hard and things look stalled at moments, he doesn't give up. That's not who he is, neither is — neither is that who the Vice President is. So they'll continue to press on moving all these agenda items forward.

Q Is there a concern by the Democratic base — for the Democratic base that feels that he became president standing on these pillars, and now they are in jeopardy? Is there concern by this White House about what the Democratic base is feeling as they see voting rights stall, as they see policing stalled, as they see the issue of reparations not moving as fast as they want, and other issues?

MS. PSAKI: I would say, first, the President shares their frustration about the fact that voting rights, making voting more accessible to more people across the country is a no brainer. He agrees with the frustration that there are more — is more we can do to put in place reforms on policing, something that he feels is long overdue and he would like to sign a bill into law. And his role as president is to continue to use his voice, his — the bully pulpit and his platforms to advocate for moving these things forward.

Karen, go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. You've said a couple of times, on vaccines, that the work continues across several months —

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q — after the July 4th holiday. Will we hear from the President today a new date that is the next target date to get to a certain percentage of Americans vaccinated? Is there a new timeline?

MS. PSAKI: I don't expect a new goal to be set today. What I will tell you is that our work is going to continue, person by person, community by community, and we're going to meet people where they are. That's what he's going to talk about.

And he's going to continue to use resources from the federal government, empowering doctors, empowering key voices in communities, and that's what you'll hear him talk about today.

Q You also had said earlier about not changing minds — I think it was in response to a question. We had a poll out this weekend with the Washington Post that said 3 in 10 adults say they haven't gotten the coronavirus vaccine and "definitely" or "probably will not" get one. Does the White House have a sense of a number of how many persuadable people there actually are out there? And how do you target just them if you can try and convince some of them?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Karen, I'd first say, if you go back to even five or six months ago, that percentage of people who were not planning to get the vaccine was even much higher than that. And what we've seen have an impact is: As people get vaccinated in their communities, they tell their neighbor, they tell their friend. Primary care physicians tell people who are coming to their doctor's office to get checkups. Pharmacists and communities are calling their neighbors and saying, "Come on down, we have vaccines for you." We're seeing the impact of that.

So we've seen, actually, even people who didn't — had no intention of getting the vaccine for a range of reasons — maybe they didn't know how to get it, maybe they didn't know where to get it, maybe they were scared of the impacts — actually get vaccinated. And that, to us, is an encouraging sign that we can continue to press and make progress moving forward.

Go ahead.

Q So, two questions. First, is there a target for herd immunity for COVID vaccines? Is it 75 percent, 80 percent? What is that goal for the administration right now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Dr. Fauci has addressed this a number of times and has conveyed that “herd immunity” is kind of an outdated term. So we had set a goal of reaching 70 percent of adults by July 4th. We reached that goal of adults 27 and older by that date. And we're continuing to press to reach it, and we will in the next couple of weeks, for adults over the age of 18.

But our work doesn't stop there, and we're going to continue to press to get 12- to 18-year-olds vaccinated, to continue to work with communities where there's lower vaccination rates. That's one of the reasons we initiated these strike forces to go into communities and work with them to determine what they need; to take a localized, specific approach that works with elected officials and communities. But I don't have a new goal to set for you.

We are — I would remind all of you that we are — we have reduced the death rate by 90 percent. And we've reduced the — the COVID rate by more than 90 percent. But again, we're going to continue to press ahead, even after July 4th.

Q So the other question was: Afghan military leaders say the U.S. military left the Air Force base with no warning in the middle of night. Why did the U.S. decide to do that? And is that a sign of a lack of trust in Afghan leaders that they wouldn't give them a heads up on their departure?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the Department of Defense on that and on the specific accuracy of those comments.

Q But obviously there's a relationship that the White House has with the Afghan leaders. I mean, how did you explain that to them, and what was (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm only pointing you to the Department of Defense because they are the leaders on the ground who would have handed off to Afghan leaders on the ground.

Q Jen, in the back, please.

MS. PSAKI: Oh, we'll go — oh, oh — just going around. Go ahead.

Q Thank you. Another one on Afghanistan, please. There's been a lot of talk, understandably, about what is the administration doing and is it doing enough for the Afghan translators.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

Q More broadly, with the shift that's coming now and the talk about the Taliban, you know, making a lot of advances pretty quickly, is the Biden administration concerned about, kind of, an exodus of a lot more than just translators but like a whole bunch of Afghans, some of whom might want to come here, and, more probably, a lot of whom might try and make their way to Europe? Is that something the President is discussing with European allies? Would the U.S. be opening the doors to some of these people? Are you preparing for an exodus situation or (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say, first, that our focus, as of now, is identifying a group of SIV applicants who have served as interpreters and translators, as well as other at-risk categories who've assisted us. And as you know — but for everybody else who hasn't paid as close attention — our plan is to relocate this group to a location outside of Afghanistan before we complete our military drawdown by the end of August. So that's where our focus is on at this point in time.

And, of course, we are doing that in part because we know these are individuals who helped the United States, even at — often at great risk, personal risk to themselves and their families. And we're going to work every possible contingency to make sure that we can help those who have helped us. But that's really what our focus is at this point.

Q Okay, but what about the broader concern, though, of an influx of people trying to reach Europe?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any update on that. I'm happy to talk to our national security team and see if there's an assessment or concern there.

Go ahead.

Q A follow-up to the jobs report from last Friday: Axios reported this morning double-digit wage growth in four key sectors: transportation, warehousing, leisure, and hospitality. And yet, you talk to any employer in any of those sectors and they'll tell you it's very difficult to find and keep good workers for, perhaps, low-skill, low-wage jobs. Is the White House offering any advice to those employers at this point, with these wage increases of 15 to 17 percent already, and it's still difficult finding quality workers?

MS. PSAKI: It is a worker's market right now, and I can't assess industry to industry without having more details — or I guess that would be hard for me to do anyway. But, certainly, we're seeing people feel more comfortable rejoining the jobs market. A big factor, in our view, is the vaccination rates in lots of communities across the country.

We know that employers are starting to hire, as we've seen from the jobs numbers which — 850,000 jobs last month was a very large number, I will just note, since you gave me the opportunity.

In terms of specific industries, there are cases where they need to pay their workers more, and that will make them more competitive in hiring. But I'd have to get — we can follow up after if there's a specific sector, and I'm happy to ask the economic team about that.

Go ahead.

Q Thanks, Jen. The White House COVID Response Team, last week, said that they're setting up these surge — these surge response teams to go into states and communities with low vaccination rates and rising cases. Where are they going first? What states and local communities are you in touch with?

MS. PSAKI: So, we're in touch with a range of communities. I provided an update last week that we were in touch with Missouri about possibly sending some teams there. I know we had already sent a team — deployed a team to Colorado to collaborate with a local Department of Health in Mesa County. I can see if there's more. But we're in touch with a range of officials around the country, and we're eager to have these teams out helping communities get vaccinated and protect themselves from the virus.

Q And this is something where the state or the local community has to come to you, or are you seeing, you know, in this community it's particularly bad, you approach that community and you say, "We'd like to help"?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the CDC is deploying these teams, so they work with local communities. We can see vaccination rates and where there are rising caseloads, and then work in a collaborative way with the communities to deploy the teams.

Go ahead. Go ahead, Eugene.

Q There's still no nominee for the DOJ's Antitrust — the leader on Antitrust. It's been the longest that position has been open since George H.W. Bush, and so, I guess, just curious if there's a hold-up with that position, and if so, what is it.

MS. PSAKI: I would say this is certainly a position the President is eager to fill. As with any important position in government, he wants to have the right person in place. I don't have anything to predict for you in terms of the timeline for it.

Q And, on Afghanistan, the President promised that the United States would continue to provide civilian and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. But if the Taliban were to take over the government again, won't those individuals be withdrawn?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first, I would say that we have every intention of continuing an ongoing presence [sic] — presence in Kabul, which is continuing even after we bring our military, who are serving, home by the end of August. But we will also continue to be partners to the Afghan government. That's something that the President reiterated when he met with leaders just a week and a half ago. That we — that includes security assistance, that includes humanitarian assistance, and that includes over-the-horizon capacity to ensure that we are working to address any threats that we face. That will continue, and we intend to have a presence on the ground in our embassy there in Kabul.

Q And it does seem like the Taliban is starting to gain more power and take over there. What's the United States government — what is President Biden willing to do after pulling the troops out?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would first say, if you take us back to when the President made this decision and announcement: We — he asked his team to do a clear-eyed assessment, not to sugarcoat it, of what the impact could be, of moving — withdrawing our troops from Afghanistan after a 20-year war — a war that the President continues to feel does not have a military solution.

What the President is continuing to press on is a political solution and political negotiations and discussions, which we hope will reconvene soon, to move toward a political solution on the ground to bring greater peace and stability to the people of Afghanistan. That's his hope.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. So, you mentioned, two weeks ago, that vaccine sharing to the rest of the world is not a matter of supply, but overcoming the logistical challenge.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q Now that you've passed the deadline of June and you've not met the target of distributing 80 million vaccine doses, what has the administration learned and will do differently? And do have a new target for the date of completing those 80 million doses?

And then just a follow-up on that: For countries that have refrigerated — refrigeration and distribution challenges, why is the administration focusing on Pfizer and Moderna rather than Johnson & Johnson?

And then I have another question on the LGBTQ community.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, first let me say that we have allocated all 80 million doses. And I would say what we have learned through the process is that there are logistical challenges, because when you talk about working with countries, even as we convey to a country we have a million doses or 2 million doses, sometimes we have to work through legal barriers, we have to work through regulatory barriers. There are issues as it relates to materials needed to distribute these vaccines, and there are also even transportation issues with refrigeration needed as well.

So we have — we have noted as — even as we've allocated all these doses, as we committed to, that part of it is countries need to be ready to receive them on the ground. And there is no past precedent for this. So there's certainly lessons that we have learned.

And as we've proceeded, we have become — these countries have become more effective and efficient at receiving those doses. They've worked through the red tape. And that enables us to provide the doses more easily in the future.

In terms of the allocation of doses: We provide what's available. I don't have any more detail for you in terms of which vaccines. As you know, we had a larger percentage of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, so hence there are Moderna and Pfizer vaccines perhaps going to more countries around —

Q Okay. And on —

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q — on LGBTQ, there was violence in Tbilisi, Georgia, yesterday where LGBTQ activists and also journalists were attacked. Now, the President has recently vowed to use U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance to help promote LGBT rights around the world. How does this translate to the situation in Georgia? Would there be any kind of real repercussions for situations, like in Georgia and other countries, where

the rights of LGBTQ and minorities are not protected?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely, that's a priority of the President; it's a priority of the State Department and the Secretary of State. The State Department would probably have more of a specific update of direct engagement with Georgia. I don't have any policy announcements or decisions to preview for you.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Jen. During the weekend, there was an attack targeting U.S. military base in the Deir el-Zour, in Syria. And it's not a Pentagon question, I promise you.

MS. PSAKI: That's okay. Go ahead.

Q Does the President believe that his strategy to counter the pro-Iran militias in Iraq and Syria is working, considering (inaudible) will authorize the Pentagon to — with the second attack that we have seen in the last few weeks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Nadia, we — he approved these strikes, one, with the full authority — legal authority — U.S. legal authority and international authority, because — and in a way that was proportionate and responded to threats against our entity — U.S. men and women serving and entities that were serving in these countries.

It did not mean we expected everything to grind to a complete halt at the time, but he still felt it was the appropriate and proportionate steps. And our objective continues to be a de-escalation of violence on the ground.

Go ahead.

Q Thank you very much.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q Thank you. On cyber: President Biden and President Putin met three weeks ago, and the first expert-level meeting about ransomware is going to happen next week. That's four weeks after their meeting.

MS. PSAKI: That's not what I said actually. I said the meetings are ongoing and there's another meeting next week on ransomware.

Q So, has there been a meeting about ransomware at the expert level since the meeting between the two presidents?

MS. PSAKI: There have been ongoing cyber and expert-level meetings. I don't have an agenda of each of them to read out for you.

Q But not specifically on ransomware?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything more than cyber and expert-level meetings. And we're not going to read out the agenda from all of the meetings.

Q Is President Biden frustrated that the pace seems to be slow in those negotiations following this meeting with the Russian President?

MS. PSAKI: I wouldn't say he would characterize it that way. The meeting with the Russian President was just a couple of weeks ago. We've had ongoing meetings at an expert level pretty much since that point in time. And again, there's another meeting scheduled for next week.

Q Thank you, Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead, right there. Right there.

Q Me?

MS. PSAKI: Yep, go ahead.

Q Thank you so much. Another foreign policy question, if I may.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q There was a discussion last year of arranging a P5 summit meeting. And the idea was to get the leaders of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council together at UNGA. Is President Biden interested in something like that, in any chance? Would he be willing to take part in a discussion like that, at UNGA, to discuss rules of the road in light of the current tensions between the West and the East?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have anything about the UNGA schedule to preview for you quite yet. Again, there are a range of engagements we have with a number of the P5 countries, which will certainly continue. But in terms of meeting at UNGA, I don't have anything to preview for you.

Q What about the meeting in principle as such, without (inaudible)?



MS. PSAKI: I don't think we're quite at that point in our planning process quite yet.

Lynn, go ahead.

Q Thank you for taking my questions. Some follow up on the —

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

Q — Illinois visit. Two questions. Let me just give you both of them to make sure I get them in.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead. I'm not going to cut you off, Lynn. I know better than that. Go ahead. (Laughter.)

Q I appreciate that. But as you know, this visit is — it's the first presidential visit —

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

Q — of Biden to Illinois, and COVID came in just as he was about to come before the Illinois primaries.

So, Crystal Lake is really tough political turf for Democrats. In the county it's in — McHenry — Biden lost, Senator Durbin lost, and Representative Lauren Underwood — who you've mentioned — lost, though Biden did win Crystal Lake.

So, could you just explain a little bit more of how this trip to one of the redder parts of the bluest states in totality can advance the Biden policy and political agenda since there's no swayable members of Congress; they're all for you?

And then, on another very serious note: In Chicago, it's had its most violent weekend of this year: 104 shot, 19 killed. I understand Mayor Lori Lightfoot will be meeting with the President at O'Hare. I understand the administration did roll out many things to do to help combat crime in cities like Chicago. But is there something more that perhaps the President may be able to bring or discuss with Mayor Lightfoot when they meet tomorrow?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, on your first question, Lynn, I think the President was — is eager to visit McHenry County College, which, as you know, is located in Crystal Lake, Illinois. And he ran as someone who would represent not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just independents, but all people.

So I would see this as less of a political trip, more of his — of an opportunity to speak to all Americans about why his Build Back Better agenda and why his effort to make — to extend the Child Tax Credit, to make community college more affordable, to make universal pre-K a reality is something that many people of all political stripes should be able to support. And that's the case he'll make tomorrow.

So he did — last week, he did the bipartisan infrastructure deal and, kind of, did a very detailed laydown. You'll see him tomorrow do a very detailed laydown of the rest of his Build Back Better agenda and what many of you would shorthand as “the reconciliation” — many components of the reconciliation package.

But he's also eager to see Congresswoman Underwood, given she's been such an advocate for the expansion of healthcare, making it more affordable and accessible. And that's something he will continue to advocate for in this bill.

Q Before I get to Mayor Lightfoot —

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

Q — you know that's exactly the county she — Democrats are trying to get rid of for her in the remap. So it may not — it may be not — it may be moved soon, because that might not be her county in the remap.

Could you clarify — when I checked before the briefing, I didn't think she had a speaking role in the program tomorrow. Does she by now?

MS. PSAKI: I'll have to check, Lynn. I think — I wanted to give you all an overview of kind of why he was going there. But in terms of specific meetings in the program, I think we're still finalizing all those specific details.

Q Okay. And then, on crime in Chicago and the meeting with Mayor Lightfoot?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I know that they're — I believe you mentioned a greet at the airport.

Q Yes.

MS. PSAKI: So I'll have to check and see how long that is allocated for that meeting. And certainly, he is always receptive to what any elected official wants to raise and what they want to discuss.

I will note that the President continues to work to address violent crime. We've seen rates go up over the last 18 months around the country, including in the city of Chicago. And as you know, Lynn, from covering this, we see spikes in violent crime typically during summer months, often — unfortunately — during holiday weekends. And we saw that over the last weekend.

But I will say that he will continue to advocate for, and the mayor may want to discuss this — I guess we'll see — or not — but increases in his budget, including an additional \$300 million more for the COPS program. That is — than what I would say was approved in the prior Trump administration budget.

So he had \$237 billion [sic] in his — in his — “million,” sorry — got a little high there — million in his budget. And the President is proposing \$537 million in his budget because he wants COPS funding to go out to communities across the country.

He will also continue to work to empower ATF. He's proposed an additional \$70 million increase, over the last Trump budget, for ATF to ensure that they have the funding and resources they need to crack down on illegal guns. And I know gun violence is a huge driver of the crime in Chicago.

And finally, he's going to continue to advocate for supporting evidence-based community violence intervention programs that are proven to reduce gun violence in a range of communities. But I'm sure he'll be happy to discuss components of his budget. She may have different things on her agenda when they see each other tomorrow.

Q And he's not going —

Q Thank you, Jen.

Q — into the city proper? He's just going to go to the two stops?

MS. PSAKI: That is correct.

Thanks, everyone, so much. Have a great day.

2:06 P.M. EDT

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