

The President's News Conference

July 11, 2024

The President. Hey, everybody. Thank you. Please be seated.

Well, good evening. We just concluded this year's NATO summit. And the consensus among the members was it was a great success. It was especially momentous because it represented the 75th year of the most important military defense alliance in the world's—the history of the world.

We should never forget that NATO grew out of the wreckage of World War II, the most destructive war in history. The idea was to create an alliance of free and democratic nations that would commit themselves to a compact of collective defense. Standing together, they knew we'd all be safer. An attack on one would be treated as an attack on all.

And it's worked because a would-be aggressor knows if they attack one of us, they'll be attacked by all of us. Sending that message is the best way to deter aggression and prevent wars in the first place.

For those who thought NATO's time had passed, they got a rude awakening when Putin invaded Ukraine. Some of the oldest and deepest fears in Europe roared back to life because, once again, a murderous madman was on the march.

But this time, no one cowered in appeasement, especially the United States. We collected intelligence that Russia was planning to invade Ukraine months before the invasion. I directed the intelligence community to be—a significant amount of intelligence to be declassified so I could start building an international coalition to oppose the invasion.

Then, in February, some of you remember, I warned the world that the invasion was imminent. I rallied a coalition of 50 nations from Europe to Asia to help Ukraine defend itself.

My foreign policy—many foreign policy experts thought, as Putin amassed Russian forces just 100 miles north of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine—but he thought—he, Putin, thought it was the mother home of Russia—the capital would fall in less than a week.

But the Ukrainian people, backed by a coalition I helped build, stopped them. Today, Kyiv still stands. And NATO stands stronger than it has ever been.

During the week of this summit, several head of states made it a point in their statements to thank the United States and to thank me personally for all that NATO has achieved. NATO is not only stronger, NATO is bigger because we led the charge to bring in Finland and Sweden into the alliance, and it makes a gigantic difference.

[At this point, the President cleared his throat.]

Excuse me.

Meanwhile, my predecessor has made it clear he has no commitment to NATO. He's made it clear that he would feel no obligation to honor article 5. He's already told Putin, and I quote, "do whatever the hell you want." In fact, the day after Putin invaded Ukraine, here's what he said: It was "genius." It was "wonderful." Some of you forgot that, but that's exactly what he said.

But I've made it clear, a strong NATO is essential to American security. And I believe the obligation of article 5 is sacred. And I would remind all Americans, article 5 was invoked only once in NATO's long history, and that was to defend America after 9/11.

I made it clear that I will not bow down to Putin. I will not walk away from Ukraine. I will keep NATO strong. And that's exactly what we did and exactly what we'll continue to do.

Now the future of American policy is up to the American people. This is much more than a political question. It's more than that. It's a national security issue.

Don't reduce this to the usual testament that people talk about it—the issues of being a political campaign. It's far too important. It's about the world we will live in for decades to come. Every American must ask herself or himself: Is the world safer with NATO? Are you safer? Is your family safer?

I believe the American people know the answer to all those questions is "yes." And I believe the American people understand that America is stronger—stronger—because of our alliances. I believe the American consensus from Truman to Reagan to me still holds today.

America cannot retreat from the world. It must lead the world. We are an indispensable nation, as Madeleine Albright wrote.

Now let me turn to three other key issues.

Just this morning we had a great economic report showing inflation is down. Overall, prices fell last month. Core inflation is the lowest it's been in 3 years. Prices are falling for cars, appliances, and airfare—airfares. Grocery prices have fallen since the start of the year.

We're going to keep working to take down corporate greed to bring those prices down further.

Meanwhile, Trump's calling for a 10-percent tariff on everything Americans buy, including food from overseas, vegetables, and other necessities. And economists tell us that that would cost the average American working family another \$2,500 a year. It's a tax of \$2,500 a year.

Second, our efforts to secure the border—our southern border is working. After Trump killed the bipartisan effort to secure the border—Republicans and Democrats had worked on—because he thought it would benefit me and make him a loser, Republicans walked away. So I took executive action last month.

As a consequence, working with Mexico, border encounters have gone down over 50 percent. The current level is lower today than when Trump left office.

Third, for months, the United States has been working to secure a cease-fire in Gaza, to bring the hostages home, to create a path for peace and stability in the Middle East.

Six weeks ago, I laid out a detailed plan in writing. It was endorsed by the U.N. Security Council, the G-7. That framework is now agreed on by both Israel and Hamas. So I sent my team to the region to hammer out the details.

These are difficult, complex issues. There are still gaps to close, but we're making progress, the trend is positive, and I'm determined to get this deal done and bring an end to this war, which should end now.

Let me conclude where I began. We're the United States of America. We are the indispensable nation. Our leadership matters. Our partnerships matter. This moment matters. We must rise to meet it.

With that, I'll take your questions. I've been given a list of people to call on here.

Reuters, Jeff Mason.

2024 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, your political future has hung over the NATO summit a little bit this week. Speaker Pelosi made a point of suggesting that your decision on whether to stay in the race was still open. George Clooney and a handful of lawmakers have called on you to step aside. Reuters is reporting tonight that UAW leadership is concerned about your ability to win.

The President. UAW just endorsed me. But go ahead.

Q. Thank you. My question for you is, how are you incorporating these developments into your decision to stay? And separately, what concerns do you have about Vice President Harris's ability to beat Donald Trump if she were at the top of the ticket?

The President. Look, I wouldn't have picked Vice President Trump [Harris; White House correction] to be Vice President did I think she was not qualified to be President. So let's start there. Number one.

The fact is that—the consideration is that I think I'm the most qualified person to run for President. I beat him once, and I will beat him again.

Secondly, the idea—I served in the Senate a long time. The idea that Senators and Congressmen running for office worry about the ticket is not unusual.

And I might add, there were at least five Presidents running or incumbent Presidents who had lower numbers than I have now later in the campaign. So there's a long way to go in this campaign.

And so I'm just going to keep moving. Keep moving and—because, look, I've got more work to do. We've got more work to finish. There's so much—we've made so much progress. Think about it.

Think about where we are economically relative to the rest of the world. Name me a world leader who wouldn't want to trade places with our economy. We've created over 800,000 manufacturing jobs, 1.5 million jobs—I mean, so things are moving.

We've got more to go. Working class people still have—need help. Corporate greed is still at large. There are—prices—the corporate profits have doubled since the pandemic. They're coming down.

And so I'm optimistic about where things are going.

Danny Kemp, AFP.

The President's Verbal Slips/North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit

Q. Thanks. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask you about your—you mixed up Presidents Zelenskyy and Putin earlier today. The——

The President. [Laughter]

Q. And you now have sort of your key allies—including the British Prime Minister, the President of France, and the German Chancellor—having to step in and make excuses for you on that. Officials here are saying off the record that your decline has become noticeable. Hasn't this now, frankly, become damaging for America's standing in the world? Thank you.

The President. Did you see any damage to our standing in my leading this conference? Have you seen a more successful conference? What do you think?

And the move—the Putin piece, I was talking about Putin, and I said, "And now"—at the very end, I said, "Here"—I mean, "Putin." And I said: "Oh, no. I'm sorry, Zelenskyy." And then I added five other names.

Look, guys, the idea anybody suggests that we haven't had an incredibly successful conference—how many times did you hear in that conference—I know it sounds too self-serving—but other leaders, heads of state, in thanking me saying, "The reason we're together is because of Biden, because Biden did the following."

Look, folks, this is a—well, anyway. I thought it was the most successful conference I've attended in a long time. And find me a world leader who didn't think it was.

Next one. Sorry. Nancy Cordes, CBS.

National Economy/Tax Code Reform/Organized Labor

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned there are instances in history where Presidents have faced a challenge, but what makes this moment in history so unique is that it is not your enemies who are calling on you to reconsider your decision to stay in the race. It's your friends, supporters, people who think you've done a great job over the past 4 years.

Have you spent time thinking about what it would mean for your legacy, which you've worked decades to build, if you stay in the race despite the concerns that voters say they have, and you lose to someone who you yourself have argued is unfit to return to the Oval Office?

The President. Well, look, I'm not in this for my legacy, I'm in this to complete the job I started.

As you'll recall, understandably, many of you and many economists thought my initial initiatives that I put forward—"Can't do that. It's going to cause inflation. Things are going to skyrocket. The debt's going to go up."

What are you hearing now from mainstream economists? Sixteen economic Nobel laureates said I've done a hell of a job, that under my plans so far and what's going to happen in the future if I'm reelected, that things are going to get much better. Our economy is growing.

I was determined when I got elected to stop the trickle-down economic theory that if the wealthy did very well, everybody else would do well. My dad was a well-read and decent guy. I don't remember much trickling down on his kitchen table.

Middle class people and working class people need help. And so what happened is, I decided to implement—was able to implement as President what I believed when I was a Senator. And that is that the way to build this economy is from the middle out and the bottom up. That way, we grow the economy, and the wealthy still do very well. They do fine.

And guess what? Find me an economist—a mainstream economist who said we haven't done well. What have we not done that isn't working right now? And so we've got more to do though. We've got to finish the job.

And by the way, I come from the corporate State of the world. Delaware has more corporations than and—you know, registered in Delaware than every other State in the Nation combined.

I'm not anticorporate. But corporate profits have doubled since the pandemic—doubled. It's time things get back in order a little bit. It's time—for example, if I'm reelected, we're going to make sure that rents are kept at 5-percent increase, corporate rents for apartments and the like and homes are limited to 5 percent.

We're going to make a lot of changes that I've been talking about, because we're going to continue to grow this economy.

And by the way, I know—remember how I got so roundly criticized for being so pro-union—not labor—union—union? Well, guess what? I've been the most pro-union labor President in history. Not a joke.

And guess what? We had the Treasury Department do a study. When unions do better, everybody does better. Everybody does better.

And we talk about how, for example—and when I went—remember when we talked about getting the computer chip industry back in the United States? Used to be 40 percent of the industry. We invented the chip. Forty percent of the industry was in the United States.

And former Presidents decided that the best way to do it is find the cheapest labor in the world, send the product over there, and import what the product was.

And so what did I do? I was told not to go over to Europe—I mean, to Asia—including Europe, but Asia. And I remember going to South Korea, convincing them to invest \$20 billion in the United States to build computer chip factories. And I asked why, when they finally decided to do it. And the answer was: Because you have the safest economy in the world and you have the best workers in the world.

So the whole idea here is, we've invested—there's over \$50 billion in investment in computer chip manufacturing just coming into being. None of you thought that would happen. None of you thought that would happen. But it's happening. It's happening.

And that's going to grow economies all through—and by the way, red States and blue States—matter of fact, there's as much in red States as in blue States. I've made no distinction.

So my generic point is that the idea that we can't continue to build and grow the economy, make it fairer—and like I said, from my standpoint, when the middle class does well, that's when the whole economy grows. The poor have a shot; the wealthy do well. But the wealthy got to start paying their taxes.

Vice President Kamala D. Harris

Q. As a follow-up, sir, you mentioned that your Vice President, Kamala Harris, would be ready to serve on day one. Can you elaborate on that? What is it about her attributes and her accomplishments over the last 4 years that make her ready to serve on day one, if necessary?

The President. First of all, the way she's handled the issue of freedom of women's bodies—to have control over their bodies.

Secondly, her ability to handle almost any issue on the board. This was a hell of a prosecutor. She was a first-rate person in—and in the Senate, she was really good.

I wouldn't have picked her unless I thought she was qualified to be President from the very beginning. I made no bones about that. She is qualified to be President. That's why I picked her.

Felicia Schwartz, Financial Times.

The President's Schedule

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Presidency is the most straining job in the world, and it's 24/7. How can you say you'll be up for that next year, in 2 years, in 4 years given the limits you've acknowledged that you have today?

The President. The limits I've acknowledged I have?

Q. There's been reporting that you've acknowledged that you need to go to bed earlier, end your evening around 8.

The President. That's not true. Look—[laughter]—what I said was: Instead of my every day starting at 7 and going to bed at midnight, it'd be smarter for me to pace myself a little more. And I said—for example, the 8, 7, 6 stuff—instead of starting a fundraiser at 9 o'clock, start at 8 o'clock. People get to go home by 10 o'clock. That's what I'm talking about.

I'm not talking about—and if you looked at my schedule since I've—since I made that stupid mistake of—in the campaign—in the debate, I mean, my schedule has been full bore. I've done—where's—and where's Trump been? Riding around in his golf cart, filling out his scorecard before he hits the ball?

I mean, look, he's done virtually nothing. And I have—I don't know how many—I've—don't hold me to it—roughly 20 major events, some of them with thousands of people showing up.

And so I just think it's better. I always have an inclination, whether I was playing sports or doing politics, just to keep going, not stop. I've just got to just pace myself a little more—pace myself.

And the next debate, I'm not going to be traveling into 15 time zones a week before. [Laughter] Anyway, that's what it was about. That's what it was about.

And by the way, even with that, I love my staff, but they add things. They add things all the time at the very end. I'm catching hell from my wife for that. Anyway.

I'm sorry. Zeke Miller, Associated Press.

Ukraine/Russia

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Two questions for you. First, on the NATO summit. President Zelenskyy, in your meeting with him, he pressed you to lift your limitations on the Ukrainian use of American weapons, saying that—in his public remarks afterwards, saying that Ukraine cannot win the war unless those limitations are lifted. Are you reconsidering your position on that?

And then, secondly, following up on Felicia's question there. Leaders of your own party have said that they are not worried about that debate, they're worried about the next bad night and the bad night after that. How can you reassure the American people that you are up to the task and that there won't be more bad nights at a debate stage or somewhere else?

The President. The first thing about Zelenskyy asking for the ability to strike deep into Russia: We have allowed Zelenskyy to use American weapons in the near term, in the near abroad, into Russia. Whether or not he has—we should be—he should be attacked—for example, should Zelenskyy—he's not, but if he had the capacity to strike Moscow, strike the Kremlin, would that make sense? It wouldn't.

The question is: What's the best use of the weaponry he has and the weaponry we're getting to him? I've gotten him more HIMAR—I got him more long-range capacity as well as defensive capacity.

And so our military is working—I'm following the advice of my commander in chief—my—of the—the Chief of Staff of the military as well as the Secretary of Defense and our intelligence people. And we're making a day-to-day basis on what they should and shouldn't go—how far they should go in. That's a logical thing to do.

Second question related to——

The President's Accomplishments

Q. Bad nights—bad night, sir. How can you reassure the American people that you won't have more bad nights, whether they'd be on a debate stage or it's a matter of foreign policy?

The President. Well, I tell you what, the best way to assure them is the way I assure myself, and that is: Am I getting the job done? Am I getting the job done?

Can you name me somebody who's gotten more major pieces of legislation passed in 3½ years? I got—I created 2,000 jobs just last week. So, if I slow down and I can't get the job done, that's a sign that I shouldn't be doing it. But there's no indication of that yet. None.

Who do we got here? Marek [Walkuski], Polskie Radio.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How are you?

The President. I'm well.

2024 Presidential Election/North Atlantic Treaty Organization/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. The elections in the U.S. have consequences around the world. You have pretty high standing in Europe. I just asked President Macron about you, and he said, "We are happy to have him as the President of the United States." But there is a concern. Many people in Poland and across Europe are worried that the former President may win the election. And there's a lot of concern that Donald Trump may weaken NATO, stop supporting Ukraine, or push Ukraine to give up territories to Russia.

The President. They're correct.

Q. And your—yourself was warning just 2 minutes ago about it. So my question is: Do you think that Europe will be left on its own if Donald Trump wins the election? And what's your advice to European leaders to prepare for possible U.S. disengagement?

The President. Well, look, I think—how can I say this without sounding too self-serving? I'm not having any of my European allies come up to me and say, "Joe, don't run." What I hear them say is: "You've got to win. You can't let this guy come forward. He'd be a disaster. He'd be a disaster."

I mean, I think he said at one of his rallies—don't hold me to this—recently where NATO—"I just learned about NATO" or something to that effect.

Foreign policy has never been his strong point. And he seems to have an affinity to people who are authoritarian. That worries—as I don't tell you, from Poland—that worries Europe. That worries Poland. And nobody, including the people of Poland, think that if he wins in Ukraine, he's going to stop in Ukraine, that that's going to be the end of it.

And so what I can say is, I think I am the best qualified person to do the job, to make sure that Ukraine is not fall—that Ukraine succeeds, that the European alliance stays strong.

You may recall, no one was talking about Finland joining NATO. I remember talking to Putin in—when—right after we got elected, in Geneva. And he was talking about what we should do—he—what we couldn't have—be in Eastern Europe, et cetera. And I said, "You're looking for the Finlandization of Ukraine." I said, "You're going to get to NATOization of Finland."

And about 4 weeks later, I got a call—that—that's not true—probably 5 months later—from the President of Finland, could he come and see me. Because—in my office, I had—I invited him to the Oval Office. We sat down and talked. He said he wanted to join NATO, could I help. And I did. It wasn't automatic.

And then I got a call from the Swedes.

[A laptop computer played audio.]

The President. I beg your pardon?

Q. It was a recording.

The President. And so Finland joined NATO. Eight-hundred-mile border, it's a significant—and they were already allies, but they weren't part of NATO.

And you heard—I think you heard—maybe—I can't recall if he said it publicly or in our—in a closed meeting, but he wouldn't mind it being repeated. He said, "We decided in Finland—the people of Finland decided they had to be part of NATO. It was in our interest, because of the joint ability to be together, to dissuade any attack on Finland. And the same thing with Sweden. It took a lot of selling to some folks, particularly in Turkey and other places, to agree to the expansion.

But it expanded, and we're a hell of a lot stronger because of it. We're more secure because of it.

And by the way, I was able to get 50 other nations—50—five-zero—to support Ukraine. Fifty. And we were able to bring about a coalition between—in—of Europe and Asia—Japan and South Korea.

I just met with—we've talked about AUKUS, and we talked about the relationship between Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, the United States. We're making the world safer and stronger, because we have to deal with a new arrangement that exists in the world.

The cold war is over. The postwar era is over. What is going to replace it? And I respectfully suggest, I have a pretty good idea of what that should be. I've convinced a lot of people to follow it, and we're just going to get stronger.

David Sanger [New York Times]. Where is——

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Be nice, David. [Laughter]

China/Russia/North Korea

Q. Mr. President, the NATO declaration that was issued yesterday had—was very notable because it described China as a "decisive enabler" of the war in Ukraine and—for its provision of critical goods to the Russians. That's part of a broader partnership that seems to have cemented in place in the past 2 or 3 years. I think one that you were a little bit doubtful of when we asked you about it some time ago.

So I'd be interested to know whether you have a strategy now of trying to interrupt the partnership between China and Russia, and whether or not in a second term you would pursue that, if you could describe that strategy to us.

And along the way, could you also tell us whether you think—just to follow up on Felicia's question—that if you were in a room with Vladimir Putin, again, the way you were 3 years ago, or with President Xi, that a few years from now, you will be able to go negotiate with them, handle them one on one?

The President. Well, the first part of your question is, we discussed and I raised in the NATO summit—and others raised—the future of China's involvement, what they're going to do—what they're doing with Russia, in terms of accommodating, facilitating. They're getting access to additional—they're not supplying—they're not supplying weapons themselves; they're supplying mechanisms for them to be able to get weapons.

And China's position is basically—and I've spent more time with Xi Jinping than any world leader has—over 90 hours since being Vice President and all the way through. For real. And by the way, I handed in all my notes.

But my point is that Xi believes that China is a large enough market that they can entice any country, including European countries, to invest there in return for commitments to—from Europe to do A, B, C, or D, or not to do certain things.

What's happened is, we had a long discussion about what we cannot—we have to make clear, China has to understand that if they are supplying Russia with information and capacity, along with working with North Korea and others to help Russia in armament, that they're not going to benefit economically as a consequence of that—by getting the kind of investment they're looking for.

And so, for example, we're in a situation where when—and we've reestablished direct contact with China after that—remember the "balloon," quote, unquote, going down and, all of a sudden, the thing came to an end? Well, we set up a new mechanism. There's a direct line between Xi and me, and our military has direct access to one another, and they contact one another when we have problems.

The issue is that we have to make sure that Xi understands there's a price to pay for undercutting both the Pacific Basin, as well as Europe, and as relates to Russia and dealing with Ukraine.

And so we—for example, if you want to invest in China, as you know—you know this area really well. If you want to invest in China, you have to—you have a 51-percent Chinese owner; you have to make sure that you do it by their rules; and you can't—you don't have the authority—and you have to provide all access to all the data and information you have.

There was a while there, as you recall, in the last administration and other administrations, where the access to that market was enticive [enticing; White House correction] enough to get companies to come in because they had access to over a billion people in the market—a market—not a billion, but a lot of people in the market. And so they were doing it.

But that curtailed—that got curtailed when we started saying we're going to play by the same rules. For example, the idea they don't abide by the international rules related to subsidizing products by the Government funding. So guess what? They're not going to be able to export their electric vehicles to the United States without a significant tariff. Others are doing the same thing around the world.

But it is a concern. It is a concern that you have both China, South Korea—I mean, North Korea, Russia, Iran—countries that are not necessarily coordinated in the past—looking to figure out how they can have impact.

China/European Defense Industrial Base/Russia

Q. Do you have a strategy to interrupt that impact? To——

The President. Yes, I do, but I'm not prepared to talk about the detail of it in public.

And I think you'll see that some of our European friends are going to be curtailing their involve—investment in Russia—I mean, in—excuse me, in China, as long as China continues to have this indirect help to Russia, in terms of being able to help their economy as well as—as well as—help them in—as a consequence that their ability to fight in Ukraine.

The other thing that we talked a lot about is that—and I raised it, and there was—I didn't hear any—I can't swear that everyone agreed, because not everybody got to talk about it. But we haven't—we need a new industrial policy in the West. For example, we talked about how both the EU, as well as NATO, has to be able to begin to build their own munition capacity, has to be able to generate their own capacity to provide for weapons and the ability to—it came as a surprise to

some of us how we had fallen behind in the West in terms of the ability to construct new materiel, new weaponry, and new—everything from vehicles to weapon systems.

And so one of the things that came out of this was—we're going to be meeting again with a number of my colleagues—my European colleagues—is: What do we do to increase the capacity of the West, and particularly in Europe, and Japan to be able to generate the kind of ability to produce their own weapons systems—not just for themselves, but to be able to generate that?

It's the same—this is—that's what Russia is trying to figure out. They went to China, and they didn't get the weapons, but then they went to North Korea.

But we're going to be in a position where the West is going to become the industrial base for it to be able to build—the ability to have all the defensive weapons that we need. That was a discussion as well.

China/Russia

Q. Mr. President, I'm not sure you answered on whether you would be ready to go deal with Putin and Xi 2 or 3 years from now.

The President. I'm ready to deal with them now and 3 years from now. Look, the—like I said, I'm dealing with Xi right now, in direct contact with him. I have no good reason to talk to Putin right now. There's not much that he is prepared to do in terms of accommodating any change in his behavior.

And—but there isn't any world leader I'm not prepared to deal with. But I understand the generic point is: Is Putin ready to talk? I'm not ready to talk to Putin unless Putin is ready to change his behavior.

And the idea—look, Putin has got a problem. First of all, in this war that he has—supposedly had won—and by the way, I think—don't hold me to the exact number, but I think that Russia had 17.3 percent of Ukraine that they've conquered. Now it's 17.4—I mean, in terms of percentage of territory.

They've not been very successful. They've called horrible damage and loss of life. But they've also lost over 350,000 troops, military—killed or wounded. They have over a million people, particularly young people with technical capability, leaving Russia because they see no future there. They've got a problem.

But what they do have control of is, they are very good at controlling and running the public outcry that relates to how they use mechanisms to communicate with people. They lie like hell to their constituencies. They lie like hell about what's going on.

And so the idea that we're going to be able to fundamentally change Russia in the near term is not likely. But one thing for certain: If we allow Russia to succeed in Ukraine, they're not stopping at Ukraine.

I recommend—I know you know this because you've written about it—read Putin's speech after they moved in. What it was all about—in Kyiv—it wasn't about just—anyway, read what his objective is.

And anyway, but—so I think that I'm prepared to talk to any leader who wants to talk, including if Putin called me and he wanted to talk. Last time I talked to Putin was trying to get him to work on an arms control agreement related to nuclear weapons in space. That didn't go very far.

So my point is, I'm prepared to talk to anybody, but I don't see any inclination. There is an inclination on the part of the Chinese to keep in contact with me, because they're not sure where this all goes.

And look what's happened in Asia. We have strengthened the Asian-Pacific area more than anyone else has. We—you know, we just put together with—today, we had—we—I brought on—I asked the—our NATO allies that we bring on the group from the South Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Australia—I already mentioned Australia.

And I met twice now, I think, with the 14 leaders of the Pacific Island nations, and we've slowed down what's going on there. We've slowed down China's reach.

But there's a lot of work to do. This is a moving target. And I don't take it lightly.

Asam [Asma; White House correction] from NPR.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Asma Khalid with NPR. I have two questions. Earlier, you spoke about the cease-fire plan between Israel and Hamas. We're now looking at 10 months of war. And I'm curious if there's anything that you feel personally you wish you would have done differently over the course of the war.

And then, secondly, if I may, I wanted to ask you about your Presidential campaign. I remember covering your campaign in 2020, and there was a moment where you referred to yourself as a quote, "bridge" candidacy, a transition to a younger generation of leaders. I want to understand what changed.

Israel/Gaza Conflict/Afghanistan/U.S. Diplomatic Efforts

The President. Two things. Let's go back to when you talked about would I have changed anything that's happening with Israel and the Palestinians and the Palestinian movement.

The answer is, as you recall, from the very beginning, I immediately—I went to Israel, but I also got in immediate contact with El Sisi in Egypt. I met with the King of Jordan. I met with—I met with most of the Arab leaders to try to get a consensus going as to what had to be done to deal with getting more aid and food and medicine into the Gaza Strip.

And we pushed it really hard. And Israel occasionally was less than cooperative. Number one.

The Israeli war cabinet I've been—I've been dealing with Israel since Golda Meir. I've—some—some of the reporters around here who cover me all the time have heard me say this: The last—first time I met with Golda Meir, I sat near—across from her and her desk, and her assistant was Rabin, sitting next to me. That's how far back I go.

I know Israel well, and I support Israel. But this war cabinet is one of the most conservative war cabinets in the history of Israel. And there's no ultimate answer other than a two-state solution here.

And so what was able to be done in terms of the organization—the plan I put together was, it would be a process for a two-state solution. And we get the Arab nations to—particularly from Egypt all the way to Saudi Arabia to be in a position where they would cooperate in the transition so that they could keep the peace in Gaza without Israeli forces staying in Gaza.

The question has been from the beginning: What's the day after in Gaza? And the day after in Gaza has to be—the end of the day after it has to be no occupation by Israel on the Gaza Strip, as well as the ability for us to access—get in and out, as rapidly as you can, all that's needed there.

I've been disappointed that some of the things that I've put forward have not succeeded as well, like the port we attached from Cyprus. I was hopeful that would be more successful.

But that's why I'm—when I went to Israel after—immediately after the massacres that occurred at the hands of Hamas, that I—the one thing I said to the Israelis, and I met with the war cabinet and with Bibi: Don't make the same mistake America made after bin Laden. There's no need to occupy anywhere. Go after the people who did the job.

You may recall, I get—still get criticized for it, but I was totally opposed to the occupation and trying to unite Afghanistan. Once we got—once we got bin Laden, we should have moved on because it was not in our—no one is ever going to unite it—unite that country.

I've been over every inch of that—not every inch—of the entirety, from the poppy fields, all the way to the north. I said: "Don't make the same mistake we made. Don't think that's what you should be doing is doubling down. We'll help you find the bad guys, Sinwar and company."

And I—and all this criticism about I wouldn't provide—when the weapons they needed. I am not providing them 2,000-pound bombs. They cannot be used in Gaza or any populated area without causing great human tragedy and damage.

But we're—remember what happened when you had the attack on Israel from—with rockets and ballistic missiles? I was able to unite the Arab nations as well as—as well as Europe, and nothing happened. Nothing got hurt. It sent—it sent an incredible lesson to what was going on from the Middle East.

So there's a lot of things that, in retrospect, I wish I had been able to convince the Israelis to do. But the bottom line is, we have a chance now. It's time to end this war. It doesn't mean walk away from going after Sinwar and Hamas.

And if you notice—you know better than most—there is a lot—a growing dissatisfaction in the—on the West Bank, from the Palestinians about Hamas. Hamas is not popular now.

And so there's a lot of moving parts. I just have to keep making—moving to make sure that we get as much done as we can toward a cease-fire—a cease-fire—and get those—and by the way, look at the numbers in Israel. I mean, I—my numbers are better in Israel than they are here. But, then again, they're better than a lot of other people here too.

But anyway——

The President's Accomplishments

Q. If I may, Mr. President, a question about "bridge" candidacy. In 2020, you referred to yourself as being a "bridge" candidate for a younger, fresher generation of Democratic leaders. And I wanted to know, what changed?

The President. What changed was the gravity of the situation I inherited in terms of the economy, our foreign policy, and domestic division.

And I think—I won't put words in anybody's mouth. Most Presidential historians give me credit for having accomplished more than most any President since Johnson and maybe before that to get major pieces of legislation passed.

And what I realized was, my long time in the Senate had equipped me to have the wisdom to know how to deal with the Congress to get things done. We got more major legislation passed that no one thought would happen.

And I want to finish it—to get that finished. If tomorrow—if you said—if we had a circumstance wherever—there was a lineup, and I didn't—hadn't inherited what I did and we just moved things along—anyway, it's going to change.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. Last question.

The President. Haley Bull, Scripps—or, no. Josh Wingrove [Bloomberg]—I'm sorry. It was the next one. I'll do two more questions then.

2024 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Many of your colleagues, Democrats on the Hill are watching tonight as they assess what they want to say about your candidacy. I'm wondering how you're thinking of this right now. It seems like your answer is clear. But they're watching how things go tonight, tomorrow in Michigan, next week in Texas and Nevada. Are you thinking that way, about whether how the next week or two goes would inform your——

The President. Am I using it that way, you said?

Q. Are you thinking that way about how the next 2 weeks go? Will that affect your decision, or are you fully determined on running in November as the party's nominee?

The President. I'm determined on running, but I think it's important that I relay—I allay fears by seeing—let them see me out there. Let me see them out—you know, for the longest time it was, you know: "Biden is not prepared to sit with us unscripted. Biden is not prepared to"—you know, anyway.

And so what I'm doing, and it's what I've been doing—I think we've done over 20 major events, from Wisconsin to North Carolina to—anyway—to demonstrate that I'm going out in the areas where we think we can win, where we can persuade people to move our way or people are already there.

And here, look, the other thing is, we have the most extensive campaign organization that anybody has had in a long, long time. We have well over a thousand volunteers knocking on doors, making phone calls, making tens of thousands of phone calls. We have headquarters—I forget exactly how many. I don't want to cite a number and then find out I'm off. But we have scores of headquarters in all the toss-up States. We're organized. We're moving.

And I—that's awful hard to replace in the near term.

And so—and here's the other thing: I was in the Senate a long time. Very proud of what I've done in the Senate. I was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for a long time, and I was chairman of—or ranking member and chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I'm going to be going down to the Johnson Library on—anyway, I'm going to be going around making the case of things that I think we have to finish and how we can't afford to lose what we've done or backslide on civil rights, civil liberties, women's rights. The—that little button we have: "Control guns, not girls."

I mean, the idea that we're seeing around—this is where Kamala is so good as well—we're sitting around—more children are killed with a—by a bullet than any other cause of death. The United States of America. What the hell are we doing? What are we doing? We've got a candidate saying—promised the NRA: "Don't worry. I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to do anything." We've got a Supreme Court that is—what you might call the most conservative Court in American history.

This is ridiculous. There's so much we can do still, and I'm determined to get it done. It's about freedom.

And by the way—I'll end this—well, I—well, I'm going—not going to do that. Haley has to come up too.

But the—I remember I made a speech on democracy in Philadelphia, in Independence Hall. And—I'm not being critical, just observing—the bulk of the press said, "What the hell is he talking about that for?" Democracy—yes, you did. "Democracy is not an issue." "Democracy is not an issue."

Except the polling data showed 60 percent of the people knew I was right, thought I was right.

I'm not asking you a question; you don't have to answer, obviously. But do you think our democracy is under siege based on this Court? Do you think democracy is under siege based on Project 2025?

Do you think he means what he says when he says he's going to do away with the civil service, eliminate the Department of Education, make sure—I mean, there's—we've never been here before.

And that's the other reason why I didn't, as you say, hand off to another generation. I've got to finish this job. I've got to finish this job, because there's so much at stake.

Q. Very quickly. You had some discussions over the past few days with your Press Secretary about the question of health exams, and you said you take a cognitive test every day in this job. Are you open to taking another physical or tests before the election? Governor Whitmer of Michigan, for instance, said "it wouldn't hurt" to take a test.

The President's Cognitive Health

The President. Well, look, two things. One, I've taken three significant and intense neurological exams by the neurologic—by a neurosurgeon—a neurologist. In each case—as recently as February, and they say I'm in good shape. Okay?

Although I do have a little problem with my left foot because it's not as sensitive, because I broke my foot and didn't wear the boot. But I'm good.

I'm tested every single day about my neurological capacity—the decisions I make every day.

You've talked to my staff. All of you talked to my staff. Sometimes, my staff talks a lot. [*Laughter*] But the fact of the matter is, I don't think you have them telling you that all the major ideas we've undertaken haven't been in part initiated by me.

I remember when the staff—and I said, "I'm going to go to South Korea, and we're going to get the chip." And: "What are you doing?" "I'm going to get Japan and Korea back together again after no—essentially having hostilities toward one another since the end of World War II. I'm going to move and see that we can expand"—you know, the only thing age does is help you with a—it creates a little bit of wisdom if you pay attention.

And so the point I'm making is, I think it's important that I—if my—if the neurologist tells me he thinks I need another exam—and by the way, I've laid every bit of the record out. I haven't done—hadn't hidden—hadn't hidden—hidden a thing.

You ought to ask Trump for his, okay?

I've—I've laid it all out.

And every single day, I'm surrounded by good docs. If they think there's a problem, I promise you—or even if they don't think it's a problem—they think I should have a neurological exam again, I'll do it. But no one is suggesting that to me now.

And I'll ask you another question. No matter what I did, no one is going to be satisfied. "Did you have seven docs? Did you have two? Who did you have? Did you do this? How many times

have you"—so I am not opposed. If my doctors tell me they should—I should have another neurological exam, I'll do it. But that's where I am.

Haley Bull, Scripps.

2024 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said you're making decisions on a day-to-day basis when it comes to support for Ukraine. Does that mean you have not closed the door on further considering lifting restrictions for U.S.-made weapons inside Russia?

And if I may, your convention is coming up where your delegates are pledged to make you the official nominee. If they have second thoughts, are they free to vote their conscience?

The President. Obviously, they're free to do whatever they want, but they—I get overwhelming support. Overwhelming support. I won how—I forget how many votes I won in the primary. The overwhelming—and so tomorrow, if all of a sudden, I show up at a convention and everybody says, "We want somebody else," that's the democratic process. It's not going to happen.

Q. Even if that means they vote for someone else?

The President. Sure.

Look, I'll end this with this. I served in the Senate a long time. I understand the impetus of candidates running for local office and whether they think the top—if they can help them or not.

In my State of Delaware, which was a very—at least a purple—it was a red State when I started, in terms of where you now talk "red" and "blue."

I don't recall most of the Democratic Presidents winning my State when I was a candidate. The truth of the matter is I understand the self-interest of any candidate. If they think that, you know, running with Biden at the top of the ticket is going to hurt them, then they're going to run away. I get it.

But, so far, go and look at the polling data in their States. Look at the in depth—and by the way, I think you'd all acknowledge—and you're all experts; I'm not being solicitous about the press, you're experts on this stuff—how accurate does anybody think the polls are these days? I can give you a series of polls where you have likely voters, me versus Trump, where I win all the time. When the unlikely voters vote, he wins sometimes.

So, bottom line is, all the polling data right now, which I think is premature, because the campaign really hasn't even started. I mean, it hasn't started in earnest yet. Most of the time, it doesn't start until after September—after Labor Day. So a lot can happen.

But I think I'm the best qualified—I know—I believe I'm the best qualified to govern. And I think I'm the best qualified to win. But there are other people who could beat Trump too. But it's awful to start from scratch.

And you know, we talk about, you know, money raised. We're not doing bad. We've got about \$220 million in the bank. And we're doing well.

So, with that, you have any—want to follow up on any of that you just asked me?

Q. Yes. [Laughter] You earlier explained confidence in your Vice President.

The President. Yes.

2024 Presidential Election

Q. If your team came back and showed you data that she would fare better against former President Donald Trump, would you reconsider your decision to stay in the race?

The President. No, unless they came back and said, "There's no way you can win." Me. No one is saying that. No poll says that.

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible].

The President. Okay. Thank——

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Press Secretary Jean-Pierre. This ends tonight's press conference. Thanks everybody.

[Several reporters asked questions at once.]

This ends—this concludes——

Q. Sir, respectfully, earlier you misspoke in your opening answer. You referred to Vice President Harris as "Vice President Trump." Right now Donald Trump is using that to mock your age and your memory. How do you combat that criticism from tonight?

The President. Listen to him. Thank you.

Q. President Biden——

Press Secretary Jean-Pierre. This concludes tonight's press conference. Thank you, everybody. Thanks, everyone.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:27 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Q. "C.Q." Brown, Jr., USAF; former President Sauli Niinistö of Finland; President Abdelfattah Said Elsisí of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu of Israel; Yahya Sinwar, leader of Hamas; and Kevin R. Cannard, movement disorders specialist, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. Reporters referred to Rep. Nancy Pelosi; actor George T. Clooney; Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom; President Emmanuel Macron of France; and Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 12.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : News conferences, July 11.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abdullah II, King; Austin, Lloyd J., III; Brown, Charles Q. "C.Q.," Jr.; Cannard, Kevin R.; Elsisí, Abdelfattah Said; Harris, Kamala D.; Jean-Pierre, Karine; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Niinistö, Sauli; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Sinwar, Yahya; Trump, Donald J.; Xi Jinping; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; AUKUS trilateral security partnership; Border security; China, President; China, relations with North Korea; China, relations with Russia; China, relations with U.S.; China, trade and economic policies; COVID-19 pandemic; Economic improvement; Egypt, President; European Union, defense industrial base; Finland, North Atlantic Treaty Organization accession; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Gaza, international assistance; Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Housing, affordability and access; Indo-Pacific, economic and security cooperation; Inflation; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, Prime Minister; Israel, relations with U.S.; Israel, U.S. assistance; Japan, relations with South Korea; Job creation and growth; Joint Chiefs of Staff; Jordan, King; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing

industry, domestic investment; Mexico, immigration enforcement cooperation with U.S.; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea, relations with China; Reproductive health care; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Russia, relations with China; Secretary of Defense; Semiconductor manufacturing; September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; South Korea, relations with Japan; Sweden, North Atlantic Treaty Organization accession; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; Ukraine, international military aid; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Ukraine, U.S. assistance; United Auto Workers (UAW); United Nations Security Council; Vice President; White House Press Secretary.

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