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Chris Hayes

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MSNBC: All in with Chris Hayes

CHAYES

English

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[20:00:00]

LATOSHA BROWN, CO-FOUNDER BLACK VOTERS MATTER: So, yes, we're in a space that we see protests as part of our power. And we will stand and continue to protest until we get voting rights.

JOY REID, MSNBC HOST: Amen. Amen. We're with you. LaTosha Brown, Bishop William Barber, Ari Berman working for the right cause, democracy. That's tonight's REIDOUT. "ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts now.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MEHDI HASAN, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR (voice over): Tonight on ALL IN.

JAKE SULLIVAN, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER: We'll do as much as we can, for as long as we can.

HASAN: The Taliban tightened its grip on Afghanistan and the U.S. scrambles to get people out.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The speed of evacuation will pick up.

HASAN: Tonight, the venomous backlash against Afghan refugees.

TUCKER CARLSON, HOST, FOX NEWS CHANNEL: So, first, we invade and then we're invaded.

HASAN: And a reminder of who started this terrible 20-year war.

GEORGE W. BUSH, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: America and Afghanistan are now allies against terror. We'll be partners in rebuilding that country.

HASAN: Then another reversal in health policy. Just who could get a COVID booster shot and when?

Plus, the latest push for Congress to save voting rights even though the Senate keeps killing the bill. Top House Democrat Hakeem Jeffries joins me to discuss that when ALL IN starts right now.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN (on camera): Good evening from Washington D.C. I'm Mehdi Hasan in for Chris Hayes. No matter whether you were for or against the war in Afghanistan, I think most observers agree that the way it's been brought to an end has been a disaster. The Taliban is again in control of the country. And in addition to political power, they've got their hands on us supplied military equipment, including guns, ammunition, and combat aircraft.

So, we all agree it's bad right now. But did you know there was a good chance we could have maybe avoided all of this? That's because in December 2001, the Taliban seemed to be on the verge of striking a deal with the Afghan government to surrender. This was at a time when the Taliban itself said they were finished as a political force.

But Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense at the time, rejected the idea. And when asked about the possibility of such a deal, said "the answer is no." He wanted an unconditional surrender. How did that work out? Just to be clear, no one is saying that Afghanistan would have become peaceful or violence-free, only that we wouldn't have spent the next 19 years fighting an unwinnable war.

More than 2400 U.S. service members were killed in Afghanistan, so were an estimated 66,000 Afghan military and police and more than 47,000 Afghan civilians, over 400 aid workers and more than 70 journalists, all at a U.S. price tag of \$2 trillion. But the Bush administration failed to end the war early on is one of the many gross mistakes that they made, including allowing Osama bin Laden to escape Afghanistan.

According to a Senate report from 2009, Bin Laden was "within our grasp in December 2001, but the administration let him slip through their hands." Quoting from the report, "the decisions that opened the door for his escape to Pakistan allowed Bin Laden to emerge as a potent symbolic figure who continues to attract a steady flow of money and inspires fanatics worldwide. The failure to finish the job represents a lost opportunity that forever altered the course of the conflict in Afghanistan and the future of international terrorism.

That report came out 12 years ago, but it's now almost accepted wisdom that Bush and company were obsessing over the next war in Iraq, and diverted attention away from Afghanistan. They allowed al-Qaeda to regroup. Today, it's easy to point fingers when it comes to Afghanistan. And we're seeing a lot of that now. It's Donald Trump's fault, because he struck a deal with the Taliban. It's Joe Biden's fault because he pulled the troops out too quickly.

But let's not forget that it all started with the guy who launched the so-called war on terror, George W. Bush. Yesterday, as the crisis was unfolding, Bush even put out a statement saying that it gave him "deep sadness." And then he had the nerve to say, let us all resolved to be united in saving lives and praying for the people of Afghanistan." Really? The guy who bombed and invaded Afghanistan, who ran a torture prison at Bagram Air Base, who sent a number of Afghans to Guantanamo Bay prison without charging them with anything? That guy is now sad and lecturing the rest of us about human rights and saving lives?

What happened on Bush's watch in Afghanistan was atrocious, perhaps criminal. That's not my view. In 2017, the International Criminal Court said there was enough information to prove that U.S. forces and members of the CIA broke international law, that they had committed acts of torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, rape and sexual violence in Afghanistan in 2003 and 2004.

Not only did the Bush administration fail miserably in Afghanistan over eight years, every president that came after W would in some respect double down on his failure, even Joe Biden, who in my view deserves support for pulling out of Afghanistan for ending that war even if he messed up at the end.

[20:05:13]

The New York Times points out today that as Biden was publicly saying the Afghan government would likely not fail, intelligence assessments were saying the opposite. For 20 years, we tried and failed to defeat the Taliban. Now, we leave the country with the Taliban emboldened and in charge. So, who's to blame? And will anyone ever be held to account for this monumental two decades long failure?

Jamil Jaffer served as Associate White House Counsel to President George W. Bush from 2008 to 2009. He later served as a counsel to both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Intelligence Committee. He joins me now.

Jamil, thanks so much for coming on the show tonight. On December 7, 2001, the New York Times reported that Afghanistan's Taliban militia agreed to surrender its last remaining stronghold, the southern city of Kandahar, to a prominent anti-Taliban commander and would begin giving up its weapons. But Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld immediately objected to portions of the deal that reportedly will -- that would allow the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar to remain in Kandahar, to live in dignity in opposition custody so long as he renounced terrorism.

Jamil, the reality is that this could have been ended almost as soon as it started. But the Bush administration, not just in December 2001, but repeatedly over the years turned down opportunities for a negotiated end to the war, and here we are 20 years later.

JAMIL JAFFER, FORMER ASSOCIATE WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: Well, Mehdi, I'm not sure it's accurate to say that the Bush administration could have ended the war if only they had accepted the surrender of Kandahar and allowed Mullah Omar to stay there. Let's be realistic. The Bush administration push back, they continue to fight, eventually push the Taliban out of power. And here they are returning 20 years later to power.

It's not like if we had negotiated with them, as by the way the Trump administration did, the Biden administration did, that they wouldn't surge forward. Just last week, Jen Psaki from the White House podium said, man, if only we can get the Taliban back to the negotiating table instead of taking these cities, you know, we can work out a deal.

Of course, that was never going to happen. So, you know, I don't think it's fair to say that the Bush administration just cut a better deal in 2001, we wouldn't be right back here today.

HASAN: Well, we can agree to disagree with that. But I agree -- I appreciate you coming on and pushing back. Let me ask you this. Former President Bush has put out a statement saying quote, "I've been watching the tragic events unfolding in Afghanistan with deep sadness." A study from Brown University found that as of April, more than 71,000 Afghan and Pakistani civilians are estimated to have died as a direct result of the war.

There was also the torture of Afghans I mentioned at the start including a taxi driver on George Bush's watch at Bagram Air Base. Where were -- where was his deep sadness over any of that stuff that was his actual responsibility when it came to Afghan lives?

JAFFER: Well, look, I think, Mehdi, I think a lot of people regret the way things have gone in Afghanistan and regret the way things have proceeded to date. But I think it's also fair to say that, you know, just yesterday, we had President Biden on television expressing deep concern for the situation of Afghan civilians, our allies in the region who he made a commitment to when he decided to pull out those 20,000 SIVs. Many of whom remain not in Kabul, not at the airport, not on places of the United States, but subject to house search by the Taliban, a potential, you know, who knows, torture, death and the like.

And so, you know, there's a lot of blame to go around here, Mehdi. I think the hard question now is, have you made the decision to leave that country? How do we do so in a way that protects our Americans that remain there about 10,000, our 20,000 SIVs, 18,000 that remain in the country, and 60,000 Afghans who worked alongside us. How do we ensure that they're not subject to being attacked, potentially killed by the Taliban?

HASAN: It's an important point. I'm glad you made it. I think on Biden, I think we can both agree the handling of the SIV situation has been bad. You're right. There's a lot of blame to go around, which is why I started the show talking about George Bush because he seems to have escaped a lot of it in recent days. It seems to be Trump v. Biden, and not the president who was there from the very beginning.

You retweeted a Republican congressman recently saying, "al-Qaeda 3.0 will emerge from this aftermath of this reckless withdrawal. The same Obama foreign policy team, Blinken, Austin, Sullivan oversaw the pull out of Iraq and the rise of ISIS, and they're responsible for this disaster. Americans deserve to see accountability and resignations."

But isn't that a little convenient? It was George Bush who signed the pullout agreement from Iraq. It was Donald Trump who bragged about signing the pullout agreement with the Taliban. Some might argue President Obama- Biden inherited those decisions from Republicans, and now they get blamed by Republicans for them. Isn't that a little convenient?

JAFFER: Look, I don't doubt that there were mistakes were made in the signing of the agreement by President Trump. I think that was a catastrophic mistake. I said at the time, I'll say it again. He never should negotiate with the Taliban. The idea of bringing up the Taliban to Camp David on the anniversary of 9/11 was -- would have been a catastrophic mistake. I'm glad he didn't do that. And I think it was a mistake to negotiate with Mullah Baradar, right?

But the fact that matter is the Biden administration is in power now. They could have easily unwound agreements. Unlike Iraq which didn't want us in the country, the Afghans begged us to stay, begged us to stay. And Joe Biden said nope, I'm going to do away the conditions based approach. I'm going to go pull out on September 11, and here we are.

So, look, at the end of the day, it doesn't need to be political, right? Congressman Mike Waltz is a friend of mine. He's a former Green Beret, right? He served with distinction. So, I think he has a right to express his views as a congressman, and as a former Green Beret.

But I'll say this, Mehdi, right, what are we doing now, right? Now that by this made clear what his position is, right? How do we do this in the right way? What is the right way to exit.

[20:10:27]

HASAN: So, before -- so before we run out of time -- before we run out of time, I'm going to jump in. You say, what do we do now? Just one quick point, the polling suggests more Afghans wanted us to leave than to stay as of January 2020. But in terms of what we do now, very quickly, would you just stay forever then? You say

we shouldn't have negotiated with the Taliban? What would you have done then, just stay indefinitely, 10 years, 20 years? Last Word to you.

JAFFER: Look, I think, Mehdi -- I think, Mehdi, the right answer is a small counterterrorism force, four to 5000 troops at Bagram, right? Keeping that facility open, available to provide air support to our own forces fighting the Taliban, to continue the fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda who no doubt Congressman Mike Waltz is right, will be back.

They will be back in that country. They will plot against America. And we'll have no one to blame but ourselves --

HASAN: But how for?

JAFFER: I'm sorry?

HASAN: How long for the small force? How long will they stay?

JAFFER: As long as it takes -- as long as it takes to keep our country safe from that threat. If that's 10 years, 15 years, or another 20 years, so be it. Let's be honest, Mehdi, we lost less American lives than the Afghans lost in any year of that conflict. You know that -- you know that Joe Biden suggests the Afghans aren't willing to fight is outrageous and not accurate.

HASAN: OK, there's a reason they call it a forever war. Jamil Jaffer, thank you so much for your insights tonight. I appreciate it.

JAFFER: Thanks, Mehdi.

HASAN: Today, as thousands of Afghans flee the country in fear of what Taliban rule will mean for them and their loved ones, the Taliban attempted a new public relations campaign in a truly surreal press conference promising not to harm those who fought against them and saying they will uphold women's rights, yes, women's rights, within the framework of what they consider to be Sharia law.

This new supposedly gentler Taliban has been met with justified skepticism as the last time they were in power, women had almost no rights whatsoever. Andrew Quilty has been reporting from Afghanistan since 2013. He's a contributor to Harper's Magazine. This September issue features his in depth piece, When the Raids Came: The War's Toll On One Afghan Family. He also published a piece for the Intercept titled No Exit: As the Taliban Seize the Cities, Desperate Afghans are Trapped in an American-made Fiasco.

Andrew Quilty joins me live from Kabul tonight. Andrew, thanks so much for coming on the show. You went to that Taliban press conference. You were there? What was your impression of that?

ANDREW QUILTY, CONTRIBUTOR, HARPERS MAGAZINE: Thanks for having me, Mehdi. First of all, there was a lot of anticipation from the journalist there who for a long time and being communicating with the Taliban spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid, who had never actually met him. So, meeting this faceless character who had represented the Taliban to the international press for so long was fundamental moment in itself.

The press conference was also held in the former government-made unit media and information center. The -- it had all the trappings of a government press conference from, you know, what might have been weeks ago, except the government flag in the background had been replaced with the Taliban flag. Another sort of significant difference was the size of the crowd. I've never seen a crowd of a couple press corps as big as that for a -- for a press conference. There were a couple of female journalists in the crowd.

And I think the message that we took away was this continued effort by the Taliban to present this positive face with which, as you mentioned, there is still a lot of skepticism.

HASAN: Andrew, do locals, do residents of Kabul believe this new message, this spin that the Taliban is putting out? Do you?

QUILTY: Everyone is holding their breath I think. A lot of people I speak to say that yes, yes, it's all well and good. We, you know, have optimism. But they're worried that once the new administration finds its feet and begins to enforce its harsh interpretation of Sharia law, that the vice and virtue police and their intelligence commission will start going door to door looking for people on lists, people who have worked with the Americans, people who have worked with the government, and of course, the security forces.

The Taliban are going to great pains to allay those fears amongst Afghan citizens, but they're going to have to -- they're going to have to put their money where their mouth is if they -- if they're really going to convince Afghans.

[20:15:14]

HASAN: Andrew, just to remind our viewers, you're coming to us live from Kabul. What are you hearing there about the ability to leave the country for both Afghans and foreigners? I believe there are -- the government is here is telling us there's still more than 10,000 American citizens on the ground in Afghanistan.

QUILTY: The situation at the airport is extremely chaotic, not only outside the airport gates, and there are several airport gates, but obviously, inside, we've all seen those videos of thousands of people out of control. There's -- obviously, the Taliban has not yet had time to implement any kind of organization within the airport. I'm told that all the checking machines, for example, have been trashed.

So, to answer your question, it's extremely difficult. I know a lot of people who have made efforts to get inside the airport because they are booked on flights, but who have been turned back. And that's the case for foreigners getting on government-sponsored flights and my own government, the Australian government, is putting on flights from the Australian Defense Force. And that's all well and good, but getting to the airport itself, getting in the gate in some kind of orderly fashion is a challenge that is still being met with great difficulty.

HASAN: Great difficulty, indeed, Andrew Quilty in Kabul, thanks for staying up late for us. Thanks for your insights and please do stay safe.

The United States spent two decades and over \$2 trillion in Afghanistan just to end up in this disaster. Who should be held accountable and how? I'll ask Congressman Hakeem Jeffries if it's time to investigate this war and whether Congress will heed the Department of Justice's warnings about the threat to voting rights here in America. All of that coming up next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:20:00]

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KRISTEN CLARKE, ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, UNITED STATES: I am here today to sound an alarm. In 2013, the Supreme Court's decision in Shelby County versus Holder suspended the preclearance process, the Justice Department's single most powerful and effective tool for protecting the right to vote. The department's ability to protect the right to vote has been eroded as a result. For the Justice Department, restoration of the voting rights act as a matter of great urgency.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: That was Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke issuing a stark warning on the threat to voting rights yesterday. Her plea echoes similar calls for action from the country's top Democrats.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We're facing the most significant test of our democracy since the Civil War. I'm not saying this to alarm you. I'm saying this because you should be alarmed.

KAMALA HARRIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: All Americans have the right to vote, and with it the opportunity to determine their own future. However, today, the ability of Americans to exercise that right is under vicious attack.

SEN. CHUCK SCHUMER (D-NY): Let me be clear, Republicans refusing to support anything on voting rights is not an excuse for Democrats to do nothing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Here's the problem that urgent rhetoric is simply not reflected in their actions. Today, the House introduced yet another sweeping voting rights bill with Democratic Congresswoman Terri Sewell of Alabama unveiling it at the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge, where civil rights heroes were beaten by police during their march for voting rights.

The bill will pass in the house just as other voting rights bills have before it. But as long as the filibuster is in place, it is dead on arrival in the Senate. Republicans will not support any legislation making it easier to vote. Eliminating or at least reforming the 60 vote threshold in the Senate is the only way to get it passed.

So, why hasn't President Joe Biden pushed to get rid of the filibuster? Why hasn't Chuck Schumer done it yet? Are they going to let this final opportunity to save American democracy as we know it slipped through their fingers?

Joining me now to discuss what Congress is doing to protect voting rights is someone who serves in House leadership, Congressman Hakeem Jeffries of New York, chair of the House Democratic Caucus. Congressman, thanks so much for coming on tonight.

We'll get to voting rights in a moment. I do want to start with Afghanistan. Your colleague Congresswoman Ocasio Cortez tweeted, "We have a moral obligation to the Afghan people. The U.S. role in this crisis is indisputable. We must waste no time or expense in helping refugees safely and swiftly leave Afghanistan. We must immediately welcome them to the U.S. and provide real support as they rebuild their lives."

Do you agree with your colleague from New York? Should specific funding for Afghan refugees now perhaps be part of the budget bill?

REP. HAKEEM JEFFRIES (D-NY): Well, certainly something that we need to look at. And I agree that we have to get the situation in Afghanistan under control. First step, of course, is to make sure that the airspace has been secured so that flights can come in and come out. That appears to have been done.

The second step will be to get control of the airport. That appears to be a work in progress, but it's something that the administration is clearly committed to doing. And then step three will be to make sure that we can secure a safe passage from Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan to the airport that are now controlled by the Taliban.

It's my understanding that the administration understands that that is going to have to be something that is done in order to make sure that the American people who are there can be safely evacuated as well as Afghan refugees and others who work closely with us over the last 20 years.

HASAN: Congressman, is the House going to hold hearings on this debacle in Afghanistan about what went wrong, two decades of sacrifices basically down the drain?

JEFFRIES: I don't want to get out ahead of any of the committee chairs, any announcements that they may make, but it is my expectation that you will see some active engagement by the relevant House committees including the committee on foreign affairs in terms of getting an understanding of the current moment that we're in, as well as how we got to this point over the last 20 years.

[20:25:12]

HASAN: So, Congressman, on voting rights. To be fair, the House has done its job. It passed the For the People Act. It died in the Senate. The new John Lewis Voting Rights Bill you're backing will also pass in the House, and then it too will die in the Senate. At what point do you tell President Biden and Senator Chuck Schumer they need to get rid of the filibuster, no more waiting, there is no time left?

JEFFRIES: Well, we certainly cannot allow these bills to die in the Senate at this critical moment for our democracy. At the end of the day, the very integrity of our democracy depends on the unfettered right to vote which we know is under intense assault.

In the aftermath of the violent insurrection on the sixth, instead of running toward democracy which is what my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle should have done, they are running away from democracy. They have doubled and tripled down on voter suppression efforts, which is why we have to act.

Now, I do believe one, most importantly, we are going to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act next week, and we will pipe pass it decisively. And then the question will be in terms of the Senate. There are already exceptions that exists to the filibuster. Budget reconciliation is an exception. It's an exception that Republicans used in 2017 to pass the GOP tax scam, where 83% of the benefits went to the wealthiest one percent. And there's a federal judiciary exception that Mitch McConnell has used to steal not one but two Supreme Court justices.

So, if there are exceptions that already exists, certainly this should be one for democracy and voting rights. And I think you'll see us continue to push that and press that position moving forward.

HASAN: I'm glad to hear you say that. But we are eight months in. I've interviewed a lot of members of Congress, Democratic senators, House members over the last eight months, and I've been hearing this, I'm hearing this, it's coming, we're pushing, time is running out.

I mean, some might argue on gerrymandering, the time has run out. The census is out. Republican state legislators are already starting to redraw boundaries. They could take back the House next year without a

single extra vote, thanks to gerrymandering. And I wonder, do you think enough people in your party, especially in the Senate recognize that history will judge your party if the Republicans got out of democracy, and you guys, let them because you were interested in bipartisanship in the Senate?

JEFFRIES: Well, it's fair to say, Mehdi, that if we had the ability in the House to reform the filibuster rule, we would do it. But of course, we do not. That's a Senate role, and only the Senate can do it. I certainly think that there are many senators who understand the urgency of the moment. But there are, of course, a handful that we have to continue to persuade. And that is something that will take place with increased intensity over the next few days and next few weeks.

You're absolutely right. Because Republicans have committed to voter suppression as an electoral strategy, and they are bankrupt of substantive ideas in so many areas, we know that we've got to deal with this issue in order to preserve our democracy.

HASAN: And the intensity has to come not just from you guys in the House, but from the President in the White House. Congressman, a group of conservative Democrats in the House are threatening to hold up the budget resolution. Politico reports that your boss, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, called it "amateur hour."

We hear so much about the left and the squad being obstructionist, but are these nine so-called centrist really trying to block to derail President Biden's entire agenda? And if so, what are you going to do about it?

JEFFRIES: Well, I embraced the entire spectrum of the House Democratic Caucus from the very progressive members on the left, to more centrist and moderate and even a few conservative members of the caucus. I don't think anyone is an obstructionist within the caucus. Everybody has the ability to express their ideas about the best way to move forward.

But the bottom line is, the President has made clear, we've got an American Jobs Plan and an American Families Plan, both of which need to be passed. And part of the American Jobs Plan is captured in the infrastructure bill, but only part of it. And the entirety, we need to get over the finish line. And in order to do that, we've got to enact the budget reconciliation bill for America's families and children on a parallel track. And I believe that is exactly what is going to happen next week.

HASAN: Congressman, I was struck by this quote from you recently about how you and Congressman Colin Allred, a former NFL linebacker were prepared to physically fight back on January 6. "I took my jacket off and my tie because I said you know what, if it's on, it's on, we're not going to be overrun by the sedition Trump supporters and it's just going to be what is going to be."

I have to ask, all these months later, I mean, what was going through your mind that day? I know the Republicans want us to move on from January 6, but when I read a quote like that, I think about a senior House Democrat prepared to fight his way out of the legislature?

[20:30:16]

JEFFRIES: Well, we really thought we were going to have to fight for our lives. It came at a point when the Sergeant at Arms interrupted the proceedings and said, be prepared to hit the ground. The mob has breached the Capitol. They're a few feet from the chamber. And get ready to secure the gas masks that are underneath your chairs.

I've been in the House at that point for eight years, had no idea that we're gasmask in the chamber. But then of course, Colin Allred is behind me. And he says to me, I don't know about you, Hakeem, but I'm not going down without a fight. And that's when the jackets came off. And if you ever find yourself in the middle of a violent insurrection, which I hope no one ever does moving forward, it's good to have a former NFL linebacker by your side.

Thankfully, the Capitol Police found an exit route for us. But it was a very dangerous situation inspired of course, by the former twice impeach, corrupt President of the United States of America. We can never allow something like that to ever happen again.

HASAN: No, we cannot. Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, thank you so much for your time tonight. I appreciate it.

JEFFRIES: Thank you, Mehdi.

HASAN: In Texas, the governor who has banned both mask and vaccine mandates has himself tested positive for COVID. According to a statement from his office, Governor Greg Abbott is fully vaccinated and isn't experiencing any symptoms and will self-isolate in the Governor's Mansion. The news came less than 24 hours after Governor Abbott attended a maskless indoor fundraiser.

Now, it's worth noting that sources tell NBC News, Abbott has told people he already received a booster shot of the vaccine though his office did not respond to a request for comment. That extra dose may be helping him after contracting the disease. Lucky him.

And now it looks like the U.S. is going to roll out a third dose for millions of Americans. That's what we'll be discussing next. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:35:00]

HASAN: Right now, about 30 percent of the eligible population in the U.S. is still unvaccinated. They still have to get their first shot. They still yet to get it. At the same time, approximately 60 percent of that same population are fully vaccinated. Now, many of those people are about to become eligible to get a third shot, a booster.

The Biden administration is expected to announce that people who received either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine should get a third booster shot either at eight months after receiving their second dose. The first priority will likely be granted to healthcare workers, to nursing home residents, to the elderly as early as September.

Yet again, though, this is a reversal of the administration's COVID policy. We have had months of administration and CDC officials saying no need for boosters because people remain highly protected from the virus after their two shots.

Dr. Celine Gounder was a member of the Biden Transition COVID-19 Advisory Board. She's an infectious diseases physician, epidemiologist, as well as a clinical assistant professor of medicine at NYU. Dr. Gounder joins me now. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

On July 8, the CDC and the FDA issued a very public statement saying that booster shots were unnecessary. They said that in response to Pfizer and Moderna saying they weren't necessary. And now a little over a month later, that's been reversed. That comes on the heels of the U-turn over masking indoors if you're fully vaccinated.

You've been on the Biden team. And to be fair, they've done a good job of fighting the virus overall. But when it comes to messaging, hasn't there been a lot of mixed messaging?

CELINE GOUNDER, FORMER MEMBER OF THE BIDEN TRANSITION COVID-19 ADVISORY BOARD: Mehdi, I am concerned about the messaging here about the need for extra doses of vaccine. There is clear data that people who are highly immunocompromised, so people who have had solid organ transplants or on highly immunosuppressive medications, people who have AIDS, these are people who may need an additional dose of vaccine.

And I say additional dose because I think when people hear boosters, they're thinking the flu shot that you get every year. I think we're really just talking about a third dose. There's also good data that people who are in nursing homes would benefit from extra doses, and what I would call the older elderly people over the age of 80. But there's really not good data to support giving extra doses to the general population at this time.

HASAN: Is there any data to show that there's a harm in doing it?

GOUNDER: Well, there certainly could be. And because we haven't studied these vaccines in that way, in this number of people, you're talking about hundreds of millions of doses that we'd be administering extra doses of, there is a trade-off. Not to mention the fact that there is a better allocation of that limited vaccine supply.

You have kids who are going to be coming online, the kids five to 11 this fall. We want to be getting vaccine doses into those kids. And there are many Americans, almost half of Americans really who yet are yet to be vaccinated. And we would all benefit from having more people in the community vaccinated than individuals getting extra doses.

And I say that, you know, speaking for myself too. I know that if my neighbor is vaccinated versus not vaccinated, that better protects me than getting an extra dose of vaccine.

HASAN: Yes. And what's the reasoning behind the administration's eight-month waiting period, that you wait eight months after your second dose? What happens in those months?

GOUNDER: You know, honestly, a lot of us are scratching our heads. I don't know if this is a reflection of supply, but there's really no data that would suggest that there is a waning of immunity to the point where you would be more likely to end up in the hospital, to end up with more severe disease at this eight month mark.

We are seeing an increase in breakthrough infections, but that was to be expected. The vaccines are not perfect. And when you're swimming in virus, even if you yourself are vaccinated, there is still going to be a risk of getting infected.

HASAN: And of course, all of this applies only to Pfizer and Moderna, the two shot regime, not to Johnson and Johnson where we're being told there's still research being done. Dr. Gounder, let me ask you this. Texas Republican Governor Greg Abbott has been telling people he received a third dose of the vaccine, but he's still tested positive for COVID today.

He wasn't wearing a mask though at his fundraiser last night. What is it like to live in a country where a Republican governor can get three doses of the COVID vaccine while banning mass mandates for the public?

[20:40:29]

GOUNDER: Well, he clearly understands the risk of COVID to his own personal health if he sought out this third dose of vaccine. And not only that, he's also gotten monoclonal antibodies, the same drug that was used to treat former President Trump, former Governor Chris Christie. That same drug has also been administered to Governor Abbott now for treatment of COVID. So, he clearly understands the risk.

I think the message here is also vaccines are not perfect. I don't know the timing of that third dose. It may have been very recent. But vaccines are not going to prevent all infections especially if you're exposing yourself to this degree, to indoor crowds without a mask. And this speaks to the need to be layering interventions, masking, improved ventilation, and air filtration, socializing outdoors when possible, in addition to getting vaccinated.

HASAN: The head of the World Health Organization this month called for a halt on booster shots, saying the vaccine gap between wealthy countries and poorer countries in this world of ours has widened. So, is it an ethical choice for the U.S. to make to supply these extra shots, which you're saying you're not sure about the evidence for?

GOUNDER: Look, I don't think there's just a humanitarian or ethical or moral argument to be made to have this moratorium on extra doses. I think this is frankly in our self-interest. It's pragmatic. It is what will have the most public health impact to spread the vaccine supply across more people, to spread that vaccine supply to get the people who are currently not vaccinated, vaccinated whether those are people here in the United States, or around the world.

Remember, you know, variants like the Delta variant which are really causing great, great problems for us here in the United States now emerged in countries like India where the disease was allowed to spread like wildfire. And so, we really for our own national interest, need to be spreading vaccine supply around the world.

HASAN: Yes, we do. And I think perceptionally, nothing says more about global health inequity than millions and millions of Africans not even having one dose and Americans getting ready for our third. Dr. Celine Gounder, thank you so much for your time and your analysis tonight. I appreciate it.

Still to come, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as the White House scrambles to provide answers about Afghan refugees. The fear mongering over at Fox News is in full force. My response to that next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:45:00]

HASAN: As the United States military pulls out of Afghanistan and the country falls to the Taliban, thousands of Afghans are trying to get out of the country and come here to the U.S. to escape the horror they expect will soon come. But here in the U.S., the usual figures on the right are already spewing their gross hate-filled takes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CARLSON: If history is any guide, and it's always a guide, we will see many refugees from Afghanistan resettle in our country in the coming months, probably in your neighborhood. And over the next decade, that number may swell to the millions. So, first we invade and then we're invaded.

LAURA INGRAHAM, HOST, FOX NEWS CHANNEL: Is it really our responsibility to welcome thousands of potentially unvetted refugees from Afghanistan? All day, we've heard phrases like we promised them. Well, who did? Did you?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Yes, Laura, we do have a responsibility to these people. And we did promise them we have their backs. Also, Laura Ingraham and Tucker Carlson at the time supported both the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. So, they are the last people who get to say nothing to do with us, not our problem.

If you did not support the war in Afghanistan, maybe you could then justify saying, well, none of this is on me. That would be cruel, yes, but kind of fair. But these two were pro-war. And now they're telling us, they're telling the Afghan people sorry, you're on your own.

Still, the worst hypocrite of them, the worst of all maybe the former Trump Adviser Stephen Miller. He wrote on Twitter over the weekend, "It's becoming increasingly clear that Biden and his radical deputies will use that catastrophic debacle in Afghanistan as a pretext for doing to America what Angular Merkel did to Germany and Europe" referencing the chancellor of Germany's decision in 2015 to take in over a million refugees.

And yet, this is the same Stephen Miller whose own great grandfather came here to the United States in 1906 to escape anti-Jewish pogroms in Belarus. Yes, Stephen Miller might not be alive today had the U.S. not opened its doors to refugees from across the world over the past century and more.

The hypocrisy is just galling. And to be honest, I don't know what's worse, listening to people who back these wars refusing to accept the consequences of them, or listening to those people use these wars as an excuse to push white supremacy. Shame on all of them.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[20:50:00]

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SULLIVAN: Our plan is to safely evacuate the people who worked with the United States who are eligible for Special Immigrant Visas, which is a generous program set up on a bipartisan basis by our Congress. We have identified those individuals and families. We are making provision to have them come to the airport and get on evacuation flights out of the country. That is what we are going to do between now and the end of the month.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Tonight, the U.S. is scrambling to evacuate people from Afghanistan before the withdrawal deadline in two weeks' time. According to the International Rescue Committee, more than 300,000 Afghan civilians have been affiliated with the U.S. mission. Meaning, the number fleeing the country could be extraordinary.

Images are emerging of just some of those evacuations, 640 people packed into a U.S. cargo plane flying from Kabul to Qatar. The Pentagon says they are trying to get between five and 9000 people out every day, and that it's prepared to relocate up to 22,000 Afghan civilians to military bases in Wisconsin and Texas while they start the resettlement process.

Jane Graupman is the executive director of the International Institute of Minnesota, which is currently assisting in resettling Afghan refugees in the U.S. She joins me now. Thanks so much for coming on the show this evening, Jane.

You went to the airport on Sunday to welcome a family from Afghanistan. Can you tell us about that? How are they doing now?

JANE GRAUPMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA: Yes, we settled a family of nine, two parents and seven children. We got a very short notice we find out on Saturday that we're going to be resettling the family and met them at the airport on Sunday evening. So, they're doing well. We're helping to connect them to services at the institute, the International Institute where I work, and other services in the community.

I mean, it is probably obvious but needs to be said that people are headed to leave very quickly. They've left behind, you know, most of the things that provide meaning in their life. This family was lucky they brought their children with them. But they've given up all their possessions, their profession. And so it's -- it'll be a big transition for them.

[20:55:42]

HASAN: Yes, massive, I imagine. Jane, walk us through the Special Immigrant Visa Program. How exactly does it work for the people who are trying to leave Afghanistan?

GRAUPMAN: Yes, the Special Immigrant Visa Program, it's commonly referred to as the SIV program. That program has been around for decades. It's done in (AUDIO GAP) but the applications for the SIV program originate in the country of origin. So, in this case, African citizens who are living in Africa, many of them in Kabul, are applying through the U.S. embassy to relocate into qualify for the SIV program.

And one challenge with that program, unfortunately, is that there are many security checks, health checks that people have to clear before they get SIV status. And that has been taking up to four years. So, there's been 1100 people that have arrived through that program to the U.S. currently. But as you have mentioned, there's many more that are eligible. And they're eligible because they have worked alongside with and for the U.S. military and the U.S. government.

HASAN: Jane, today, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan addressed why the U.S. didn't begin evacuating people before the Taliban got to Kabul. Listen to what he said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SULLIVAN: The Afghan government and its supporters, including many of the people now seeking to leave made a passionate case that we should not conduct a mass evacuation lest we trigger a loss of confidence in the government. Now, our signaling support for the government obviously did not save the government. But this was a considered judgment.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HASAN: Things seem pretty chaotic since the President the country fled. How are the families they're dealing with it as they tried to get out? And do by the explanation from Jake Sullivan?

GRAUPMAN: You know, the families here that have already been resettled, the Afghan families have already been resettled through the SIV program are definitely very worried and concerned about their families back in Afghanistan. They're also I think, a little bit confused as are -- you know, as am I, to be honest, about why there wasn't a more orderly process in place.

You know, the U.S. government has been working with these folks for decades, many of them. So, they're known to the U.S. military. The US military has a lot of biographical data about those folks because they had to get clearance to work with a military. So, it seems that that would help to provide more quickly departure. But we're hopeful that that will still happen.

HASAN: Jane, sources tell Politico that the White House let political fear of GOP attacks make them act too cautiously on relocating Afghans to the U.S. As one administration official put it, it's like they want the credit from liberals for ending the Trump cruelty to immigrants and refugees, but they also don't want the political backlash that comes from actual refugees arriving in America in any sort of large numbers.

The backlash is already here. I played some clips from Fox News earlier. How do you respond to the kind of fear mongering from the Tucker Carlson's and Laura Ingraham's of this world?

GRAUPMAN: Well, I will respond with a story today actually talking to an Afghan family that we resettled in 2011. And that family is thriving. They have -- the father in the family has a job and a top us corporation. He's a manager in that company. He has -- he and his family have purchased a home. They're thriving. Their kids are thriving.

And that's just -- that's very typical of the Afghan refugees that have been resettled in Minnesota and across the country.

HASAN: Yes.

GRAUPMAN: I think what I would also say to them is that, you know, disparaging immigrants --

HASAN: Well, unfortunately, we're out of time, but I'm glad you told us -- I'm glad you told us that story. We're out of time, sadly, but I'm glad you told us that story because they are refugees in need of help. They're not invaders. Jane Graupman, I appreciate the work that you do. Keep doing that work. And thank you for coming on the show tonight.

GRAUPMAN: (INAUDIBLE)

HASAN: That is ALL IN for this evening. "THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW" starts right now. Good evening, Rachel.

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