

# [***SpaceX Launch; Trump and Haley Battle Over New Hampshire; Budget Negotiations Continue; Interview With Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA); Interview With Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-TX)***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B4M-2KR1-JCS1-6000-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

NEIL CAVUTO, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: You are looking live right now at Florida's Kennedy Space Center, where an all-European mission to the International Space Station will be taking off later this hour featuring, among others, an Italian astronaut on board.

Now, a lot of you are saying, you're only saying this because there's an Italian astronaut on board. Well, that Italian co-pilot, Walter Villadei, would be the 10th Italian in space. Now, a lot of you have been saying, you're only saying that because he would be the 10th Italian in space.

And you are actually correct. But it is a beautiful day for a space launch on this SpaceX mission, which would be the third commercial crew flight. There's a way that the Italians look at this by talking about a beautiful day for a space launch, and it's (SPEAKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE) which means it's a beautiful day for a space launch.

So we will take you there in 49 minutes, when this puppy gets going.

In the meantime, another big story we are following right now, and it is getting bigger by the second, the border and what to do about it. Is a deal close to address it? President Biden hinting today there could be movement, while some Republicans are saying that, for any deal to happen, there better be big improvements right now. The Senate thinks it has a plan, those in the House not so sure this is the plan.

Where's all of this headed? We will talk to Republican Congressman Dan Crenshaw and a Democrat who was in that big White House powwow yesterday, the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, Adam Smith. They're all here. They're all now.

Welcome, everybody. I'm Neil Cavuto.

Let's get right to it with what's going on at the White House at the and the back-and-forth on whether a deal can be had on the border, along with an effort to avoid an outright government shutdown, which, if something isn't done, could happen as soon as late tomorrow night.

Jacqui Heinrich at the White House -- Jacqui.

JACQUI HEINRICH, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hey, Neil.

Both the White House and Senate Republicans describe these border policy reform talks as heading in the right direction, but it's still very unclear whether or not this can even pass the House, Speaker Mike Johnson reiterating his list of demands last night, including reforming asylum parole, restoring remain-in-Mexico, ending catch-and-release, and rebuilding the wall.

And progressives are worried that their Senate counterparts could be giving away too much.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGAN (D-CA): We are here to implore our Senate colleagues to just say no and hold the line. These are not good-faith immigration talks.

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL (D-WA): This is not a negotiation. This is a hostage- taking. It's extortion.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HEINRICH: Despite that gap, the president told me today there aren't any big issues left to resolve.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HEINRICH: What are the sticking points on the border agreement? Where are the disagreements you're working on?

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I don't think we have any sticking points left.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HEINRICH: In the meantime, officials here continue to blame House Republicans for getting in the way of progress on the border, even doubling down on two plainly inaccurate claims in recent days.

The Washington Post gave the administration three Pinocchios for claiming House Republicans voted to eliminate 2,000 Border Patrol agents, even though no cuts to Border Patrol were ever proposed.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HEINRICH: To voters, don't you think they know the difference between what is a truthful statement and what is spin? And is it insulting to them at all to keep saying it when it's just not true?

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: One thing that the president does not do is insult voters or American people, to be more exact.

HEINRICH: Will the administration then amend its separate statement that implied that Texas officials were responsible for the deaths of three migrants, when in fact they had nothing to do with it?

JEAN-PIERRE: Our statement is consistent with DOJ's filing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HEINRICH: That is not accurate either. The DOJ filing says those migrants died an hour before Mexico notified Border Patrol, but the White House statement says: "On Friday night, a woman and two children drowned near Eagle Pass and Texas officials blocked U.S. Border Patrol from attempting to provide emergency assistance."

Officials here claim now that that statement was referring to other migrants who were in the water and needed help, but that doesn't appear anywhere in that statement, Neil.

CAVUTO: Jacqui, thank you for that.

Jacqui Heinrich at the White House.

To Congressman Dan Crenshaw of Texas, what he makes of all of this.

Where do you think things stand, Congressman?

REP. DAN CRENSHAW (R-TX): It's hard to say. We haven't seen the details that we'd like to see from this small group of senators supposedly making a deal.

There were some items that came out last week which seems pretty unacceptable to Republicans, but we don't actually know what's in it. I know what we want, right? I agree with Speaker Johnson. There's some major changes that need to happen.

You have to have in law that you have to clarify and stop this mass parole program that Biden has instituted. That's what we mean by catch-and- release. Now the other part of catch-and-release is asylum reform, too many people who are economic migrants coming into our country saying that they're asylum seekers, but we all know they're just they're looking for a job.

They're economic migrants. They don't meet the standards for asylum, and we need to make that more clear in law. And you need Mexico to cooperate. You need that remain-in-Mexico policy. You do those three things, and you will have massive changes, and that's worth a deal.

CAVUTO: We don't know the details of that Senate deal that was narrowly passed, to your point, sir, but what we know enough that some of your colleagues in the House had said, if they had a choice between dealing with the border or shutting the government down, they would deal with shutting the government down.

That's the risk. Where are you?

CRENSHAW: That makes a good sound by it. It just won't work.

So, I mean, look, when you have a good strategy in ***politics***, you have two things in mind, your principles and good policy, but also an understanding of political reality. So, you can hold your own government hostage. You can refuse to pay your troops and refuse to pay your Border Patrol and think that that's good leverage to get policy wins.

It won't be because you're losing that political battle. This is why Speaker Johnson and I have advocated for this. You have to advocate and use as leverage for the border policy we want Ukraine aid. That's what you have to do, because they want that more than we do. And they have already indicated via their supplemental requests that they're willing to do that, and they being the White House.

And they have a lot of incentives to do that. So, look, if you're going to hold something leverage, hold Ukraine aid leverage. Don't hold your own troop pay leverage. I mean, it's just simple, smart ***politics***.

CAVUTO: Lindsey Graham had commented on this for those, especially maybe among some of your colleagues, sir, who are talking about waiting for a President Trump to come back and deal with this, that that won't work. This is from Lindsey Graham.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-SC): To those who think that, if President Trump wins, which I hope he does, that we can get a better deal, you won't. You got to get 60 votes in the United States Senate.

What Senator Lankford has been able to achieve in asylum and expedited removal in other areas along the border, I think, are meaningful reforms.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CAVUTO: All right, meaningful reforms in his eyes, I know not to all of your colleagues.

You have argued using the possibility of government shutdown as a cudgel to get what you want is a mistake. But some of the even said that Speaker Johnson might have to get the Kevin McCarthy treatment. And all it takes is a single one of your colleagues to make that happen.

What do you think?

CRENSHAW: Well, let them do it. If they don't want border security that badly, let them do it. But that's an insane position to take.

So, I mean, I agree with Lindsey Graham. Look, if we get meaningful reforms -- now, I don't know if these are meaningful reforms yet, because I haven't seen any details. But if I take a look at that and I say, this will decrease illegal immigration by hundreds of thousands of people, if 'I see that, I would be crazy not to take that, because my actual priority is not worrying about the ***politics*** of Trump versus Biden.

My actual priority is border security. And anyone who is saying that, oh, they'd rather wait until -- they're making political arguments and they're more concerned about their red jersey than they are about actually doing what we said we would do, which is figure out how to secure the border.

So that's a very strong statement I have for anybody who plans on taking that position. Now, we have got to see what comes out of these deals, see if it's really border reforms that we can get behind that will actually work. But, if they are, well, then that's going to be pretty significant.

CAVUTO: This spending back and forth as well, Congressman, a lot of people think this time tomorrow you won't have a deal and we will start a partial shutdown midnight tomorrow. What do you think?

CRENSHAW: It looks like we're going to pass a C.R. today...

CAVUTO: OK.

CRENSHAW: ... to give us a little bit more time to negotiate those appropriations bills.

And, again, the strategy here is, you want to keep that appropriations negotiation process separate from this other process of the supplemental with Ukraine aid, Israel aid and border security. That's the proper way to do it. That's the smart play. That's how we win this in the court of public opinion and actually win on policy.

CAVUTO: And this extension would take you to roughly March or so, right?

CRENSHAW: March, yes. Yes.

CAVUTO: Got it.

CRENSHAW: It's not very long, but it's something.

CAVUTO: All right, I understand.

Congressman, thank you for taking the time.

The back-and-forth on this is razor close. Remember, Republicans have this narrow majority, and some people's -- and, by some people's math, it's down to about two votes right now with departures and sickness and all of that.

Now, that change, and you could have numbers who don't show up in the numbers we expect, but it makes this vote and how they handle this, whether they come up with a C.R. today or something temporarily today to keep the government lights on through March, it's anyone's guess as to how that plays out.

Now, if this was a concern at the corner of Wall and Broad, they had a very funny way of showing it. The Dow rocketed ahead more than 201 points, a lot of that buoyed by the fact that, apart from some of the Washington drama and ***politics***, the fact of the matter is, companies are doing well, the numbers are looking good, and the economic backdrop is improving.

Now, the concern seems to be, does this necessarily last this long? Because there are also concerns that, in an environment where things are improving, there's no need for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates, and that sort of cuts both ways. A lot of people interpret that as a sign, wait a minute, we have a gift here in terms of lower rates that might not materialize because things are going well.

It's a nice problem to have, but it was a problem Wall Street could deal with today.

Let's go right now to congressman Adam Smith. The Washington Democrat joins us right now, sits on the House Armed Services Committee. He's the ranking member.

Congressman, great to have you.

Where do you think things stand?

REP. ADAM SMITH (D-WA): I think we're making progress. I think the meeting at the White House yesterday was a very constructive conversation.

And, look, there's widespread agreement that we need to do Ukraine assistance and we need to do something on the border policy. And the Senate in particular is having a bipartisan negotiation to get there. So I think we are moving in the right direction.

It's still going to be difficult. These are tough issues. But, like I said, it was a very constructive conversation with all the top Republican and Democratic leadership in the House and the Senate and the White House team there as well.

CAVUTO: How did that go? What was it like behind the scenes?

SMITH: It was good. It was a good conversation.

I did joke with a friend of mine that it wasn't as much fun as meetings with Trump were in that context.

(LAUGHTER)

SMITH: But nobody stormed out. Nobody yelled at anybody. We had a very constructive conversation.

And I think you heard a lot of people really emphasizing the importance of supporting Ukraine at this moment. And we got some pretty stark battlefield updates about how Putin is preparing to continue his push to Kyiv if we don't get help to Ukraine now. They're holding the line, but how much longer they can hold that line if more assistance doesn't come.

And we also heard some very passionate arguments from Democrats and Republicans alike on Ukraine, but also on the border, on the fact that we are being overrun by too much migration right now and we need changes in border policy to confront that reality.

And as they say, the devil's in the details.

CAVUTO: Right.

SMITH: But there's large agreement that both of those issues need to be dealt.

CAVUTO: Yes, Congressman, you had mentioned Donald Trump. He apparently was in communication, I don't know the last phone call or communication they had, where he was asking and demanding of the speaker that it better be perfect -- I'm paraphrasing here -- that whatever we do on the border better be perfect.

Now, as you see it, on the border details, is it perfect to you?

SMITH: Well, it's never going to be perfect.

And, look, Donald Trump's interests here are not the interests of the American people. Donald Trump wants an issue come November. The American people want to improve border security. So it's never going to be perfect. And that is one concern I have, that there are some Republicans who are like, we can't vote for anything unless it absolutely solves the problem 100 percent.

Well, look, millions of migrants are fleeing Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Guatemala. They're fleeing all of these countries and pouring north. There is no perfect solution. But we can toughen up asylum laws to limit that. We can change humanitarian parole. There are a bunch of things we can do that will better manage that flow.

And if we can get that success to help all the communities all across the country -- it's not just the border communities now that are being overwhelmed. If we can get them that help now and at the same time stop Putin from destroying Ukraine, I think that that's a victory for American policy that we should get bipartisan support for.

CAVUTO: Congressman, you talk about Donald Trump, and then you question his motives here. But while even some of his detractors say the perfect thing might be in the eye of the beholder, the whole border thing was a lot better and more secure when he was in office.

And they hearken back to that as a failure on the part of this president, that he's only belatedly paid attention largely because guys like you and others have said, what we have got here is a big problem. Do you fault this president for missing the boat on this and then only belatedly, only now responding?

SMITH: Two things. That will be litigated in the fall.

And, certainly, you can make that argument. President Biden's in charge. We have a border crisis. He has responsibility for that. There's no doubt about it.

Now, certainly when you come out the other side of the pandemic, when you see what's happened in Venezuela, the problem has gotten worse in the last three years for a lot of reasons that don't have anything to do with Joe Biden being president.

But, yes, he could step up and deal with that. That is what he's trying to do now.

CAVUTO: OK.

SMITH: But -- and we can argue about whether or not he should have done it sooner. I want to do it now, so we can actually address the policy as you go forward.

CAVUTO: Got it.

Congressman, great seeing you again.

Adam Smith of the beautiful state of Washington. And maybe they will unclip this deadlock. We shall see. Maybe the next few minutes will tell.

We have a lot more coming up, including the political fallout from all of this. It's certainly a topic of concern in New Hampshire.

That's where you will find our Bryan Llenas -- Bryan.

BRYAN LLENAS, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Neil, just five days before the New Hampshire primaries, two of the top three Republican presidential candidates are in Florida today. And it's not because it's below freezing here.

We will explain why next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CAVUTO: Every time we show that promo, Bryan Llenas says, already here, already here, already here. I'm in New Hampshire already.

And he's right. He's been there. He's been living there. He's been sort of getting a lay of the land there. He's in Concord, New Hampshire, with the very latest -- Bryan.

(LAUGHTER)

LLENAS: Neil, good afternoon.

Well, look, a new poll out this morning shows that former President Donald Trump is holding steady with the lead here in New Hampshire. He's got about -- he's got 50 percent support. If you take a look at the numbers, Governor Ron DeSantis is last with just 6 percent.

But pay close attention to former Governor Nikki Haley. She's in second place with 36 percent. That's up two points from yesterday. Now, the question is, if this is a two-person race, is second place -- is a second- place finish -- excuse me -- a win for Haley?

Initially, Haley supporter, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu predicted Haley would win New Hampshire in a landslide. But now that's changed.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. CHRIS SUNUNU (R-NH): The expectation was, we wanted a strong second place. We got that. We have already exceeded those expectations.

Now we're trying to challenge to do something that none of you thought was possible, which was defeat Trump.

NIKKI HALEY (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We wanted to be strong in Iowa. We did that. We want to be stronger in New Hampshire. We're going to do that. We want to go to my sweet state of South Carolina, be even stronger there. It's about just continuing to move up.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LLENAS: Trump held a rally last night in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

He's in Florida today for the funeral of his mother-in-law. DeSantis is also in Florida today, but the majority of his campaign staff has moved to South Carolina, where he will be campaigning this weekend. DeSantis insists he's not skipping New Hampshire, but that hasn't stopped the attacks.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RON DESANTIS (R-FL), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We will hit New Hampshire on Friday, and I think South Carolina on Saturday, and then probably back to New Hampshire leading into the primary.

TRUMP: I hear he's going to drop out pretty soon, but we will see. We will see. May God bless him.

HALEY: He's closer to zero than he is to me in either of these states. So we're focused on Trump. That's all we're focused on. DeSantis, I forgot about him the second he left New Hampshire.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LLENAS: Trump will be back here in Concord, New Hampshire, actually for a rally tomorrow -- Neil.

CAVUTO: Thank you for that, Bryan Llenas in Concord.

All right, let's go to Noelle Nikpour what she makes of this, GOP fund- raiser, what they often call a bundler, takes all that money and bundles it up and hands it out. Not exactly like that.

But, Noelle, it is interesting what the money guys do now. If you're looking and investing in Nikki Haley, you're also waiting to see how well she does in New Hampshire. If she doesn't do well, that money might stop. In the case of Governor DeSantis, it might already have.

What are you hearing?

NOELLE NIKPOUR, REPUBLICAN FUND-RAISER: Well, love Trump, hate Trump., frankly, my relationships are with the donors. So I'm loyal to the donor and advising donors.

You have got to look, anyone is better than Joe Biden. So I love Ron DeSantis. He's qualified. Nikki Haley, more than qualified. You have got Donald Trump, who is running on his record. But you have got to stop throwing money at things that are just not going to materialize.

So we need those funds. Neil, we need that money in the general election. This is going to be all hands on deck. I do think that she's got every right. She has moved up a couple of points in New Hampshire. But let's just look at the total atmosphere. Like I said, hate Trump, love Trump, this guy is winning, and he's winning in most states by double digits.

So I just don't see the pathway for the other two candidates. And I really don't want it to get so much further that they are going to alienate themselves in the race when it comes down to the general, if Donald Trump is going to be our nominee, that he has -- they have gotten so on the outs with him that there's not a place for them within the party.

I mean, there's going to be several positions, including V.P., that any of these candidates on stage -- and I would recommend and I do recommend to a lot of my donors that ask me, I say, hold your powder dry, because we're going to need it for the general. Don't waste it.

CAVUTO: You know, Nicole (sic), there are some similarities between the state of the race now and the state of the race in 2016.

I mean, early on, with the successes of then-candidate Trump, a lot of people thought, well, he will peter out, he's not serious about this, and even if he is, this short-lived fixation with him will go away. And they bet on that happening, and it never did.

Now there's a similar sort of inevitability to the Donald Trump run, where a lot of people are now beginning to say, all right, once he's convicted, all bets are off. If he's found guilty of any one of these charges that have been thrown out at him, everything changes.

Now, with all of that, the fact of the matter is, he is a strong candidate in the face of all of these indictments. Do they think, does anyone really think that a conviction is going to change that?

NIKPOUR: I mean, obviously not. Look at this. I mean, every time he takes a hit, his numbers get stronger.

The only numbers that don't get stronger are from the major donors. And a lot of the major donors are just so turned off. But the facts are the facts. And like I said, I don't have a dog in this race. I'm not working for any of the candidates, but I am advising some of the major donors.

And this is part of the problem. He is just by leaps and bounds -- another example, I got a scathing text from one of the donor, major donors to the Koch brothers fund. And they were furious that they had put so much of their money into backing Nikki Haley, when the numbers don't justify it.

And they were furious. And I said, from now on, please consult with us a little bit more deeply when you're going to make these huge decisions. So this has caused so many problems.

And, Neil, on another (AUDIO GAP) we have never had anything where we have new labels -- No Labels.

CAVUTO: No, that's true.

NIKPOUR: (AUDIO GAP) We have so many factors going on right now.

CAVUTO: No, you're right, all simultaneously.

Thank you very much yes, Noelle Nikpour, on that.

NIKPOUR: Yes.

CAVUTO: Nikki Haley, meanwhile, back on the campaign trail in New Hampshire.

We will be there, of course, on Saturday. We're going to talk about Governor Chris Sununu there, a big backer. He will be joining us Saturday, because he seems to have slightly redefined what would be a successful primary for Nikki. He used to say win it outright, now maybe not so much.

So what's changing? We will gauge that when we're there.

More after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CAVUTO: All right, another mission to space about to take off, Elon Musk's SpaceX commercial flight. This will be the third crew flight. It has four Europeans on board, including an Italian astronaut.

And, as Italians would say, they hope it's a beautiful flight -- after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CAVUTO: All right, right now, he is polling at 50 percent in New Hampshire. So it looks like the former president could be on track for another big win, where he gets half the vote.

But he's got a busy courtroom and campaign calendar that's sort of colliding as we speak. Having said all of that and even with all of that, that you're looking at, a busy courtroom calendar, some suspect that he could wrap up this nomination in early March, maybe after what they call Super Tuesday, a host of primaries and caucuses around the country by that time, maybe just a week or two after that.

Bob Cusack of The Hill joins us right now, the editor in chief.

That's sort of a rapid plan and a rapid-fire nomination battle there. But how do you see it going, Bob?

BOB CUSACK, EDITOR IN CHIEF, THE HILL: Oh, I mean, without a doubt.

And, I mean, if you look at New Hampshire, the Decision Desk, The Hill average poll shows Trump up 10. Now, there have been polls showing Nikki Haley getting closer. However, Nikki Haley, I think, has to win New Hampshire. If she wins New Hampshire, she can go to her home state in South Carolina. She's down big there, too, but that could change things.

Without a doubt, I think Trump can score an early knockout for the nomination. This is not 2016. Remember, that dragged all the way to the convention. And Ted Cruz said, vote your conscience at the convention. This could be quick.

However, you never know. We counted out Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire, and then she stunned Barack Obama and went on to a very close primary. So you never know, but Trump certainly is looking good now.

CAVUTO: All right, you need 1,215 delegates to secure the thing. Donald Trump right now has 20 of those delegates, so it does seem a bit premature to say it's all over here.

But you do get a sense of how quickly things can develop when, between January 23 and March 4, 248 delegates are at stake. By the time we're up to Super Tuesday on March 5, you have got 865 delegates at stake. So, within and around that period, you could make a case for him sort of taking it all together.

Now, a lot of the candidates too, I should say, that are the center of attention right now, Nikki Haley and Ron DeSantis, seem to have a fallback plan, where they say, well, you never know. He could be convicted, that is, Donald Trump, on any one of these court cases and indictments he's facing, and then it's all -- it's all bets off.

But I'm not even sure a conviction or several would change that math.

CUSACK: I'm not so sure either, Neil. I mean, certainly, that's part of the equation of, well, what happens with Trump if there's a legal or a health issue?

CAVUTO: And why they stay in, why those two stay in, right?

CUSACK: Exactly.

CAVUTO: Right.

CUSACK: They could -- again, they're fighting for second in case anything happens.

But to take the nomination from Trump is going to be almost impossible at this rate. So -- and the other thing is, they have got to worry about money and donors. I know you were just talking about that.

CAVUTO: Right.

CUSACK: You have got to have the money to continue on. And we have seen a number of candidates simply didn't have the money and dropped out.

CAVUTO: Yes.

And I was talking to one Haley donor who was saying pretty much the same thing, that, if she doesn't do well in New Hampshire, I'm not going to pour good money after what would look like bad money. Now, that's probably not a pervasive view, but I would imagine it's a popular one.

CUSACK: Yes, it is.

And, certainly, New Hampshire is the state that she has to win, because, as you know, Neil, independents can vote.

CAVUTO: Tailor-made for him.

CUSACK: It's tailor-made, absolutely. She spent a lot of time there. She didn't put a lot of resources into Iowa, some certainly, but not as much as DeSantis.

So, her path, you can see. She wins New Hampshire, carries the momentum to South Carolina, carries the momentum into Super Tuesday. There are a lot of ifs there. DeSantis, I'm not sure exactly what his path is, but he thinks, listen, I'm more concerned of the Nikki Haley.

But, again, how do you beat Trump? You got to start winning states. With Nikki Haley, it's got to start in New Hampshire, or she's in real trouble.

CAVUTO: Any predictions how New Hampshire goes?

CUSACK: Right now, I'm giving the edge to Trump at the moment, just because I think he has some momentum coming out of Iowa, and he's got a grip on the party like no other.

However, I don't think a close second for Nikki Haley is good enough. She's got to win.

CAVUTO: Interesting. All right, Bob, thank you very much.

Bob Cusack on that.

All right, you know by now we have had four attacks, distinct attacks, on Houthi rebel positions in Yemen. There's talk of a fifth one, and the president making it very clear this doesn't stop until they stop with their attacks. It is a widening war right now.

We will explain just how widening -- after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

QUESTION: Are the airstrikes in Yemen working?

BIDEN: Well, when you say working, are they stopping the Houthis? No. Are they going to continue? Yes.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CAVUTO: They're going to continue, the president says,these strikes we have against these Houthi rebels in Yemen. We have had four separate attacks. They generally try to respond on their own with unsuccessful, errant drone and related attacks on U.S. positions and interests and ships in the area of the Red Sea and beyond.

Lieutenant General Keith Kellogg with us right now, former national security adviser under Vice President Mike Pence and much, much more.

Always good having you, General. Always learn a lot.

What are we learning from these four separate strikes at Houthi rebels in Yemen?

LT. GEN. KEITH KELLOGG (RET.), FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Yes, thanks for having me, Neil.

Look, what we're learning in this situation is out of control. And the president admitted that the Houthis are not going to stop. So we have not created any balance or guardrails to control this or the -- basically the state sponsor, which is Iran.

Every time we take an action, it's a minimal -- it's a minimal response, everything from when we did the other day. We didn't designate them, the Houthis, as a foreign terrorist organization. What we told -- designated them as SDGT, which is a specially designated terrorist group, which is lesser than an FTO.

Then we do these minimal strikes into Yemen against the Houthis that don't really do anything. And then you see the emboldened Iranians now actually striking into Pakistan. And the reason they're doing that is they're emboldened by everything happening in the Persian Gulf region. They see the United States not providing any counter or any balance, be it diplomatically, be it economically, or be it militarily.

So this is going to continue. And when -- what I mean by out of control, and I'm really serious about this, control means you have an ability to influence the action. We don't have any ability today to influence any of these actions in itself created.

CAVUTO: Now, in the meantime, Pakistan responds to Iranian attacks and the back-and-forth there. We have got these escalating attacks on Houthi rebels, to your point, sir.

But stepping back, to a lot of folks, that shows a widening Middle East conflict. And it's getting kind of treacherous. What do you think?

KELLOGG: Yes, Neil, it is.

It is going to keep widening because, what I said before, it's emboldened the Iranians to do things they normally wouldn't do. I mean, there are attacks into Baluchistan and Pakistan, which is basically a virtually uninhabited area. It was kind of to make a point. It's -- the point they're trying to make is, we can influence actions all through the region. And we're able to do that with nobody pushing back on us.

So, what you -- there's no controls on the Iranians. Now, the only way we're going to change that is they have to make a major shift in how they operate. And I used to use the term super escalation. There's a thing they call in national security an escalation ladder. Well, if the United States doesn't do that and up the gain on what we're going to do, then it's going to continue.

And these simple pinprick attacks, responses by the United States, that's not going to do anything. And even the president admitted that. The Houthis are going to continue to attack. It emboldens Hezbollah, it emboldens Hamas, it emboldens the Houthis, and it sure as heck emboldens the Iranians.

CAVUTO: It doesn't stop, to your point here, that the attacks will continue as long as the provocations continue and back and forth we go.

General, thank you very much for that.

Oil did tick up on some of these developments today, but it is still below where it was when all of this started, if you think about it, with the Hamas' attack on Israel back on October 7. We're actually lower in oil prices from that point, but, of course, it doesn't take much to get them going.

Meanwhile, we are waiting to watch what would be the third commercial crew flight for SpaceX.

Jonathan Serrie following it closely from the Kennedy Space Center -- Jonathan.

JONATHAN SERRIE, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hi there, Neil.

A partnership between Axiom Space and SpaceX, and launch is less than seven minutes away. I will have a live report coming up -- Neil.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CAVUTO: All right, this SpaceX mission that we're watching right now was supposed to take off yesterday, but the four European astronauts aboard realized it was Jonathan Serrie's birthday today, so they decided this is a better time to launch.

Jonathan, what are we looking at here, my friend? Happy birthday.

(LAUGHTER)

SERRIE: Oh, thank you so much, Neil.

In fact, I will return the favor and tell you there is a large Italian delegation here watching the launch because one of their own is on board this spacecraft. He is Walter Villadei of the Italian Air Force. He's actually going to be piloting the spacecraft, which is scheduled to launch at 4:49 Eastern time.

Although SpaceX makes both the rocket and the spacecraft, the astronauts and their mission are coordinated by another company, Houston-based Axiom Space. This is Axiom's third private astronaut mission to the International Space Station and the first all-European commercial crew, which also includes the first Turkish astronaut to travel to space, as well as an astronaut from Sweden, and a dual national from Spain in the U.S., who is commanding the mission as the private company's chief astronaut.

Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL LOPEZ-ALEGRIA, ASTRONAUT: Fundamentally, it really gets back to developing the organic capability within the company to do human spaceflight, which, despite how I hope we make it look easy, is actually very, very complicated.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SERRIE: The astronauts will spend two weeks aboard the International Space Station studying the effects of human spaceflight, as well as doing stem cell research on neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, and Alzheimer's.

Also, they're going to do some cancer research. Axiom's long-term plan, though, is to build the first commercial space station in low-Earth orbit - - Neil.

CAVUTO: Now, the big thing a lot of people watch with this, besides the launch, is the incredible pictures as we get ready for that.

So let's go to mission control right now as they get ready to launch what will be the third commercial crew flight for SpaceX, Elon Musk's perhaps most successful venture business-wise.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: T-minus 15? Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.

Ignition. Engine full power. And liftoff.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Further beyond, opening the door for more to follow. Godspeed, Ax-3.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Stage one propulsion is nominal.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: And, of course, if you are just joining us, this is the launch of the Axiom 3 launch to the International Space Station.

Those incredible views on your screen, and there's our first shot of the Ax-3 free crew inside Dragon on ascent. Now, in just a few seconds here, we should hear the callout that Falcon 9...

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ... telemetry. Stage one, throttle down.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There is that callout that Falcon 9's engines are throttling down to help us pass through the period of maximum dynamic pressure during ascent.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Max Q.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There's that callout for Max Q.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Falcon 9 is supersonic.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: And the Falcon 9 is going faster than the speed of sound.

Now, at this point, we will begin to throttle Falcon 9's engines back.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Throttle up.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There's that callout for mission control as well, as our Ax-3 crew continues on their way to space.

We're now T-plus one minute and 32 seconds into flight. The next event we have is Mbak (ph) chill, similar to what...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Mbak chill under way.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There's that call telling us that, again, we're flowing a little bit of that super-chilled liquid oxygen.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: One bravo.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Copy, one bravo.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That call there was one of the abort mode callouts that the crew is calling out as they are making their ascent on Falcon 9.

Now, we're less than 30 seconds or a few seconds away from four events that will happen in rapid's succession, main engine cutoff, or MECO, as it's there on the bottom of your screen, stage separation, ignition of the first stage engine and the first stage's boost back-burn.

CAVUTO: You heard that reference to the first stage booster that returns to Cape Canaveral. And that's marvelous to see.

I mean, besides just the savings, that's generally right on target.

With us right now is Terry Virts, the former International Space Station commander, former NASA astronaut.

Terry, this is the third such mission, a commercial mission, at that. For SpaceX, that's just this past year. More to follow. These things just sort of always capture everyone's attention. But we get kind of blase about them. There have been so many launches from the cape right now and from Florida that a lot of people who are in that space zone along the coast there, they love it.

And they get to see these things, it seems, almost weekly. But the importance of this mission and this European crew from four different European nations, including most famously Italy -- imagine my preference for that particular guy. But what do you make of this?

COL. TERRY VIRTS, FORMER NASA ASTRONAUT: Well, I think it's great. For me, as an astronaut, having done this, it's really cool to see launches. It never get sold.

You're right. This is a good time to be living in Florida or the Carolinas, especially on the East Coast, because there are so many launches happening. SpaceX has really been killing it. Last year, they launched 80 percent of the mass sent into space by all of humanity. So it's not America, China, Russia. It's actually SpaceX did 80 percent of that.

So, as a rocket company, they have been having good times, to say the least. But it's just fun to see people leave Earth and going into space.

CAVUTO: You know what's wild? It wasn't that long ago where we were hitching rides with the Russians to get up into space.

And now everyone seems to be hitching rides with us. But the backdrop for this is some problematic developments. This one commercial effort to go to the moon looks like it was sidelined by some technical problems, solar panel issues that will delay if it ever gets to the moon or land on the moon. At the same time, we have heard that this push to get men and women, U.S. men and women back on the moon, could be put off maybe until 2026.

What do you make of all that?

VIRTS: Well, there's no doubt. And the point has been made several times in this segment already that space is hard.

Every piece of piping and every structure and every pump has to work right to get into space. A thing like a valve -- apparently, it was a valve on this private moon mission that leaked out some propellant.

CAVUTO: Right.

VIRTS: So, there's not -- at the Air Force Academy, the astronautical engineer majors never got partial credit for their work. They either had to get it perfect or they got a zero. And they were training them early on to realize that space is tough and you got to get it right the first time.

CAVUTO: I know you welcome all comers who get into space. Some are very open about what we're doing, the United States, for example. It's for the world to see, although we have had some secret missions whose overall goal was sort of left open for interpretation.

China, of course, we don't know what they're up to, certainly on the moon or around. I have talked to a lot of your former colleagues who worry about the secretiveness of that. I believe China is spending more as a country than the other countries combined. I don't know how reliable that data is, but does that worry you that not everyone necessarily shares what they're doing?

VIRTS: Well, to quote my colleagues in Space Force, the U.S. Space Force, space is a contested domain.

CAVUTO: Yes.

VIRTS: And, certainly, the Russians are contesting it, but the Russians don't even hold a candle to China.

They definitely want to be number one. China is not playing this game just to be in second place. And so they have been incredibly aggressive at times in space, and they're -- when I was the commander of the space station, I had to maneuver to avoid some debris from an explosion that they had caused back in 2007.

They shot a satellite down. That debris is still up there. So the Chinese are not our democratic, freedom-loving friends, and we can work together, I hope professionally, but they're definitely in it to be number one, not number two.

CAVUTO: I was doing and looking at a breakdown, Terry, of those countries that have gone to space. Of course, we account for more than half the human beings that have gone into space. Russia's second. China's moved up into a quick third, but the fact of the matter is it's more diverse now.

There are more than a dozen countries that are doing this, many more to come. Japan isn't too far away. What do you make of just how many are involved in this, including, most notably, Italy, as you know, with this 10th astronaut?

(LAUGHTER)

VIRTS: Most important.

CAVUTO: See how I snuck that in there.

VIRTS: I thought you would be the next Italian astronaut, Neil. So...

CAVUTO: Could you imagine? How scary would that be?

VIRTS: I have had the privilege of speaking on all seven continents in the last few years, and I can tell you that kids in every country love space. They all have the little spacesuits with their own country's flag on.

Space is one thing that can unite us, and so it's very natural that nations can do this, especially now that companies like SpaceX are offering these - - quote, unquote -- "private missions." I see the landing there. Talk about hard. This is not easy, and it looks like...

CAVUTO: About the booster landing.

VIRTS: It's look like they did it again. That was impressive.

CAVUTO: That is remarkable. That is remarkable, how that -- exact that has got to be.

VIRTS: During the time we have been talking, this thing launched from Earth...

CAVUTO: Yes.

VIRTS: ... went up several times the speed of sound, tens of thousands of feet up, flew around, came back. They heard the sonic boom and it landed in just a couple minutes we have been talking.

CAVUTO: It is amazing, as are you, Terry, some memorable journeys. And you have a whole different view of the world when you're up there. So we appreciate that and your clear passion for this.

Terry Virts, by the grace of God, beat me to become an astronaut. Whatever. Whatever.

(LAUGHTER)

CAVUTO: Always good seeing you.

VIRTS: You will be next.

CAVUTO: Yes, right. Right.

VIRTS: Italy always -- Italy is looking for another one. I'm sure you will be next.

CAVUTO: Go, Italy, Yes, number 11.

Thank you, Terry, for that.

(LAUGHTER)

CAVUTO: Well, the view from space is very different. You don't see the divisions and the lines, as Frank Borman famously said in that Apollo flight, right, that, all of a sudden, from up there, you don't see the division down here.

So you don't see the political squabbling down here in Washington over keeping the government lights on. But, right now, we do know that they're cobbling something together.

Chad Pergram has more on those more terrestrial worries.

Hey, Chad.

CHAD PERGRAM, FOX NEWS CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Neil, good afternoon.

We have breaking news here. There will be no partial government shutdown this weekend. The Senate voted earlier today 77-18 to avert shutdown. And the House in just the past couple of moments here has voted 314-108 to sync up with the Senate to sidestep a government shutdown. This funds the government, two deadlines in early March, March 1 and March 8.

Now, they needed a two-thirds vote here, so they needed 282 yeas to pass this. So they got 314, so they were well above the threshold. Here is the big narrative, though, Neil. Only 107 House Republicans voted for this bill. In previous interim spending bills, they have had 126, 127 on the Republican side of the aisle.

Most of the Democrats hauled the freight here. But consider that attrition from how many Republicans were voting for these interim bills previously, and they went down to 107 today; 106 Republicans voted no, so only a margin of one in between Republicans who were for it and who were against it.

They did not get half of the Republican Conference, and that spells big problems for House Speaker Mike Johnson -- Neil.

CAVUTO: I'm just thinking whether some of those members, the House Freedom Caucus and others, who are not pleased with this are going to take it out on him. What do you think?

PERGRAM: Well, we don't think that there's going to be a motion to vacate the chair anytime soon.

I would look to see if they have to do an interim bill again in March, or whether they have to, as you say, cobble some of these bills together in a package and pass them to avert a government shutdown then. They have had three punts now, three punts, since they were supposed to finish all the bills in late September, Neil.

CAVUTO: All right, Chad Pergram, thank you very much here.

So, two big developments. We avoid a government shutdown on planet Earth, and we have another rocket on its way to the International Space Station, something this country does very well. Finance and accounting, eh, not so well.

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