

Newsmaker Transcript

White House Daily Briefing

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

SPICER:

Hey, good afternoon, everyone. It's been a little while. I hope you missed me.

QUESTION:

You missed us?

SPICER:

Absolutely.

We've got a lot to talk about today, so let's get right to it.

First off, I want to acknowledge the tragic plane crash that occurred in Australia, that took the lives of five individuals including four Americans. The president's thoughts are prayers are with the families of the victims. And the U.S. embassy and consulate are in ready to provide necessary and appropriate assistance.

Moving on, the president was honored to announce that Lieutenant General McMaster, will be his National Security Advisor. General McMaster served his nation and the United States Army for over three decades, including -- during Iraqi -- Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Desert Storm.

The president met with many distinguished and qualified candidates for the position and he has said that he will continue to consider many of them for other positions within the administration. He is especially pleased that Lieutenant General Kellogg will stay on as National Security Council chief of staff.

The president is -- is proud to welcome General McMaster to the team. We have full authority to structure the office to his -- to his desires, to best serve his ultimate mission, which is to protect the American interest at home and abroad.

This morning, Secretary Kelly and the Department of Homeland Security released memos regarding the implementation of two of the president's executive orders that are designed to protect the homeland. These two memos provide explicit guidance to DHS staff on how to carry out two executive orders signed by the president on January 25th. One dealing with interior enforcement and one dealing with border security.

Perhaps most critically, the president is empowering DHS to carry out the immigration laws currently on the books. Of course, DHS gave a full briefing on these memos this morning, but just to briefly summarize a few of the facts. The memo regarding the executive order enhancing public safety in the interior of the United States, outlines several practices and policies in order to strengthen the efficient and faithful execution of this country's immigration laws. That includes hiring more ICE agents and officers, as well as additional mission support and legal staff necessary to support their activities.

This memo also directs the establishment of the victims of the Immigration Crime Engagement Office within ICE, full filling another major campaign promise of the president. This office will facilitate the engagement with victims and their families to ensure that their questions and concerns, regarding immigration enforcement efforts are addressed.

SPICER:

The memo regarding the executive order of border security and immigration enforcement improvements, outlines the steps that DHS will take to secure the nations southern border, prevent further illegal immigration and to repatriate illegal immigrants swiftly, consistently and humanely. This includes immediately identifying and allocating all sources of available funding for the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of a wall along our southern border and hiring of additional personnel including 5,000 additional CBP (ph) border agents.

Again, I would refer you to DHS for further comment on these specific memos. There are fact sheets and Q&As on the DHS website that address many of the intricacies and areas within each of these executive orders that you might have questions on. Also, this weekend the president had calls with the president of Panama and the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Readouts of those calls have both been provided. The president's team this weekend also had a very productive meeting on the president's plan to repeal and replace Obamacare and ensure that it is replaced with a system that works for all Americans. Back to the president's schedule today, in honor of Black History Month, the president started his day by visiting the National Museum of African- American History and Culture.

The museum opened last September and has quickly become of Washington's most visited attractions. The president was joined by a group of individuals that included his doctor -- daughter Ivanka, Dr. Ben Carson and his wife, Senator Tim Scott, Alveda King, the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Museum Director Lonnie Bunch, Dr. David Skorton who is the secretary of the Smithsonian, as well as others.

The president commented several times during his tour about how impressed he was with the museum. Some of the exhibits that he was particularly drawn to included the section on Harriett Tubman which featured a shawl that was given to her by Queen Victoria in the late 1800s, the section of the museum that featured the courageous contribution of African-Americans that have made to the United States military.

And the president was particularly pleased by the Muhammad Ali exhibit with the quote "I shook up the world" prominently displayed. The president also enjoyed viewing for the first time with Dr. and Mrs. Carson the exhibit dedicated to his extraordinary life. Similarly, Alveda King who had never viewed the museum's exhibit on her uncle, the president was honored that he was able to share this experience with the two of them specifically.

The president further expressed his appreciation for the tour and said he looks forward to returning again. His desire's to honor the immense contributions of courageous African-American leaders throughout our history by building a more unified country dedicated to liberty to liberty and justice. This afternoon, the president will have a routine classified National Security Council briefing in the situation room in addition to his presidential daily briefing which he received earlier this morning.

Then, this evening, the president will have dinner with the vice president. I'm sure that they will discuss the vice president's recent trip to Europe. The vice president was an incredible representative for our nation and the president during his time where he reiterated our support for European allies and unified pursuit of the noble ideas of freedom, democracy and justice and the rule of law and discussing how to do more to encourage all NATO allies to meet their financial obligations and commitments.

During his speech before the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, the vice president conveyed the administration's unwavering commitment to Europe's peace and prosperity, especially remembering the tens of thousands of Americans who gave their lives to defend those ideals during both World War I and II. These shared sacrifices are the backbone of our alliance and our mission of security through strength.

During his time in Munich, the vice president also met with nine world leaders. The vice president and these leaders discussed the issues most pressing to them including the escalating violence in Eastern Ukraine and the role of NATO in the fight against ISIS. The vice president also met in Brussels with the president of the Tusk -- Vice President Tusk of the Council of European Union and NATO Secretary -- the NATO secretary general.

As a candidate for office, President Trump actually called attention repeatedly to the fact that for too long many of our other NATO allies have not been sharing their -- the financial burden. The president looks forward to working closely with NATO to advance our shared objectives. A strong NATO means a safer world and the United States looks forward to working with our partners in NATO to achieve just that.

Looking ahead to the president's upcoming schedule, tomorrow he'll meet with Secretary of State Tillerson fresh off his trip from -- to Germany for the G20 Foreign Ministers Summit. They'll discuss the president's foreign policy agenda and the secretary's upcoming trip to Mexico. Thursday morning, he'll have a listening session regarding job creation in the manufacturing sector with CEOs and business leaders from different industries.

On Friday, he'll deliver remarks to the conservative political action conference and we are just one week out today from the president's joint address to Congress. The president will continue to work

closely with his team to craft a speech that lays out his ambitious policy agenda that will benefit all Americans. Plans are currently in the works for pre and post-address activities for the president and his staff and we'll have more updates as the week goes on.

SPICER:

Before I take your questions, I want to address the recent threats and acts of vandalism on Jewish community centers throughout the country. The president said this morning, I just want to reiterate, quote, the anti-Semitic threats targeting our Jewish Community Centers are horrible and painful, and a very sad reminder of the work that we must do -- excuse me -- the work that must be done to root out hate and prejudice and evil.

With that, I'll take some of your questions. Jim Stinson.

QUESTION:

Sean -Sean?

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

Thank you. I was curious if the president regrets or wants to clarify his characterization -- by the way I have two questions -- of the media as an enemy of the American people?

SPICER:

I think the president's been very clear that certain outlets have gone out of their way to not represent his record accurately and it is a concern to him. And I think some reporters -- he has deep respect for the first amendment, for the role of the press -- I've addressed this multiple times in the past.

He has a healthy respect for the press. But I think it's a two way street, as I've also said before, and I think that the president understands that certain outlets have gone out of their way to not be completely accurate and fair in their coverage of what's going on.

QUESTION:

Speaking of the media, I've noticed two times in the last week that you've been directly contradicted by two members of the media, one of them Bill Maher of HBO who said that, in front of guest at Mar-a-Lago the president was briefed on classified North Korean - classified North Korean situation.

SPICER:

Say that again -- I'm sorry.

QUESTION:

The president and the Prime Minister of Japan...

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

...were briefed in front of guests.

SPICER:

No I didn't say that.

QUESTION:

No -- no -- no, this is what is being said...

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

...on HBO. That the president and the prime minister were briefed on classified information in front of guests at Mar-a- Lago. I just want to clarify, did that happen?

SPICER:

No.

QUESTION:

(OFF MIKE)

SPICER:

No I think I walked through this timeline before Jim. And it was -- it's amazing, a photo gets put out, the president's got a piece of paper and the immediate conclusion is, he's got to be talking about classified information.

The president was briefed on the situation in North Korea prior to the dinner in a SCIF that's at Mar-a-Lago. He went and had dinner, he discussed the logistics of the press conference, which I've talked to you all about before. There was a question as to where to hold the press conference, they had a discussion about the logistics of it and, subsequent to that dinner, he was briefed again in a SCIF with updates on the situation in North Korea.

That's it. Plain and simple.

But to your first question I think that it's amazing that the immediate jump of conclusion to several outlets was, well there's a piece of paper it must be classified. I don't -- you know, it's amazing to see that and to see people jump to that conclusion, that he's surrounded by his staff and members of the Japanese delegation, the conclusion is they must be doing something nefarious or wrong.

In fact he followed every procedure that's laid out. And I -I think in some cases it's disheartening to realize that those are the kind of immediate conclusions that somebody jumps to. So -- you know, when you talk about coverage, we have a free press, we have the right for our people to say and do what they believe.

But at some point there's a -- it is incumbent upon people to try to get it right. And in that case, it wasn't even attempted, it was a jump to conclusion by many to say that there must be something else going on. When in fact we were able to provide a very, very clear tick tock as to as far as what had happened in that.

Jessica.

QUESTION:

Sean, question about the resignation of the ten (ph) people on the Asian American Council.

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

That happened last week and in the letter they said, in part, we can no longer serve a president whose policies and outlook (ph) that are diametrically opposite to our political (ph) goals and charge.

First of all, what's the White House's reaction and do you plan to appoint your own members to this council?

SPICER:

Yeah. Those members of that council were political appointees of the Obama Administration, their terms were set to expired this year. So it's not surprising in the sense that they were appointees of Barack Obama they were going to have their terms expire.

QUESTION:

(OFF MIKE)

SPICER:

I get it but most political appointees from other agencies, whatever, would automatically resign because of the terms of these individuals they would carry through till later in the year. But I don't think it's surprising that people who were appointed by Barack Obama, to fulfill his agenda, suddenly understand that there's a new administration in town and it -- and didn't want to stay onboard.

SPICER:

But we will make sure that we appoint people to this task force, it's important it's been - it's something that's provided guidance to multiple presidents in the past and we will continue to do that.

Shannon (ph).

QUESTION:

On the - on the statement today about the anti-Semitic act, what specifically is the president going to do to address that issue and, along those lines, there reports earlier on that he was considering changing the mandate of this countering violent extremism program to focus just on Islamic Extremist groups, is he still considering that or would he also review the scope of the program to also consider...

SPICER:

Are you talking about the -- the traveler executive order, the...

QUESTION:

No, no, no, this is the Countering Violent Extremism program...

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

...that...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Yeah, I -- and again, I think we're getting ahead of ourselves, there. There's nothing to announce on that front. And secondly, to the first part of your question, I think the president's gonna do what he's talked about since election night.

Its -- its do deed (ph) in action, talk about how we can unify this country and speak out against, you know, hate, antifeminism, racism and he's gonna continue to do that. And I think that he will show you over the course of months and years, through what he does in terms of his policies and his -- and his speech, that he is gonna be a president that brings people together, that unites them.

And that speaks very, very forcefully against those who -- who are seeking to do hate or to tear people down because of their religion or their gender or the color of their skin. I mean those are all things that I think the presidents clear on (ph).

John (ph)?

QUESTION:

Two questions unrelated, if I could. The next big piece in the immigration profile here that the White House has voted (ph) for the new executive order. Is the president confident that this one will pass legal muster and -- and if he is, what gives him that confidence?

SPICER:

Well, I -- I think we first -- I wanna be clear, that -- that we feel confident that we're still gonna prevail on the case, the merits to the case. I think that as was seen in the case of Massachusetts, once it is fully adjudicated, we will prevail because the authority is granted to the president to do what he has do to protect the country.

So I feel very, very confident about where's gonna go. The second track that he's made very clear as well, is that until that occurs, we're gonna have a dual track system and that we're gonna make sure that we implement a second executive order that is tailored to achieve the same goals but in accordance with what the country said.

So we've been very -- working very closely with the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and the team here at the White House, to make sure that the next step achieves the president's goal of protecting the country and does so in a way that recognizes the concerns and the court had until we prevail at a later time. So it's a dual track thing.

Yes?

QUESTION:

Sir...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

Will this administration send American terrorist suspects picked up overseas to Guantanamo Bay for interrogation...

SPICER:

Yeah, I -- I'm not gonna -- I'm not gonna discuss that, right now. As the president has said very clearly before, we don't telegraph what we're gonna do. I think he has made very clear though, that he believes that Guantanamo Bay does serve a very, very healthy purpose in our national security and making sure that we don't bring terrorists to our seas. But I'm not gonna get into what we may or may not do in the future..

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Again, I'm just not gonna...

Martha (ph)?

Sean, I want to give you a chance to respond to something because I think that the president's remarks in your clarification about where he stands on anti-Semitism is clear. But after that statement was made by the president, the Anne Frank Center released a pretty strongly worded one...

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

...saying that these remarks while -- while (ph) received are a band aid on the cancer within the Trump administration, saying that there is, whether less or otherwise, a sense of xenophobia went in this administration...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Yeah, I -- I think it's -- look, the president has made clear since the day he was elected and frankly, going back to the campaign, that he is someone who seeks to unite this country.

He has brought a diverse group of folks into his administration, both in terms of actual positions and people that he had sought the advice of. And I think he has been very forceful with his denunciation of people who seek to attack people because of their hate -- because of excuse me, because of their religion, because of their gender, because of the color of their skin.

And it's something they can continue to fight and make very, very clear, that he has no place in this administration. But I -- I think (ph) that it's -- it's ironic that no matter how many times he talks about this, that it's never good enough.

Today, I think was an unbelievably forceful comment by the president as far as his denunciation of the actions that are currently targeted towards Jewish community centers. But I think that he's been very clear previous to this, that he wants to be someone that brings this country together and not divide people, especially in those areas.

So I saw that statement, I -- I wish that they had praised the president for his leadership in this area and I think that hopefully, as time continues to go by, they recognize his commitment to civil rights, to voting rights, to equality for all Americans.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

Sean?

SPICER:

Yeah?

QUESTION:

On that...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

You're (ph) starting early with the two questions.

QUESTION:

Sorry. Sean, southern poverty -- I think you'll -- you'll want to respond to...

SPICER:

OK.

QUESTION:

Southern poverty(inaudible) that the number of anti- Muslim groups in the U.S. has tripled between 2015 and 2016, during the time of the campaign. Is this message within the administration is that Semitism's not allowed, xenophobia's not allowed, anti-Muslim sentiment within the administration has the president been forceful about that particular issue?

SPICER:

Well, I don't -- I think that the president, in terms of his desire to combat radical Islamic terrorism, he understands that people who want to express a peaceful position have every right under our Constitution. But if you come here or want to express views that seek to do our country, our people harm, he's going to fight it aggressively whether it's domestic acts that are going on here, or attempts through people abroad to come into this country.

So there's a big difference between preventing attacks and making sure that we keep this country safe so that there is no loss of life, and allowing people to express themselves in accordance with our First Amendment. Those are two very, very different, different things.

QUESTION:

Sean, you talked about how -- how the manufacturing -- (inaudible) where you were going.

SPICER:

No (inaudible) in the back.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

I saw the manufacturing CEOs are coming on Thursday. So let me ask you something that's important to that, which is the border adjustment tax.

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

The president earlier this year called it, quote, "too complicated." Does he still feel that way? And whether he feels this is complicated or not, is there something within the administration one way

or another about whether the president, the administration wants to see this in or out of the tax package?

SPICER:

So, there's several pieces to that that I'll try to unpack. That counts as, like, eight questions.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

No, no. So first of all on the meeting on Thursday, this is going to be a really historic opportunity for CEOs to come in and talk to members of the White House staff and others through various agencies about how we can create jobs, how regulations are stifling economic growth. And I think we'll have further details on that.

But this is going to be a real interesting opportunity to really create a dialogue I think in a manner that hasn't been done before, but I'm not going to get ahead of myself on this, where we can really discuss some of the inhibitors to job creation, job retraining, what do we need for American workers to get them ahead of the curve.

With respect to specific policy positions, I think the president's been very clear that in the next couple of weeks, we expect to have a tax plan that gets out there. That is being worked on continuously. And so I'm not going to get in front of that.

While the CEOs are here, I'm sure, beyond some of these things, that's an opportunity for them to express what some of those policies are that are both helping them create jobs and grow the economy, and also inhibiting them. So, let's let that conversation play out.

Yes?

QUESTION:

OK. Thank you, Sean.

My name is Raquel (ph) from (inaudible) news, Brazil. And I have a question (inaudible) in Brazil right now about what's going to happen to the relationship between the two countries with the new administration, especially as it relates to immigration, and also to trade deals. Does President Trump also plan to review policies -- bilateral policies on Brazilian trade deals?

And also my second question, how does the administration see the current turmoil economical and political turmoil in Brazil?

And one more question, if I might. President Trump spoke with some foreign leaders from South America, like Argentina, Colombia and Peru, but not (inaudible), although the vice president spoke with President Temer from Brazil. Why is that?

SPICER:

Well, obviously we cherish our relationship with Brazil. I think there's a timing factor here. And I think we'll look forward to speaking with the president soon. So I wouldn't read too much into that right now. It's just a matter of getting things on the schedule.

We're going to review all the trade deals that are out there. The president's made very clear. Some of them have occurred, you know, well into a decade, two decades ago. I think the idea is to make sure that we are looking at all of the trade deals we have throughout the globe, to make sure that they continue to benefit America and American workers. And in many cases, we can update these deals.

So it's not any one particular country. I think that we're going to look throughout the whole host of trade agreements and then other trade-related agreements that we have with -- with countries, to make sure that they are the most up to date and they address the technological advances that have occurred. And look at the various services, and whether it's financial services or manufacturing, and that they reflect the current state of play.

So, this isn't any one country. I think the president made clear throughout the campaign, and subsequent, that he wants to review every trade deal to make sure that America and American workers are maintaining the best deal possible.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

I'm sorry? Yes?

QUESTION:

How does the administration see the turmoil in Brazil now?

SPICER:

I'm going to -- I think that's a question for the Department of State right now.

Yes?

QUESTION:

Thanks, Sean. Two questions for you.

One on the NSC meeting later this afternoon. Is that the first meeting of the National Security Council of the president, with all the principals there?

SPICER:

No. There (inaudible) routine briefing, but because of the nature of it, it's happening in the Situation Room.

QUESTION:

But is that with staff or is that with...

SPICER:

Staff.

QUESTION:

OK. So it's not with the principals...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

(inaudible) the first formal meeting of the National Security Council?

SPICER:

Well, I think General McMaster got here at noon today, so we move (ph) fast, but I think that we need to give him a few days, probably, to get his team together. So the President was obviously very pleased with the selection. I think when you saw the bipartisan support that General McMaster received from the variety of the political spectrum, people who have served Republicans and Democrats, academics, pundits, columnists, you know that he made an outstanding choice. We want to get him in, show him around the office a little bit, and then get him going. But when we have a date to announce the next meeting, we'll let you know.

QUESTION:

The joint address for next week, what's the President's goal for that address?

SPICER:

I think that I'll have a further update as the week goes on. We'll have briefings. The President is going to lay out I think two main things. Where we've come and where we're going. I think that he is very pleased with the progress that he has made so far in the first month in office. And I think it's an opportunity to remind members of Congress and the American people what he promised them on the campaign trail. What he's done already, in a very significant way, to achieve and fulfill those promises that he made, but also talk about the challenges that we have as a nation, and where we're going. And that's everything from our relationship with other countries in this world to some

of the various domestic problems that we face, the challenges that we face in cities, healthcare, education, but the President wants to make sure that the American people have a very clear indication as to where he's taking this country, and why he's going to enact the policies he's going to enact.

John -- George, I'm sorry.

QUESTION:

Thanks a lot, Sean. Let me ask you a question about the Vice President's European trip. I'm curious whether he received any commitments from our European allies to commit more in terms of their financial contribution to NATO.

SPICER:

I think several of them, I saw Chancellor Merkel's comments previous to that, noting that they understand that the U.S. is asking for that commitment. Look, we're one of the only countries -- there's a handful -- that are doing what NATO requires, which is two percent of GDP. Some of them are at 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, and some of them are below that. But we've got to ask them to do what they agreed to do. And I think we've had a very positive reaction from most of these NATO countries that understand that the financial commitment that they agreed to is something that they need to live up to. And I think the Vice President continued to receive assurances, much like the President has, through his foreign leader calls, where people not only understand it but are willing to follow through on it.

QUESTION:

Is it an ongoing process --

SPICER:

Of course it's an ongoing process. I mean, I think we need to follow up to make sure that they -- that the commitments that they're making on the phone or in person, in the case of the Vice President, are followed up. Dave --

QUESTION:

Thanks. The DHS memos today, obviously these immigration enforcement efforts cost money, hiring more agents. Do you envision that the current budget is sufficient, or are you going to need to go to Congress --

SPICER:

Yes, I think right now ICE and DHS in particular as well as CBP (ph) are looking at what this is going to cost and how much and putting a request together and then figuring out how much can be

handled through reallocation of resources and then how much we can save, maybe in another area, but then also work with Congress --

QUESTION:

(inaudible) different matter -- there was an election record report out today that the President raised more small campaign donations in 2016 than either Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders combined. Did he have a reaction to that? Have you seen that?

SPICER:

I don't know, and I would ask you to probably go through the RNC for that. That's a political matter that we generally don't discuss.

Yes --

QUESTION:

The National (inaudible) citing reliable sources that the Trump administration today will rescind Obama era guidance requiring schools to allow a transgender kid to use a restroom (inaudible) their gender identity. Will the Trump administration rescind that guidance?

SPICER:

Right now, that's an issue that the Department of Justice and the Department of Education are addressing. I would tell you -- and I think that there will be further guidance coming from DOJ in particular with respect to not just the executive order, but also the case that's in front of the Supreme Court.

The President has maintained for a long time that this is a states rights issue and not one for the federal government, so while there will be further guidance coming out on this, I think that all you have to do is look at what the President's view has been for a long time, that this is not something that the federal government should be involved in. This is a states rights issue.

Matt --

QUESTION:

In the wake of the Vice President's trip to Europe, there's questions as to the administration's position on the future of the European Union with regard to a number of political movements across the continent advocating for the disbandment eventually of the European Union. I wanted to see if you could clarify the administration's position on the future of the European Union.

SPICER:

I think that the Vice President had great meetings with several European Union leaders and made it very clear to them that we'd continue -- will continue to work with them and reaffirmed our commitment to working with these nations. There's no update on that.

Cecilia (ph)?

QUESTION:

Thank you. On immigration, (inaudible) two parts today (ph). Is one of the goals here mass deportation?

SPICER:

No.

QUESTION:

Not at all?

SPICER:

This isn't - look, I think what we have to get back to his understanding a couple of things. There's a law in place that says if you're in this country illegally, that we have an obligation to make sure that the people who are in this - in our country are here legally. What the order sets out today is ensures that the million or so people that have been adjudicated already, that there's - that ICE prioritizes - creates a system of prioritization, and makes sure that - that we walk through that system in a way that protects this country.

This is consistent with everything the president has talked about, which is prioritizing the people who are here, who represent a threat to public, who have a criminal record. And all this does, is lay out the exact procedures to makes sure that the - that that subgroup (ph) of people who pose a threat to our nation because of a conviction or a violation, public safety, or have a criminal record are adjudicated first and foremost. That's its, plain and simple.

QUESTION:

So is it then voted that (ph), is the White House's message today to undocumented people in this country, whose only crime is being in this country illegally, don't worry? Or you're...

SPICER:

The message - the message from this White House and from the DHS is that those people who are in this country and pose a threat to our public, or have committed a crime, will be the first to go, and we will be aggressively making sure that that occurs. That - that - that is what the priority is.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Cecilia (ph), the president has said multiple times that we've got to look at this issue on a very, very case - you know, holistic way. And the number one priority when you look at the scope of how many people are in the country illegally, the number one priority is making sure that people who pose a threat to this country are immediately dealt with.

And this is not a small group of people, we're talking close to a million people who have already been adjudicated, and had their - their status processed through a formal due process system. And so what we need to do now is to make sure that we focus the resources and the efforts on those people going first and foremost. And the fact sheet and the information we put out lays that out very, very clearly what is being done.

But for so long, the people at ICE and CBP had their hands cuffed behind them, and when they were going to deal with the mission of their job, the last administration had so many carve out for who can (ph) be and who couldn't be adjudicated, that it made it very difficult for the customs and enforcement people to do their job and enforce the laws of this country.

But right now, what we've done is to make sure that they have the ability and the guidance and the resources to do what they - what their mission is, and that's it, plain and simple. And the president is consistent with his priority of making sure that those people who pose a threat to this country are the first ones to go.

QUESTION:

On immigration, to follow up. The president has a (inaudible) for DACA.

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

Can you explain the process - expand on what he was saying on Thursday about the process that the administration has taken.

SPICER:

Yeah, I think this is - this is - yeah, and this is what I was basically talking to Cecilia (ph) about, which is the president has made clear, when you have 12, 14, 15 million people in the country illegally, that there has to be a system of priority, and right now, ICE's priority is going to make sure that we focus on first and foremost on that.

He's specifically in the guide that (ph) talks about that DACA and DAPA, unless they put - unless someone who fits under that program and fits into the subcategory, is not subject to what is being

dealt with now. Remember, everybody who is here illegally is subject to removal at any time. That is consistent with every country, not just ours. If you're in this country in an illegal manner, that obviously - that there's a provision that could ensure that you'd be removed.

But the priority that the president has laid forward, and the priority that ICE is putting forward through DHS' guidance is to make sure that the people who have committed a crime or pose a threat to our public are - are the priority of their efforts, first and foremost. Katelyn (ph)?

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

So President (inaudible) and his (ph) team has also had reservations about undocumented people in the United States to our beneficiaries of public assistance (inaudible) either at the state or the federal level. What's the president going to be doing to either issue guidance or executive (inaudible)?

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

...for taxpayer money, with respect to sanctuary cities, and the enforcement measures that he's putting forward on immigration.

SPICER:

Right now, obviously, that actions today are focused on people who -- who are in this country and what we need to do on our southern border to facilitate the building of the wall that he's talked about. So we're doing this one step at a time in a very methodical way and right now the focus is to make sure that ICE and CBP and DHS have the authority and the resources to carry out that first mission.

We will have more and continues to see that immigration is one of those issues that he was very, very clear and consistent on in the campaign and we're going to continue to implement the policies that he talked about to keep the country safe.

QUESTION:

John Kasich has been a very vocal critic of President Trump, even in the campaign, saying that his immigration plan was crazy, his statement that the elections were rigged was silly and he did not endorse him and did not vote for him. What is the president hoping to accomplish with their meeting at the White House on Friday?

SPICER:

So, Governor Kasich has reached out on multiple occasions to meet with the president to follow on and the president, you know, has shown through the transition and since time in office that he wants to meet with anybody that can help move this country forward and share in his vision. I think that includes people who are with him, who are not with him, who are on the other side of the aisle, who are independents, union workers, business leaders.

Now that he is president, and frankly, I would again date it back to the transition, he understands that he's the president for every American and he's talked consistently about having a united county. And you do that by bringing people together, whether or not they agree with you on every issue or one or two issues.

But if there's common ground that can be found to move the country forward, then great. And I think so many of the president's priority issues are issues that Ohio is dealing with and that he wants to make sure that he can continue to work with Governor Kasich so that every American benefits from (inaudible).

April?

QUESTION:

Did Kasich ask for the meeting?

SPICER:

Yes.

QUESTION:

OK.

QUESTION:

What did the president gain from his tour today? You talked about where he -- the exhibits that he visited. Did he also visit slavery (ph)? And the reason why I'm asking this is because when he was candidate Trump, he said things like we made this country meaning white America, not necessarily black. Did he gain...

SPICER:

Well, I don't know why you would say that. What do you mean?

QUESTION:

No, no, he said that. I heard him say that.

SPICER:

No, no, but look. The answer to your question is, right -- one of the first exhibits that he visited was one of the slavery exhibits and the director walked him through some very amazing stories and statistics about where slave labor was prevalent (ph). Not just in traditional southern colonies, but throughout the country. So they did have a very robust discussion about slavery early on in the tour.

And I think that it was a very eye-opening and powerful tour for him, and frankly, for every American and I would encourage any American that can find the time and get in because it's so popular. But it really is enlightening as far as parts of our history that people may not fully appreciate or know and the contributions and the sacrifices that so many Americans have made that are -- that are a critical piece to our history that sometimes don't get the attention they deserve.

So I think the president walked away from there, and you know, I mentioned in the remarks that he mentioned to Lonnie that he wanted to come back because you can't do it justice. And it's much like the Holocaust Museum, where you go through once and then you sit there and start thinking of all the things that you saw and think, you know, I'd like to go back and fully -- more fully explore what I just saw because it peaked some degree of interest or intellectual curiosity.

But he was very taken aback. It's a very, very powerful institution and tour and it covers a lot of ground. I think he was really proud to -- to share it with Dr. Carson. When you walk through that museum and you see all of the elements of our history and you walk up to this one glass exhibit that has Dr. Carson's scrubs and pictures of him, and to experience that with him and his wife for the first time and you realize how amazing that is for any American to be part of a Smithsonian and you're standing with Dr. Carson and his wife where he is experiencing with you for the first time and how powerful that must have been was -- was I think a real interesting opportunity for him to sit there hand to hand with another American and watch them be part of American history.

And you also appreciate some of the real contributions that Dr. Carson has made to medicine and -- and what he -- and the depth and breadth of his accomplishments.

QUESTION:

And lastly, kind of putting this with the next question, is there any advancement on the CBC (ph) meeting with the president and also the head of the CBC (ph) that he was wondering if the president saw anything from current and past members of the CVC while he was in the museum, to get a little bit of information on them before this meeting happens?

SPICER:

I -- I -- there -- I'll have further updates on that. I know the president looks forward to -- to that meeting. And I think that we're in the process of trying to -- to begin setting that up. And so I'll have further updates on that once we get closer. I know that we've additional work before the month concludes on historically black college and universities and some meetings that we're working out with them. But I want to get them locked in before I...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

What did he think about the members that he saw, in the museum?

SPICER:

Well, when you walk through one of them, there's a -- there's a big jumbotron and we paused for a while and John Lewis was there giving a very powerful speech and we just paused and watched that for a little while.

So again, I think that -- respectfully, when you walk through a museum like this, there's a lot of moments where you're just stopping and taking it in. And there's, you know, if you haven't been there, you walk up this one ramp and they stop and there's two big screen and one of them is -- is a video screen and it's a massive jumbotron...

QUESTION:

(OFF-MIKE)

SPICER:

Right. And -- and we watched the video of John Lewis and talking there and describing his efforts in championing of voting civil rights. And so, I don't -- I know the president paused and watched it and listened to it. And again, I -- I would go back to how he described his overall. We didn't dissect the different things, but I watched him and it was a very powerful experience for him and I know he looks forward to going back.

Hally (ph)?

QUESTION:

Sean, some questions for you. First one on undocumented (inaudible) you just made very clear that the president's priority is to deport those who pose a threat to public safety.

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

I know you're familiar with the case in Arizona. The mother of (inaudible) is she a threat to this country?

SPICER:

I might leave that up to ICE. We don't get involved from the White House to particular cases. That's not...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

But -- I -- you're right and I understand...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

... a threat to public safety?

SPICER:

But -- but -- Hally (ph), I think the answer is, is that ICE determined that she had violated the law in a way that was in accordance with this. Again, we've got to get back to this idea that, our job -- especially here at the White House -- isn't to -- to call ball and stripes and say, well, this portion only violated part of the law or let me go -- if this was any other subject, if this was tax evasion and we said, well, they only really violated a little bit of -- they only cheated on their taxes a little, you wouldn't be saying, hey, should they really be going to prison or should they be getting a fine?

At some point, laws are laws. And if people have a problem with the law, whether it's at the local state or federal issue, then -- then we should petition our lawmakers and the executive and at the particular branch of government and change it. But -- but our job shouldn't be to figure out, should -- should this individual not have to abide by the law? Should this individual get a pass? If we want to change the law, we go a very amazing process here in this country to both, create and change laws.

And -- and so, I don't want to comment on the specifics of any one case, because I think that that -- that then puts the White House in a position of deciding, you know, what -- who is following the law and who isn't, and what -- who should get a pass. The bottom...

QUESTION:

(OFF-MIKE) just said right? The prioritization of cases....

SPICER:

No, no, there's a difference. When you have 13 or 14 million people, that are in the country (inaudible) you know, I think it's one thing to say, prioritize people who pose a threat to public

safety and go after this individual or that individual or whatever. That -- that is -- there's -- there's no question, that -- you have to have priorities in anything.

What do you do first, what do you do second, what do you do third. And when you're talking about 13, 14, 15 potentially more, millions of people in this country, the president needed to give guidance, especially after what they went through in the last administration, where there were so many carve outs, that ICE agent and CBP members didn't -- had to figure out each individual, whether or not they fit in a particular category and they could adjudicate that case.

The president wanted to take the shackles off individuals in these agencies and say, you have a mission, there are laws that need to be followed, you should do your mission and follow the law. And for specific cases, I would refer you to ICE in particular and do that.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Hold on, hold on.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Hold on, Hally's (ph) on number two.

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Glen (ph), it's Hally's (ph) turn. Would you please not interrupt her?

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

Do you want to take that now?

SPICER:

No, no, no. I think -- I'm not gonna allow you to be interrupted.

QUESTION:

So, the second question is on anti -- anti-semitism...

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

... did you reference from the podium, the president made very clear. You said though, that he has he taken opportunities in the past. Just last week though, right? He had the opportunities to deliver a message to the American people about anti-semitism. You made very clear, he was not anti-semitic...

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

... and he -- and he was in fact, insulted by that. But as far as a broader message to the American people, he declined to offer one. Is the president comfortable with his obligation, as the leader of this country, to deliver that kind of broad and forceful message to Americans. And if so, why didn't he do it sooner in the case of the...

SPICER:

Well, I think the idea Hally (ph), that he has. And I think there's a point at which, he talked literally on election night about uniting this country and making sure that all Americans (inaudible) and every time there's an incidence, its interesting -- I mean I get a question, is he gonna announce this one, is he gonna announce this one?

At some point, the question's asked and answered. He had stood very forcefully against...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

What are you asking, I mean?

QUESTION:

I'm asking if he's comfortable with his role as the person who needs to be delivering a broader message...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

...right, and I think that his -- he is very comfortable and understands that as the leader of the free world, the president of this country, the commander in chief, that he has an awesome responsibility to -- to make it very clear, where we're going as a country and what our values are.

And that he has spoken very forcefully, that we don't stand for this kind of behavior and words and tolerance. That we are a country that should bring people together and that we shouldn't tolerate people who are hating on individuals because of their gender or because of their religion, or the color of their skin or a variety of other things.

But that there's a point in which it's asked and answered. And I think the president has been very clear over and over again, you know, going back through the campaign, the transition now that he -- that's the kind of president that he wants to be, that's the kind of country that he wants to lead.

Chi (ph)?

QUESTION:

Thanks, Sean. Following the DHS memos this morning, the ACLU said the courts won't allow these orders to become a reality. How is the administration preparing for another potential legal battle and do you have any response to the ACLU?

SPICER:

Well, I think we're -- we have done a phenomenal job of working with the various departments, particularly DHS and DOJ, State and through the White House staff to make sure that we are well within any concerns that the court might have.

And as I mentioned, I think it's important to continue to emphasize, we feel as though the first one (ph) did that, as well and then we were vindicated (ph) several times in the court. We have an issue with the ninth circuit and I think we will overcome that ultimately on the merits (ph).

But in the meantime, a dual track is something that we wanted to pursue to make sure that we do everything we can, as I mentioned before, to keep the country safe.

Yeah?

QUESTION:

Thank you...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Yep, sure.

QUESTION:

Yeah, thanks...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

...the Australian foreign minister is here today, meeting the vice president...

SPICER:

I'm sorry, today?

QUESTION:

The Australian foreign minister is...

SPICER:

Yeah.

QUESTION:

...meeting the vice president and also the secretary of state tomorrow. I guess we can assume that the U.S./Australia refugee deal will come up. Now, last time we spoke, the president was still considering and reviewing the deal.

Can you just update us on...

SPICER:

Yeah, I'm gonna wait -- we'll have a readout of that -- yep, OK. Of course, everyone gets two.

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION:

Yeah. If you could just update us on -- on the current position on the deal and also, given that recent exposure on the president dictate for us (ph), will Australia be expected to return the favor?

SPICER:

I -- look, I -- again, I would wait. Let's -- we'll have a readout after that call as far as what they discussed but -- I -- I've got nothing. I don't wanna get ahead of the vice president's meeting with either secretary of state or -- or the vice president.

Kristen (ph)?

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

Thank you. I have two questions. One on the admission (ph) of refugee's executive orders that were expected in the coming days. So with that (ph) it withstands legal challenges, can you tell us what the language might look like as it relates to Syrian refugees?

SPICER:

I appreciate the effort. But when we have it ready, we'll get it out. And I think a part of this is...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Excuse me? I -- I again, I appreciate the second try. But we're not ready to announce it and part of it is that we're making sure that it is completely ready to go. And so when we have that, we will get it out to you. And just -- that the -- the reason that we haven't announced is it's not ready to be announced.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

...one more on the...

SPICER:

Of course.

QUESTION:

...comments that the president made today about anti- Semitism. In terms of the timing, obviously, he was asked about it.

SPICER:

Right.

QUESTION:

But they also came after his daughter, Ivanka, who sent out that tweet, has she counseled him where (ph) she wanted the people saying it's important for...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

Look, I -- I think because the president was visiting the African American museum, he wanted to make it very clear. I think it was very powerful that while there and while understanding the struggles of so many. And we talk about how, you know, one of the beauties of history is we don't (ph) repeat itself.

And I think that when you're at a museum like that and seeing the struggles that so many Americans faced and overcame, that you want to remind people that there is still issues that our country is grappling with and that there is no place for that hate and for that language.

And I think you know, as I mentioned, it was a very powerful opportunity for him to say that and to make clear again, what his -- what his opinions were.

Sarah (ph)?

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

...last week, Sean?

SPICER:

I'm sorry?

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

...regret (ph) not...

SPICER:

I think the -- the president was very clear, that was a very -- I think as I mentioned Hallie (ph), he has -- he has discussed this over and over again. I think there's a point to which his position is abundantly clear. His attempts and his desire and his rhetoric to unite the country has been expressed over and over again.

Sarah (ph)?

QUESTION:

Hey Sean, the New York Times is reporting that Trump's budget director is preparing a budget that eliminates the Export- Import Bank. Several lawmakers, including Senator Heitkamp, have come out of private meetings with President Trump and said that in those private meetings, he expressed support for the Export (sic) Bank. So which is it? Does he support Ex-Im or does he support eliminating it?

SPICER:

I can confirm that the OMB director, the budget director is working on a budget. Beyond that, I'm not going to get ahead of the OMB director right now. They are drafting a budget. They are talking to members of Congress and other interested parties about funding levels and such. But we're not at a position to go yet.

Yes?

QUESTION:

To square the circle on Alexis's question, since the DHS guidance did not eliminate DACA, does that mean that the program is remaining in place, that it's a settled matter, and it's not going away?

SPICER:

No, Jordan. What it means is that this particular enforcement is tailored to what I've been referencing over and over again, that what we're talking about today is the implementation of those two executive orders, one specifically that's tasking the agencies under DHS to address a very specific problem of the million or so, plus-or-minus people that they have identified, that they have been adjudicated with having -- with already having gone through the process to be adjudicated and taken out of the country.

QUESTION:

So that means that DACA...

(CROSSTALK)

SPICER:

That's right. Exactly. It just means that that -- this -- what it means more than anything is that this order does not address that and it's very clear in the Q&A, and again I would refer you back to the DHS's website that has all of that.

Goyal?

QUESTION:

Thank you very much. Two questions, please.

One, it's been one month on the job for you and for the president. And you are already talk of the town around the globe. My two questions are, one...

SPICER:

My wife would disagree with you.

(LAUGHTER)

It's not always positive, too.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

It looks like, Sean, that the president's order is working, at least around the globe, because more than 60,000 Pakistanis have been deported by (inaudible) that they were illegals, and also they went back to the country. (inaudible) and also at the same time, Pakistani government is arresting hundreds of terrorists inside the country. Any presidential message?

SPICER:

No. Look, I'm not going to -- there's nothing that I have in terms of an update of what's going on in Pakistan. I would refer you to the Department of State with respect to specific policies. But, you know, the broader point that you're making is I think each country needs to look at what they need to do to control the people that are entering their country and keep their people safe.

When you look at our laws in particular, and compare them to so many other countries around the globe, we actually tend to probably fall in the lower end of having -- of how tough our immigration policies are vis-a-vis someone else.

Yes?

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

As far as illegal immigration is a concern in the U.S., millions of illegal immigrants (inaudible) waiting for the last eight or 10 years that they might see a light in the dark tunnel. And now they're hoping that President Trump will have a light for them. So what is the presidential message for them, who are in this country for five, 10, 15 or 20 years, but they're not -- they don't have any criminal records?

SPICER:

Right. Well, look, the president has said before he's got a big heart. And I think that, as we continue to develop policy on immigration, it's going to be as we've talked about in the past, prioritized what we go after first, second, third. The president's been very clear. He understands that plight of some of those individuals. He's got a big heart. He understands the impact it has on many families in many communities.

But we will continue to develop policies that will address that. And again, today's focus is specifically on those two executive orders. And I'm going to limit it to that.

Yes?

QUESTION:

At the beginning -- at the beginning of the month, Senator John McCain sent a letter to the president requesting that the administration provide arms to Ukrainians fighting Russian separatists within their country. When will the president respond to Senator McCain's letter? And what is the administration's position on lethal aid to Ukrainians fighting Russian separatists?

SPICER:

I don't have anything for you on that. I'll try to get back to you on that. I know that we we're very pleased to say -- watch Senator McCain praise the pick of General McMaster. That's (inaudible) so we will consult with. But we were pleased to see so much support for him.

Scott?

QUESTION:

Yes, on Russia. Critics of the president have said that at times he doesn't talk tough enough on the subject. General McMaster, though, has been labeled by a lot of people as being pretty hawkish. I'm curious, what, if any, difference in tone or tenor or strategy we should expect now that they're working together?

SPICER:

Well, I think, as I mentioned a couple of times, I think there is widespread praise for General McMaster and his understanding and command of national security matters, foreign policy matters. He's gonna be a great asset to the president's national security team.

But ultimately, the President's always been the decider, whether it's Russia or any other issue, and I think you're right. He's -- he has made it very clear that if he can get a deal with Russia, something that the last several administrations have tried to do, that he's going to do it. And if he can't, he won't. But he is going to try, and I think his success as a business man and a negotiator should be seen as a positive sign for him to be able to do that.

But he understands that if he can find common ground on defeating ISIS and combating terrorism, growing the economy where we can find areas of economic interest, then we're going to do it. But that's -- that's where we're going to continue to work with Russia. If we can. He'll get a deal if he can, he won't if he won't. But he's going to try. And I think where others have failed, he's going to make sure that he does everything possible to make sure that -- if it's in the interest of the United States, he will get a deal.

Vivian (ph).

QUESTION:

Another question on General McMaster. So how much leeway is he going to get to restructure, to bring on his own people? There were some reports that admiral Harward was not allowed to or others as well, so can you address that?

SPICER:

Yes, thank you, I can. He will have 100 percent. The President has been very clear with that. He is a national security adviser, and he will have whatever he needs to implement a successful team.

But with respect to Admiral Harward that you brought up -- Admiral Harward made it very, very clear that he wanted this job. He would love to take it. He was impressed with the team. But during the course of discussions, he came up and he said, before I continue with this discussion, I need to address some financial and family concerns. He went back, he came back to us and said, I am unable to continue the discussions because of some financial concerns and some family issues that we have.

I spent 40 years serving this country in the United States Navy. I talked to him again Saturday night. He said if there's another opening in a year or two, I would be honored. I am so impressed with the team that's there.

And I would urge people to actually talk to him. He was so excited about being part of the team. He was available to as many reporters as he could take. We gave out his information, his contact information. And he's been very clear. He wrote a letter to the president prior to, first thing Tuesday morning, he was in the UAE. He sent the letter over, we had it first thing in the morning where he said, because of family concerns, because of some financial constraints, having served this nation for 40 years, I can't take this job. But I am unbelievably impressed...

All of the rumors about the discretion that he would have over staff or any other thing were 100 percent false. He's made it clear that he would love to serve in the future, that he was impressed with the team, that he wanted to do this -- there were just some constraints, financially and family wise, that come with, or after having served 40 years in the military and some sacrifices both financially and family wise that he had had to make.

But I talked to him several times, and the team has talked to him. But ultimately, the president was very, very impressed with General McMaster. He'd always been one of the individuals that he was -- thought stood above some of the other folks. He was impressed with the entire list, John Bolton and others. But he -- he -- so many people had spoken to him. General Mattis, Tom Cotton, other senators, really praised General McMaster's command of the issues, his management, his style, his understanding of the geopolitical landscape, and I think that's why you saw such amazing widespread bipartisan praise for him and why he will be such an asset to the national security team.

So ultimately, we've been up with the best choice. And I think that's going to benefit not just this administration but our entire nation.

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION:

... any senior people at the NSC? Can we expect that he may replace...

SPICER:

I can't be any clearer. I think that we've got an amazing team. He's been impressed with them. But the president has -- as he did with other candidates, told them that they would lead the team and that he would have the discretion.

Jeff (ph).

QUESITON:

I just wanted to follow up on that. You said that he has the full authority to structure his office as he sees fit. Does that extend to the principals committee as well? After he comes in (inaudible) the whole apparatus, if he advises the president that he would prefer not to have the (inaudible) the president...

SPICER:

I think the president has made clear to him, as I said to Vivian (ph), he's got full authority to structure the National Security team the way he wants. Obviously with something like that, he would come to the president and make that recommendation. But the president would take that under serious consideration. I don't want to go ahead with this person or that person or structure, but the president made it very clear with him and the other candidates that they had 100 percent control and authority over the National Security Committee. Thank you, guys. I'll see you tomorrow.

QUESTION:

Will McMaster retire (ph)?

SPICER:

No. He will stay on - he will stay on active duty.

QUESTION:

Does that require prior confirmation though (ph)?

SPICER:

No. He will stay on - he will stay on active duty. That was the case in - with Powell and I think some other folks, so.

QUESTION:

One more clarification just before you go. So, when the new EO comes out, you won't rescind the original one, you'll leave it in place?

SPICER:

That's correct. Yes. Thank you, guys.

QUESTION:

Are you referring those attacks to the Justice Department, the anti-Semitic attacks?