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Press Conference by the President

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:45 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, everybody. Happy Friday. I thought I'd take some questions, but first, let me say a few words about the economy.

This morning, we learned that our economy created over 200,000 new jobs in July. That's on top of about 300,000 new jobs in June. So we are now in a six-month streak with at least 200,000 new jobs each month. That's the first time that has happened since 1997. Over the past year, we've added more jobs than any year since 2006. And all told, our businesses have created 9.9 million new jobs over the past 53 months. That's the longest streak of private sector job creation in our history.

And as we saw on Wednesday, the economy grew at a strong pace in the spring. Companies are investing. Consumers are spending. American manufacturing, energy, technology, autos -- all are booming. And thanks to the decisions that we've made, and the grit and resilience of the American people, we've recovered faster and come farther from the recession than almost any other advanced country on Earth.

So the good news is the economy clearly is getting stronger. Things are getting better. Our engines are revving a little bit louder. And the decisions that we make right now can sustain and keep that growth and momentum going.

Unfortunately, there are a series of steps that we could be taking to maintain momentum, and perhaps even accelerate it; there are steps that we could be taking that would result in more job growth, higher wages, higher incomes, more relief for middle-class families. And so far, at least, in Congress, we have not seen them willing or able to take those steps.

I've been pushing for common-sense ideas like rebuilding our infrastructure in ways that are sustained over many years and support millions of good jobs and help businesses compete. I've been advocating on behalf of raising the minimum wage, making it easier for working folks to pay off their student loans; fair pay, paid leave. All these policies have two things in common: All of them would help working families feel more stable and secure, and all of them so far have been blocked or ignored by Republicans in Congress. That's why my administration keeps taking whatever actions we can take on our own to help working families.

Now, it's good that Congress was able to pass legislation to strengthen the VA. And I want to thank the chairmen and ranking members who were involved in that. It's good that Congress was able to at least fund transportation projects for a few more months before leaving town -- although it falls far short of the kind of infrastructure effort that we need that would actually accelerate the economy. But for the most part, the big-ticket items, the things that would really make a difference in the lives of middle-class families, those things just are not getting done.

Let's just take a recent example: Immigration. We all agree that there's a problem that needs to be solved in a portion of our southern border. And we even agree on most of the solutions. But instead of working together -- instead of focusing on the 80 percent where there is agreement between Democrats and Republicans, between the administration and Congress -- House Republicans, as we speak, are trying to pass the most extreme and unworkable versions of a bill that they already know is going nowhere, that can't pass the Senate and that if it were to pass the Senate I would veto. They know it.

They're not even trying to actually solve the problem. This is a message bill that they couldn't quite pull off yesterday, so they made it a little more extreme so maybe they can pass it today -- just so they can check a box before they're leaving town for a month. And this is on an issue that they all insisted had to be a top priority.



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Now, our efforts administratively so far have helped to slow the tide of child migrants trying to come to our country. But without additional resources and help from Congress, we're just not going to have the resources we need to fully solve the problem. That means while they're out on vacation I'm going to have to make some tough choices to meet the challenge -- with or without Congress.

And yesterday, even though they've been sitting on a bipartisan immigration bill for over a year, House Republicans suggested that since they don't expect to actually pass a bill that I can sign, that I actually should go ahead and act on my own to solve the problem. Keep in mind that just a few days earlier, they voted to sue me for acting on my own. And then when they couldn't pass a bill yesterday, they put out a statement suggesting I should act on my own because they couldn't pass a bill.

So immigration has not gotten done. A student loan bill that would help folks who have student loan debt consolidate and refinance at lower rates -- that didn't pass. The transportation bill that they did pass just gets us through the spring, when we should actually be planning years in advance. States and businesses are raising the minimum wage for their workers because this Congress is failing to do so.

Even basic things like approving career diplomats for critical ambassadorial posts aren't getting done. Last night, for purely political reasons, Senate Republicans, for a certain period of time, blocked our new ambassador to Russia. It raised such an uproar that finally they went ahead and let our Russian ambassador pass -- at a time when we are dealing every day with the crisis in Ukraine.

They're still blocking our ambassador to Sierra Leone, where there's currently an Ebola outbreak. They're blocking our ambassador to Guatemala, even as they demand that we do more to stop the flow of unaccompanied children from Guatemala. There are a lot of things that we could be arguing about on policy -- that's what we should be doing as a democracy -- but we shouldn't be having an argument about placing career diplomats with bipartisan support in countries around the world where we have to have a presence.

So the bottom line is this: We have come a long way over the last five and a half years. Our challenges are nowhere near as daunting as they were when I first came into office. But the American people demand and deserve a strong and focused effort on the part of all of us to keep moving the country forward and to focus on their concerns. And the fact is we could be much further along and we could be doing even better, and the economy could be even stronger, and more jobs could be created if Congress would do the job that the people sent them here to do.

And I will not stop trying to work with both parties to get things moving faster for middle-class families and those trying to get into the middle class. When Congress returns next month, my hope is, is that instead of simply trying to pass partisan message bills on party lines that don't actually solve problems, they're going to be willing to come together to at least focus on some key areas where there's broad agreement. After all that we've had to overcome, our Congress should stop standing in the way of our country's success.

So with that, let me take a couple of questions. And I will start with Roberta Rampton of Reuters.

Q Thanks. I want to ask about the situation in the Middle East. And why do you think Israel should embrace a cease-fire in Gaza when one of its soldiers appears to have been abducted and when Hamas continues to use its network of tunnels to launch attacks? And also, have you seen Israel act at all on your call to do more to protect civilians?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I think it's important to note that we have -- and I have -- unequivocally condemned Hamas and the Palestinian factions that were responsible for killing two Israeli soldiers and abducting a third almost minutes after a cease-fire had been announced. And the U.N. has condemned them as well.

And I want to make sure that they are listening: If they are serious about trying to resolve this situation, that soldier needs to be unconditionally released as soon as possible.

I have been very clear throughout this crisis that Israel has a right to defend itself. No country can tolerate missiles raining down on its cities and people having to rush to bomb shelters every 20 minutes or half hour. No country can or would tolerate tunnels being dug under their land that can be used to launch terrorist attacks.

And so, not only have we been supportive of Israel in its right to defend itself, but in very concrete terms -- for example, in support for the Iron Dome program that has intercepted rockets that are firing down on Israeli cities -- we've been trying to cooperate as much as we can to make sure that Israel is able to protect its citizens.

Now, at the same time, we've also been clear that innocent civilians in Gaza caught in the crossfire have to weigh on our conscience and we have to do more to protect them. A cease-fire was one way in which we could stop the killing, to step back and to try to resolve some of the underlying issues that have been building up over quite some time. Israel committed to that 72-hour cease-fire, and it was violated. And trying to put that back together is going to be challenging, but we will continue to make those efforts.

And let me take this opportunity, by the way, to give Secretary John Kerry credit. He has been persistent. He has worked very hard. He has endured on many occasions really unfair criticism simply to try to get to the point where the killing stops and the underlying issues about Israel's security but also the concerns of Palestinians in Gaza can be addressed.

We're going to keep working towards that. It's going to take some time. I think it's going to be very hard to put a cease-fire back together again if Israelis and the international community can't feel confident that Hamas can follow through on a cease-fire commitment.

And it's not particularly relevant whether a particular leader in Hamas ordered this abduction. The point is, is that when they sign onto a cease-fire they're claiming to speak for all the Palestinian factions. And if they don't have control of them, and just moments after a cease-fire is signed you have Israeli soldiers being killed and captured, then it's hard for the Israelis to feel confident that a cease-fire can actually be honored.

I'm in constant consultation with Prime Minister Netanyahu. Our national security team is in constant communication with the Israel military. I want to see everything possible done to make sure that Palestinian civilians are not being killed. And it is heartbreaking to see what's happening there, and I think many of us recognize the dilemma we have. On the one hand, Israel has a right to defend itself and it's got to be able to get at those rockets and those tunnel networks. On the other hand, because of the incredibly irresponsible actions on the part of Hamas to oftentimes house these rocket launchers right in the middle of civilian neighborhoods, we end up seeing people who had nothing to do with these rockets ending up being hurt.

Part of the reason why we've been pushing so hard for a cease-fire is precisely because it's hard to reconcile Israel's legitimate need to defend itself with our concern with those civilians. And if we can pause the fighting, then it's possible that we may be able to arrive at a formula that spares lives and also ensures Israel's security. But it's difficult. And I don't think we should pretend otherwise.

Bill Plante.

Q Mr. President, like that cease-fire, you've called for diplomatic solutions not only in Israel and Gaza but also in Ukraine, in Iraq, to very little effect so far. Has the United States of America lost its influence in the world? Have you lost yours?

THE PRESIDENT: Look, this is a common theme that folks bring up. Apparently people have forgotten that America, as the most powerful country on Earth, still does not control everything around the world. And so our diplomatic efforts often take time. They often will see progress and then a step backwards. That's been true in the Middle East. That's been true in Europe. That's been true in Asia. That's the nature of world affairs. It's not neat, and it's not smooth.

But if you look at, for example, Ukraine, we have made progress in delivering on what we said we would do. We can't control how Mr. Putin thinks. But what we can do is say to Mr. Putin, if you continue on the path of arming separatists with heavy armaments that the evidence suggests may have resulted in 300 innocent people on a jet dying, and that violates international law and undermines the integrity -- territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, then you're going to face consequences that will hurt your country.

And there was a lot of skepticism about our ability to coordinate with Europeans for a strong series of sanctions. And each time we have done what we said we would do, including this week, when we put in place sanctions that have an impact on key sectors of the Russian economy -- their energy, their defense, their financial systems.

It hasn't resolved the problem yet. I spoke to Mr. Putin this morning, and I indicated to him, just as we will do what we say we do in terms of sanctions, we'll also do what we say we do in terms of wanting to resolve this issue diplomatically if he takes a different position. If he respects and honors the right of Ukrainians to determine their own destiny, then it's possible to make sure that Russian interests are addressed that are legitimate, and that Ukrainians are able to make their own decisions, and we can resolve this conflict and end some of the bloodshed.

But the point is, though, Bill, that if you look at the 20th century and the early part of this century, there are a lot of conflicts that America doesn't resolve. That's always been true. That doesn't mean we stop trying. And it's not a measure of American influence on any given day or at any given moment that there are conflicts around the world that are difficult. The conflict in Northern Ireland raged for a very, very long time until finally something broke, where the parties decided that it wasn't worth killing each other.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been going on even longer than you've been reporting. (Laughter.) And I don't think at any point was there a suggestion somehow that America didn't have influence just because we weren't able to finalize an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

You will recall that situations like Kosovo and Bosnia raged on for quite some time, and there was a lot more death and bloodshed than there has been so far in the Ukrainian situation before it ultimately did get resolved.

And so I recognize with so many different issues popping up around the world, sometimes it may seem as if this is an aberration or it's unusual. But the truth of the matter is, is that there's a big world out there, and that as indispensable as we are to try to lead it, there's still going to be tragedies out there and there are going to be conflicts. And our job is to just make sure that we continue to project what's right, what's just, and that we're building coalitions of like-minded countries and partners in order to advance not only our core security interests but also the interests of the world as a whole.

Q Do you think you could have done more?

THE PRESIDENT: On which one?

Q On any of them? Ukraine?

THE PRESIDENT: Well look, I think, Bill, that the nature of being President is that you're always asking yourself what more can you do. But with respect to, let's say, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, this administration invested an enormous amount to try to bring the parties together around a framework for peace and a two-state solution. John Kerry invested an enormous amount of time. In the end, it's up to the two parties to make a decision. We can lead them to resolve some of the technical issues and to show them a path, but they've got to want it.

With respect to Ukraine, I think that we have done everything that we can to support the Ukrainian government and to deter Russia from moving further into Ukraine. But short of going to war, there are going to be some constraints in terms of what we can do if President Putin and Russia are ignoring what should be their long-term interests.

Right now, what we've done is impose sufficient costs on Russia that, objectively speaking, they should -- President Putin should want to resolve this diplomatically, get these sanctions lifted, get their economy growing again, and have good relations with Ukraine. But sometimes people don't always act rationally, and they don't always act based on their medium- or long-term interests. That can't deter us, though. We've just got to stay at it.

Wendell.

Q Mr. President, Republicans point to some of your executive orders as reason, they say, that they can't trust you to implement legislation that they pass. Even if you don't buy that argument, do you hold yourself totally blameless in the inability it appears to reach agreement with the Republican-led House?

THE PRESIDENT: Wendell, let's just take the recent example of immigration. A bipartisan bill passed out of the Senate, co-sponsored by not just Democrats but some very conservative Republicans who recognize that the system currently is broken and if, in fact we put more resources on the border, provide a path in which those undocumented workers who've been living here for a long time and may have ties here are coming out of the shadows, paying their taxes, paying a fine, learning English -- if we fix the legal immigration system so it's more efficient, if we are attracting young people who may have studied here to stay here and create jobs here, that that all is going to be good for the economy, it's going to reduce the deficit, it might have forestalled some of the problems that we're seeing now in the Rio Grande Valley with these unaccompanied children.

And so we have a bipartisan bill, Wendell, bipartisan agreement supported by everybody from labor to the evangelical community to law enforcement. So the argument isn't between me and the House Republicans. It's between the House Republicans and Senate Republicans, and House Republicans and the business community, and House Republicans and the evangelical community. I'm just one of the people they seem to disagree with on this issue.

So that's on the comprehensive bill. So now we have a short-term crisis with respect to the Rio Grande Valley. They say we need more resources, we need tougher border security in this area where these unaccompanied children are showing up. We agree. So we put forward a supplemental to give us the additional resources and funding to do exactly what they say we should be doing, and they can't pass the bill. They can't even pass their own version of the bill. So that's not a disagreement between me and the House Republicans; that's a disagreement between the House Republicans and the House Republicans.

The point is that on a range of these issues, whether it's tax reform, whether it's reducing the deficit, whether it's rebuilding our infrastructure, we have consistently put forward proposals that in previous years and previous administrations would not have been considered radical or left wing; they would have been considered pretty sensible, mainstream approaches to solving problems.

I include under that, by the way, the Affordable Care Act. That's a whole other conversation.

And in circumstances where even basic, common-sense, plain, vanilla legislation can't pass because House Republicans consider it somehow a compromise of their principles, or giving Obama a victory, then we've got to take action. Otherwise, we're not going to be making progress on the things that the American people care about.

Q On the border supplemental -- can you act alone?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm going to have to act alone because we don't have enough resources. We've already been very clear -- we've run out of money. And we are going to have to reallocate resources in order to just make sure that some of the basic functions that have to take place down there -- whether it's making sure that these children are properly housed, or making sure we've got enough immigration judges to process their cases -- that those things get done. We're going to have to reallocate some resources.

But the broader point, Wendell, is that if, in fact, House Republicans are concerned about me acting independently of Congress -- despite the fact that I've taken fewer executive actions than my Republican predecessor or my Democratic predecessor before that, or the Republican predecessor before that -- then the easiest way to solve it is passing legislation. Get things done.

On the supplemental, we agreed on 80 percent of the issues. There were 20 percent of the issues that perhaps there were disagreements between Democrats and Republicans. As I said to one Republican colleague who was down here that I was briefing about some national security issues, why wouldn't we just go ahead and pass the 80 percent that we agree on and we'll try to work to resolve the differences on the other 20 percent? Why wouldn't we do that? And he didn't really have a good answer for it.

So there's no doubt that I can always do better on everything, including making additional calls to Speaker Boehner, and having more conversations with some of the House Republican leadership. But in the end, the challenge I have right now is that they are not able to act even on what they say their priorities are, and they're not able to work and compromise even with Senate Republicans on certain issues. And they consider what have been traditionally Republican-supported initiatives, they consider those as somehow a betrayal of the cause.

Take the example of the Export-Import Bank. This is an interesting thing that's happened. This is a program in which we help to provide financing to sell American goods and products around the world. Every country does this. It's traditionally been championed by Republicans. For some reason, right now the House Republicans have decided that we shouldn't do this -- which means that when American companies go overseas and they're trying to close a sale on selling Boeing planes, for example, or a GE turbine, or some other American product, that has all kinds of subcontractors behind it and is creating all kinds of jobs, and all sorts of small businesses depend on that sale, and that American company is going up against a German company or a Chinese company, and the Chinese and the German company are providing financing and the American company isn't, we may lose that sale.

When did that become something that Republicans opposed? It would be like me having a car dealership for Ford, and the Toyota dealership offers somebody financing and I don't. We will lose business and we'll lose jobs if we don't pass it.

So there's some big issues where I understand why we have differences. On taxes, Republicans want to maintain some corporate loopholes I think need to be closed because I think that we should be giving tax breaks to families that are struggling with child care or trying to save for a college education. On health care, obviously their view is, is that we should not be helping folks get health care, even though it's through the private marketplace. My view is, is that in a country as wealthy as ours, we can afford to make sure that everybody has access to affordable care.

Those are legitimate policy arguments. But getting our ambassadors confirmed? These are career diplomats, not political types. Making sure that we pass legislation to strengthen our borders and put more folks down there? Those shouldn't be controversial. And I think you'd be hard-pressed to find an example of where I wouldn't welcome some reasonable efforts to actually get a bill passed out of Congress that I could sign.

Last question, Michelle Kosinski.

Q You made the point that in certain difficult conflicts in the past, both sides had to reach a point where they were tired of the bloodshed. Do you think that we are actually far from that point right now? And is it realistic to try to broker a cease-fire right now when there are still tunnel operations allowed to continue? Is that going to cause a change of approach from this point forward?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, keep in mind that the cease-fire that had been agreed to would have given Israel the capability to continue to dismantle these tunnel networks, but the Israelis can dismantle these tunnel networks without going into major population centers in Gaza. So I think the Israelis are entirely right that these tunnel networks need to be dismantled. There is a way of doing that while still reducing the bloodshed.

You are right that in past conflicts, sometimes people have to feel deeply the costs. Anybody who has been watching some of these images I'd like to think should recognize the costs. You have children who are getting killed. You have women, defenseless, who are getting killed. You have Israelis whose lives are disrupted constantly and living in fear. And those are costs that are avoidable if we're able to get a cease-fire that preserves Israel's ability to defend itself and gives it the capacity to have an assurance that they're not going to be constantly threatened by rocket fire in the future, and, conversely, an agreement that recognizes the Palestinian need to be able to make a living and the average Palestinian's capacity to live a decent life.

But it's hard. It's going to be hard to get there. I think that there's a lot of anger and there's a lot of despair, and that's a volatile mix. But we have to keep trying.

And it is -- Bill asked earlier about American leadership. Part of the reason why America remains indispensable, part of the essential ingredient in American leadership is that we're willing to plunge in and try, where other countries don't bother trying. I mean, the fact of the matter is, is that in all these crises that have been mentioned, there may be some tangential risks to the United States. In some cases, as in Iraq and ISIS, those are dangers that have to be addressed right now, and we have to take them very seriously. But for the most part, these are not -- the rockets aren't being fired into the United States. The reason we are concerned is because we recognize we've got some special responsibilities.

We have to have some humility about what we can and can't accomplish. We have to recognize that our resources are finite, and we're coming out of a decade of war and our military has been stretched very hard, as has our budget. Nevertheless, we try. We go in there and we make an effort.

And when I see John Kerry going out there and trying to broker a cease-fire, we should all be supporting him. There shouldn't be a bunch of complaints and second-guessing about, well, it hasn't happened yet, or nitpicking before he's had a chance to complete his efforts. Because, I tell you what, there isn't any other country that's going in there and making those efforts.

And more often than not, as a consequence of our involvement, we get better outcomes -- not perfect outcomes, not immediate outcomes, but we get better outcomes. And that's going to be true with respect to the Middle East. That's going to be true with respect to Ukraine. That's going to be certainly true with respect to Iraq.

And I think it's useful for me to end by just reminding folks that, in my first term, if I had a press conference like this, typically, everybody would want to ask about the economy and how come jobs weren't being created, and how come the housing market is still bad, and why isn't it working. Well, you know what, what we did worked. And the economy is better. And when I say that we've just had six months of more than 200,000 jobs that hasn't happened in 17 years that shows you the power of persistence. It shows you that if you stay at it, eventually we make some progress. All right?

Q What about John Brennan?

Q The Africa summit -- Ebola?

THE PRESIDENT: I thought that you guys were going to ask me how I was going to spend my birthday. What happened to the happy birthday thing?

Q Happy birthday.

Q What about John Brennan?

Q Africa summit?

THE PRESIDENT: I will address two points. I'll address --

Q And Flight 17?

THE PRESIDENT: Hold on, guys. Come on. There's just --

Q And Africa.

THE PRESIDENT: You're not that pent up. I've been giving you questions lately.

On Brennan and the CIA, the RDI report has been transmitted, the declassified version that will be released at the pleasure of the Senate committee.

I have full confidence in John Brennan. I think he has acknowledged and directly apologized to Senator Feinstein that CIA personnel did not properly handle an investigation as to how certain documents that were not authorized to be released to the Senate staff got somehow into the hands of the Senate staff. And it's clear from the IG report that some very poor judgment was shown in terms of how that was handled. Keep in mind, though, that John Brennan was the person who called for the IG report, and he's already stood up a task force to make sure that lessons are learned and mistakes are resolved.

With respect to the larger point of the RDI report itself, even before I came into office I was very clear that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 we did some things that were wrong. We did a whole lot of things that were right, but we tortured some folks. We did some things that were contrary to our values.

I understand why it happened. I think it's important when we look back to recall how afraid people were after the Twin Towers fell and the Pentagon had been hit and the plane in Pennsylvania had fallen, and people did not know whether more attacks were imminent, and there was enormous pressure on our law enforcement and our national security teams to try to deal with this. And it's important for us not to feel too sanctimonious in retrospect about the tough job that those folks had. And a lot of those folks were working hard under enormous pressure and are real patriots.

But having said all that, we did some things that were wrong. And that's what that report reflects. And that's the reason why, after I took office, one of the first things I did was to ban some of the extraordinary interrogation techniques that are the subject of that report.

And my hope is, is that this report reminds us once again that the character of our country has to be measured in part not by what we do when things are easy, but what we do when things are hard. And when we engaged in some of these enhanced interrogation techniques, techniques that I believe and I think any fair-minded person would believe were torture, we crossed a line. And that needs to be -- that needs to be understood and accepted. And we have to, as a country, take responsibility for that so that, hopefully, we don't do it again in the future.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Now, I gave you a question.

Q All right.

Q The summit -- the U.S.-Africa --

THE PRESIDENT: We've got a U.S.-Africa Summit coming up next week. It is going to be an unprecedented gathering of African leaders. The importance of this for America needs to be understood. Africa is one of the fastest-growing continents in the world. You've got six of the 10 fastest-growing economies in Africa. You have all sorts of other countries like China and Brazil and India deeply interested in working with Africa -- not to extract natural resources alone, which traditionally has been the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world -- but now because Africa is growing and you've got thriving markets and you've got entrepreneurs and extraordinary talent among the people there.

And Africa also happens to be one of the continents where America is most popular and people feel a real affinity for our way of life. And we've made enormous progress over the last several years in not just providing traditional aid to Africa, helping countries that are suffering from malnutrition or helping countries that are suffering from AIDS, but rather partnering and thinking about how can we trade more and how can we do business together. And that's the kind of relationship that Africa is looking for.

And I've had conversations over the last several months with U.S. businesses -- some of the biggest U.S. businesses in the world -- and they say, Africa, that's one of our top priorities; we want to do business with those folks, and we think that we can create U.S. jobs and send U.S. exports to Africa. But we've got to be engaged, and so this gives us a chance to do that. It also gives us a chance to talk to Africa about security issues -- because, as we've seen, terrorist networks try to find places where governance is weak and security structures are weak. And if we want to keep ourselves safe over the long term, then one of the things that we can do is make sure that we are partnering with some countries that really have pretty effective security forces and have been deploying themselves in peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts in Africa. And that, ultimately, can save us and our troops and our military a lot of money if we've got strong partners who are able to deal with conflicts in these regions.

So it's going to be a terrific conference. I won't lie to you, traffic will be bad here in Washington. (Laughter.) I know that everybody has been warned about that, but we are really looking forward to this and I think it's going to be a great success.

Now, the last thing I'm going to say about this, because I know that it's been on people's minds, is the issue of Ebola. This is something that we take very seriously. As soon as there's an outbreak anywhere in the world of any disease that could have significant effects, the CDC is in communication with the World Health Organization and other multilateral agencies to try to make sure that we've got an appropriate response.

This has been a more aggressive Ebola outbreak than we've seen in the past. But keep in mind that it is still affecting parts of three countries, and we've got some 50 countries represented at this summit. We are doing two things with respect to the summit itself. We're taking the appropriate precautions. Folks who are coming from these countries that have even a marginal risk or an infinitesimal risk of having been exposed in some fashion, we're making sure we're doing screening on that end -- as they leave the country. We'll do additional screening when they're here. We feel confident that the procedures that we've put in place are appropriate.

More broadly, the CDC and our various health agencies are going to be working very intently with the World Health Organization and some of our partner countries to make sure that we can surge some resources down there and organization to these countries that are pretty poor and don't have a strong public health infrastructure so that we

can start containing the problem.

Keep in mind that Ebola is not something that is easily transmitted. That's why, generally, outbreaks dissipate. But the key is identifying, quarantining, isolating those who contract it and making sure that practices are in place that avoid transmission. And it can be done, but it's got to be done in an organized, systematic way, and that means that we're going to have to help these countries accomplish that.

All right? Okay.

Q Happy Birthday, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: There you go, April. (Laughter.) That's what I was talking about -- somebody finally wished me happy birthday -- although it isn't until Monday, you're right.

Thank you so much.

END 3:34 P.M. EDT