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Remarks at a White House Coronavirus Task Force Press Briefing
April 8, 2020

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. This is a holy week, when religious believers across the Nation will observe Passover, Good Friday, and Easter. Millions of Jewish families begin Passover at sundown tonight, a sacred, unbroken tradition that traces back to the ancient land of Egypt. And on Sunday, we celebrate our beautiful, wonderful Easter, which we all look forward to. And we're going to have many Easters together in churches in the future.

We're getting closer. You see the numbers. We're getting much closer to getting our country back to the way it was. We have now an extra two countries that have been attacked: 184. They're being attacked as we speak, but we'll all win. At some point, we're going to all win. We're going to do it sooner than people think.

Earlier today I spoke with 10,000 of America's faith leaders to thank them for raising the spirits of our people during these very difficult days. While we may be physically apart, we can use this time to pray, to reflect, and to focus on our personal relationship with God.

I also spoke with more than 3,000 mayors, county commissioners, and State and Tribal leaders to provide an update on our administration's ongoing drive to beat the virus, to crush the virus. And that's happening. And it's happening, I think if you look, a little bit more quickly than people thought. Maybe a lot more quickly, I hope. And it's something that all over the world we're watching, but people are watching us and seeing what we're doing, and they're very impressed.

We're dealing with many countries right now. Many, many countries. And we're giving them whatever information we're able to glean.

I just spoke with the representatives of the U.K., and I think that their great Prime Minister is doing much better today, or at least better. But certainly, he's had a tough bout, and he's still going through a tough time, but he seems to be doing better. And that's good.

And we send our regards to Boris and his family and his friends, all of the people that really love him. He's become a very popular—before this happened, became a very popular prime minister. He's doing an excellent job. He loves their country; he loves our country. So we appreciate everything he's done, and hopefully he's going to be okay.

Speaking of great people, and people that have done a fantastic job, I have Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with us. And I'd like to ask Mike to say a few words. And then, I think what we'll do, in order to get him back to the State Department, we'll take some questions, and we'll then go on with the rest of what I'm going to say. Then, we'll take some questions after that, and then Vice President Pence will take over.

So, Mike Pompeo, please.

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. Thank you, Mr. President. Under the President's leadership, my team and I at the State Department are doing our part to protect the American people from the virus and, importantly, to get them home. As you know, when many countries shut down their rail lines, their buses, their infrastructure systems, the capacity to get out of those countries—they were trapped, they're stranded—the State Department swung into action.

Since January 29, we have now repatriated over 50,000 United States citizens back to their homes from more than 90 countries, more than 490 flights back to the United States from all

across the world. This worldwide scale of our repatriation efforts is without parallel in our lifetime. We are coordinating with foreign governments, militaries, airport authorities, medical units, transportation companies, hotels, you name it. We're working with them to make sure the American people get back to be with their families.

You can see, behind me, the map of the flights, that we have brought back people——

The President. Good.

Secretary Pompeo. ——from all across the world. Every day, I get a chance to hear some of the remarkable stories from our team. Let me give you just a couple of examples. Our mission in Peru: Working with the Peruvian military and police forces to send riverboats up the river to get citizens that were stranded deep inside the Amazon forest.

[*At this point, Secretary Pompeo continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And then, lastly, aside from our repatriation efforts, we continue to help countries around the world as well. We've got CDC officials helping these countries with expertise and all the things that these countries need to get their citizens safe and healthy and back so that we can get the economy all across the world—the global economy—back on its feet when this crisis is over.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Very good. Thanks, Mike. Maybe you stick for a little while——

Secretary Pompeo. Sure.

The President. ——and we'll see if anybody has any questions for Secretary of State.

Anybody? Please.

[*Secretary Pompeo responded to questions from reporters. The President then spoke as follows.*]

The President. Go ahead. In the middle, and then him behind.

World Health Organization

Q. Thank you. Thank you, President Trump and Secretary. I have a question. The World Health Organization has a fundraising drive for about $700 million for coronavirus resources. China has only donated $20 million. The United States actually has donated less. So do you feel that China should be giving more to this World Health Organization effort?

The President. You can say we helped.

Q. And can you comment on the U.S. donation?

Secretary Pompeo. Do you want to say something, Mr. President?

The President. Well, you can just say we helped.

Secretary Pompeo. We—at this point, we're reevaluating our funding with respect to the World Health Organization. You know, this is very consistent with what President Trump said since the beginning of his campaign: Organizations have to work. They have to deliver the outcomes for which they were intended. And we need to make sure that not only the World Health Organization, but every international organization that we take taxpayer money and give it to them for the benefit of America—we need to make sure it's delivering on those taxpayer dollars.

The World Health Organization is no different in that respect. We have—they have to execute on the mission that they are designed to achieve. And we've seen, with respect to the

World Health Organization, here we are. We haven't—it hasn't accomplished what it was intended to deliver.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Secretary. You said a handful of staffers have tested positive. Are they going to get the hydroxychloroquine treatment? Is that going to be made available to personnel overseas?

Secretary Pompeo. I don't know the answer to that. But know that we'll deliver the best medical care every place we can. Some of them are in difficult places where there's not a lot of medical help, and we've done our best to move that medical assistance forward to them in the field.

The President. Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters].

[*Secretary Pompeo responded to questions from reporters. The President then spoke as follows.*]

The President. Okay? Go ahead, please.

World Health Organization

Q. So there have been some calls on the World Health Organization for a leadership change there. I was wondering what your thoughts are on that. Senator Martha McSally, for example, has called for Dr. Tedros to resign.

The President. Haven't made a determination.

Secretary Pompeo. I don't want to—look, this is not the time to be to be doing that kind of change. There'll be a lot of time to look back and see how the World Health Organization performed.

In the meantime, what our task is, is to preserve and protect the American taxpayers, to make sure that our resources don't go to places that aren't going to deliver on behalf of the American people in the world. And President Trump and I are determined to do that.

The President. Okay?

Q. Just a quick follow-up?

The President. Let's save it. Can we save it?

Q. Just a quick follow-up, sir, if I may, on China.

The President. [*Inaudible*]—busy man. He's a busy man.

Q. You said that China has a responsibility to get correct figures. How would you broadly characterize cooperation with China right now?

Secretary Pompeo. There's lots of places we've been cooperating, right? They're providing us assistance where we need it. There are places on the ground now where we do have access to the data we need, and we're deeply appreciative of that.

They've said they want to cooperate. We're completely prepared to cooperate with them. That cooperation means sharing data, being transparent, being upfront, allowing information to flow freely. That's our expectation, not just of China though, of every country that is in this place today. We—collectively, we have to work our way through this, and to do that, you have to have really good data.

The President. Okay? Thank you, Mike.

Secretary Pompeo. Great. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

The President. Appreciate it. Thanks. Okay, thank you very much.

In just a few days, we've delivered nearly 11 million N95 masks to hotspots around the country, as you know, including 6.6 million to New York and New Jersey, 1.8 million to Chicago, 1.7 million to Detroit, and 837,000 to New Orleans.

I spoke with the Governor of Louisiana a little while ago, and they're doing, really, pretty well. Much better than they thought. They'll be using fewer beds. As you know, we built a hospital. We're about set to complete another hospital, and it's—there's even a possibility they won't—they won't need it. That's what we discussed.

To date, we've shipped out more than 8,000 ventilators, and we have 10,000—almost 10,000 sitting. They are ready to go, should we need them. And an additional 2,200 newly manufactured ventilators come on line on Monday. We're going to be sending them to various locations, just in case they need them.

My administration is working with Philips to double their production of ventilators by May, and ultimately quadruple production by later this year. High-quality ventilators. We're eliminating bureaucratic barriers to pave the way for Philips's major investments in American manufacturing sites and sales.

This will help to ensure that our country can permanently produce enough ventilators in the future that we can do them by ourselves. We're going to have a big stockpile when we're finished. And we expect to be sending quite a few to other countries to help them after we're finished. And even now, we're—a couple of countries are really, really in dire need. And it looks like our projections were right on ventilators, and some States that were thinking they would need thousands of more than they thought will—are now already taken care of, which we're very happy about.

In addition, beginning in May, we'll be receiving almost 300 million new face masks. We're going to have masks of about 300 million; they'll be starting to be delivered in May and during the month of June. So we're ordering a big stockpile, and we're thinking about doing an extra 200 million should we need them or for the stockpile. So we'll be in a position to have something incredible. It will be a total of 500 million masks.

And today 750,000 new protective gowns landed in Dallas, Texas, as a result of a partnership led by the Federal Government, DuPont, and FedEx. And that's been a great partnership. That's worked very well. So we have 600—and we have 750,000 new protective gowns. And these are at a high level—very high quality.

As American industry steps up to help, so are America's doctors and scientists. Ten drugs are now in clinical trials. And my administration is taking unprecedented actions to make new therapies and treatments available without delay. The doctors, the lab technicians, the companies—I spoke to them yesterday; I spoke again today. They are coming up with things that are, I think, I hope—in the very near future—are going to be very, very special, very important.

Our National Stockpile is now equipped with nearly 30 million hydroxychloroquine pills. So we're up to about 30 million. We're distributing by the millions. You read about State Representative Karen Whitsett, who I very much appreciate her going public. But she was, I think, very, very much helped by this pill. She saw what I was saying on television. She thought she was in very bad shape. I don't want to go further than that, but you see her story; you know her story. She's a highly respected State rep from Michigan. And she did a—I think she did a

great service, what she's done. She's in terrific shape. She looks fantastic. And she was very generous with her statements.

In addition, the azithromycin and zinc—they say zinc—you should add zinc. Now, it's all—has to be recommended by doctors, physicians. But they say zinc. I want to throw that out there, because that's where they seem to be having the best result. So you add the zinc and the azithromycin.

And it's been—we've had a lot of good stories. We've got a lot of good stories. And we have almost 30 million doses. So we've got a lot. I want to thank Prime Minister Modi of India for allowing us to have what we requested from before the problem arose. And he was terrific. We'll remember it.

Later today the CDC will release further guidance to help ensure critical infrastructure workers can perform their job safely after potential exposure to the virus. And so they're working on that.

The question was asked a little while ago about the World Health Organization. And, as you know, they made a statement on June—on January 14, I guess it was, that there was no human-to-human transmission. Well, there was. They probably made that statement in the second or third week of December, in addition, but they made it very powerfully on January 14. And they criticized me very strongly when I said that we're going to shut down flights coming in from China, and especially from certain parts of China, but from China generally. We were criticized very badly.

So last year, and for many years, hundreds of millions of dollars has been paid to the World Health Organization. Hundreds of millions of dollars a year. And last year, it was $452 million, and China paid $42 million. Before that, it was $500 million, and China paid less than $40 million. And before that, it was similar numbers, in the 400s, 300s, and sometimes even in the 500s of millions of dollars. And China would do proportionately just a small fraction of that number.

And I think they have to get their priorities right, and their priorities are that everybody has to be treated properly—every country. And it doesn't seem that way, does it? It doesn't seem that way. So we're going to do study, investigation, and we're going to make a determination as to what we're doing. In the meantime, we're holding back. We're going to—we want to see. It's very unfair.

So the United States—$452 million compared to $42 million. That's to the World Health Organization. That's not good. That's not good. Not fair. Not fair at all. And other countries, as you know, also gave very substantially less than the United States.

And the World—WHO—World Health got it wrong. I mean, they got it very wrong. In many ways, they were wrong. They also minimized the threat very strongly and—not good.

I want to take this opportunity to express the thanks of an extremely grateful nation to the Americans who go to work every day, especially in these critical industries, in the midst of the pandemic to care for and protect and feed American people, including medical personnel, law enforcement, first responders, food suppliers, sanitation workers.

And somebody mentioned today, "Would you please specifically call out cashiers and clerks at grocery stores who are in danger during the pandemic, during the epidemic?" They're in danger. They're really in great danger. And they've been incredible, and I want to call them out—to cashiers and clerks. We grew up with cashiers and clerks and grocery stores, and they've been great and they've really been true American heroes, so I want to call them out, because they're working hard, and they're working in conditions that aren't ideal. But soon, they'll be ideal again.

As we mourn the terrible loss of life for this—and from this grave pandemic, we're seeing signs that our aggressive strategy to slow the spread is working. The number of new cases is stabilizing. The number of beds necessary in so many locations—I was watching this morning, New York. I was watching Louisiana. You see what's going on. The numbers are changing, and they're changing rapidly. And soon, we'll be over that curve. We'll be over the top, and we'll be headed in the right direction. I feel strongly about that.

Some terrible days ahead, but we're going to have some wonderful days ahead. And we're going to get this behind us, this terrible thing behind us. Some people will never be able to forget if they had a loved one or if they had a great friend or a friend, but we're going to get it behind us.

This is a tribute to the discipline and the devotion of the American people, what we've accomplished. If every American continues to strictly adhere to social distancing guidelines, we can defeat the invisible enemy and save countless lives, and we can do it much more quickly.

We're, hopefully, heading toward a final stretch, the light at the end of the tunnel, as I was saying. As we continue to wage all-out medical war to defeat the virus, we're also fighting an economic war to ensure we can quickly turn to full financial strength. We have to get our country back. We have to get going. Everybody wants to get going.

Yesterday I asked Congress to provide an additional $250 billion to expand the incredibly successful Paycheck Protection Program—you've seen what's gone on there; it's incredible, actually—which is allowing our small businesses to keep employees on the payroll and get ready for the opening. Like a second opening.

To protect millions of American jobs, I'm asking Congress to pass additional funding for this program this week, as soon as possible. And I think we have a pretty good understanding with the Democrats. Hopefully, it's going to be bipartisan. We do not have time for the partisan games, and we don't want that—the obstruction or totally unrelated agendas. We want to do this for the small businesses and the workers. And we can do a phase four, and a phase four will be later.

This will be an expansion of what we've already done, because it's so successful. The $350 billion will be expanded by, hopefully, 250 and, if you look at the kind of loans, thousands—tens of thousands of loans to small businesses. It's a great thing to see. It's turned out to be more successful and more productive than anybody would have thought. But Democrats or Republicans are coming together to get that job done. That's a very important job.

In recent days and days ahead, we'll restore America's health and economic might, but also dimensions of our national strength will be brought together, I think, stronger than—I think we have a chance to be stronger than ever before. We've learned a lot, and we have tremendous stimulus now. Tremendous stimulus. And we're going for more. Hopefully, we'll be doing an infrastructure bill so we can rebuild our roads and highways and bridges and tunnels and all of the things that we should be doing for our country. We're going to rebuild our country, not other countries where they don't even appreciate it.

As our citizens persevere through this present challenge, we are renewing American unity, and we're replenishing American will, and we are witnessing new American valor each and every day. We see it every day. The daring and determination of our people in this crisis reminds us that no matter how hard it gets, no matter what obstacles we must overcome, Americans will keep on fighting to victory, and we will secure the glorious future that our citizens so richly deserve, especially after going through this nightmare, this evil beast.

So we're getting very close, and hopefully, it will—hopefully, it's on the other side, and it will end soon. And I think it will. And I just think that the people of this country are fantastic.

So we'll take a few questions, and then Vice President will take over.

Please go ahead. Please.

The President's Initial Coronavirus Response/Restrictions on Travel From China to the U.S.

Q. Thank you so much, Mr. President. ABC is reporting that your intelligence community was warning about the virus as early as November and produced a detailed report about the outbreak in China. When did you first learn about the intelligence? And could you have acted on it then?

The President. Well, I learned when I started—when I learned about the gravity of it was sometime just prior to closing the country to China. And when we closed up the flights coming in from China and various other elements—and then, as you know, we closed up to Europe.

So I don't know exactly, but I'd like to see the information.

Yes, please. Please.

Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity/Coronavirus Testing Access and Technology

Q. Mr. President, a lot of Americans want to see businesses reopen, to get back to work.

The President. Yes. So do I, more than anybody.

Q. So what specifically has to happen for you to feel that it is safe to reopen the country? And what is your plan to do that?

The President. Well, I think we can say that we have to be on that down side of that slope and heading to a very strong direction that this thing is gone. We could do it in phases. We can go to some areas, which you know. Some areas are much less affected than others.

But it would be nice to be able to open with a big bang and open up our country—or certainly most of our country. And I think we're going to do that soon. If you look at what's happening, I would say we're ahead of schedule.

Now, you hate to say it too loudly, because all of the sudden, things don't happen. But I think we will be sooner rather than later. But we'll be sitting down with the professionals. We'll be sitting down with many different people and making a determination. And those meetings will start taking place fairly soon.

Q. So you wouldn't do that until the health experts tell you it's safe to do it?

The President. Yes, I would rely very heavily on them. Yes.

Q. Do you think—is there a system for monitoring and testing that you're looking at that will lead that to be safe?

The President. Yes. We're putting in—yes. We're putting in very heavy testing systems. We have the best testing systems.

And again, don't forget when we look at cases, I'm looking at some—I'm not going to insult anybody, I'm not going to insult any country—but I'm looking at countries that are showing less cases than us; that's testing. We're testing more than anybody. And you—you saw exponentially, more than anybody, by far. And our testing has become—I think it will end up being a big strength. In fact, the other countries—other countries that the media talked about are now calling us for what are we doing and how are we doing it so quickly and where are we getting these tests because our tests are really good now. They've been proven to be very accurate.

Yes, please.

Q. Thank you, President Trump. Two quick questions.

The President. Yes. Sure.

Tennessee Valley Authority

Q. One on infrastructure. Members of your administration and Members of Congress have pointed out that the top paid Federal employee, it's not the President, it's the head of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and he made $8 million last year and some——

The President. It's ridiculous. I agree. It's ridiculous. I think it's the highest paid Government—long before I got here—you said Tennessee Valley Authority, right? Has to be the highest paid man in any government; makes approximately $8 or $9 million. I don't know the gentleman, but he's got a heck of a job. He gets paid a lot of money. He's been there for a long while, hasn't he?

Q. This one actually is new. He came in April. But the previous one was——

The President. Well, that's a separate—yes, that's separate. But I'm talking about the—we just have some new people going on the Board, I know.

But as you know, that's a quasi-public agency. And whoever the head of the agency is, that person makes a lot of money——

Q. And if I could ask my second question——

The President. ——which is an amazing thing, right? And when we want them to do something, they're not there for us. That's not good. That's not good. They've been there for a long time. That's been a story for a long time.

Q. And I assume that you would support reducing that salary as part of the infrastructure bill?

The President. Yes. Reducing it by a lot.

Q. Thank you. And my other question is——

The President. That would be the greatest job in the history of government, almost. Certainly if you're into money. Tennessee Valley Authority. That's right.

Go ahead.

Q. So——

The President. I've been waiting for somebody to ask me about that. It's been bothering me for a long time too.

Go ahead.

Netflix's "Tiger King" Program

Q. So one of the biggest rating hits of the coronavirus, aside from these briefings, has been a show on Netflix called "Tiger King."

The President. Yes.

Q. And the man who's the star of this is a former zoo owner who's serving a 22-year prison sentence. He's asking you for a pardon, saying he was unfairly convicted. Your son yesterday jokingly said that, you know, he was going to advocate for it. And I was wondering if you've seen the show and if you have any thoughts on pardoning Joe Exotic.

The President. Which son? It must be Don.

Q. It was.

The President. I had a feeling it was Don. Is that what he said? I don't know. I know nothing about it. He has 22 years for what? What did he do?

Q. He allegedly hired someone to murder an animal rights activist. But he said that he didn't do that. And he was——

The President. You think he didn't do it? Are you on his side?

Q. Well, I'm a reporter. I shouldn't take sides. But——

The President. Are you recommending a pardon?

Q. No. I'm not advocating anything yet.

The President. As a reporter, you're not allowed to do that. You'd be criticized by these—would you recommend a pardon?

Q. I'm not weighing in on "Tiger King," Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't think you would. I don't think you would.

Go ahead. Do you have a question?

Q. I do like Joe Exotic, I will say.

The President. I'll take a look. Is that Joe Exotic?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's Joe Exotic? [*Laughter*]

Q. Let me get back to——

The President. Go ahead.

Q. ——the coronavirus if I can, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Coronavirus Mortality Projections

Q. Last week, your top experts were saying that we should expect 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in this country. You've been talking about how it looks like maybe things are plateauing. Are these numbers now being revised downward? I know you don't want people to stop social distancing and that sort of thing, but what can you tell us about the numbers? Are they being revised down?

The President. My—yes. My impression, Jim [Jim Acosta, CNN], is those were the numbers that were set, and they were set as an expectation from quite a while ago. I think we're just doing much better than those numbers.

If either of you would like to talk about that, it's a fair question.

Vice President Michael R. Pence. Deborah.

The President. Do you want to come up? Deborah.

Q. I know Dr. Redfield said something about it too.

White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Deborah L. Birx. Yes, so I think all of you—many of you have done the analysis of the same models that we utilized. And if you do the models of the models, you end up with that range. At the same time, we've carefully looked at

Italy and Spain. And we are doing much better, in many cases, than several other countries. And we're trying to understand that.

[*Ambassador Birx continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I think this will change how people look at respiratory diseases, because it will change what is possible when the globe, and particularly the American people, do this level of mitigation. I think, as I talked about yesterday, we are still—we are still in awe, really, of the American people's strength in this and following through.

Q. And if I could just ask, Mr. President——

The President. Yes. I'm going to do that. I'm going to ask Bob to come up just for a second. Director——

I think that's it: We have a—we've done, they have done, everybody has done—everybody, a great job. So those were original projections. And we don't want to say anything about beating it yet, but I think we will have a very good chance to beat them very substantially.

Bob, please.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert R. Redfield, Jr. Thank you, Mr. President. And I just want to add to what Ambassador Birx said. I mean, this is a consequence of the commitment of the American people. You know, a lot of us have always had challenges of changing behavior, whether—if it's exercising regularly or different habits with smoking, when it—when it affects us.

What's been remarkable to watch here is how the American public has changed their behavior when it protects the vulnerable.

Vice President Pence. That's right.

Director Redfield. I think that's really what I'm so proud to see.

Vice President Pence. That's well said.

Director of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy Peter K. Navarro/Restrictions on Travel From China to the U.S.

Q. And, Mr. President, just a follow-up on something from yesterday, and a quick just yes or no question. Yesterday you said you had not seen Peter Navarro's memo on the coronavirus back in January and February 23.

The President. Yes.

Q. Were you ever briefed on those memos? Did you ever discuss those memos with anybody on your——

The President. I don't remember that. I've now seen the memo. I saw it. It was—Peter sends a lot of memos. I didn't see the memo. As you know, World Health was saying that was not correct, because at the time, they called it wrong.

But I didn't see the memo. But I acted as quickly as—people were shocked that I acted so quickly. And everybody thought I was wrong, because I did act so quickly as you know, with respect to closing the borders—with respect not only to China, but with Europe I closed the borders. And I think that was very important.

But no, I didn't see the memo at the time. But I have seen it since.

Yes, please.

Q. One other quick question——

The President. Wait a minute, Jim. Let me—let me do a couple of others. We'll go back.

World Health Organization

Q. The head of the World Health Organization today warned against politicizing——

The President. I agree with that.

Q. And he said that the consequence of this politicization could actually create "more body bags." It's a pretty vivid image. What do you believe the consequences of the U.S. pulling out its funding of the WHO would actually be—[*inaudible*]—like this?

The President. Well, I think when you say more body bags, I think we would have done—and he would have been much better serving the people that he's supposed to serve if they gave a correct analysis. I mean, everything was, I said, China-centric: "Everything was going to be fine. No human to human. Keep the borders open." He wanted me to keep the borders open. I closed the borders despite him, and that was a hard decision to make at the time.

We were all together, and we made a decision against the World Health Organization. So when he says "politicizing," he's politicizing. That shouldn't be.

But look, we spent $450 billion, $452 billion. Almost $500 billion last year. Hundreds of billions in previous years. And they've got to do better than that. They've got to do better. When you talk about politics, I can't believe—he's talking about politics when look at the relationship they have to China.

So China spends $42 million, we spend $450 million, and everything seems to be China's way. That's not right. It's not fair to us, and honestly, it's not fair to the world.

Okay. Question in the back. Yes.

Tracking of Coronavirus Patients/Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. There's breaking news today in a couple of reports from a couple different outlets that Jared Kushner's team is seeking to create a national coronavirus database, a tracking system for patients who have been diagnosed. Now, his spokesperson said that that's not true.

The President. Yes. It's not——

Q. It's not true?

The President. I have never heard about it. Doesn't sound like a bad idea, actually. But I have not heard about that.

Q. So you would be okay with it if were?

The President. I don't know if I'd be okay. I have to see it. But it sounds very scientific, and it sounds like it could be good, based on tracking. But it also has to do with rights and lots of different constitutional questions. I have not heard that at all.

Q. Okay. So some people are concerned it would be like the post-9/11 PATRIOT Act, that it ultimately led to the FISA abuse. Are there any—are you concerned about that?

The President. Yes—the FISA abuse, of which I was the one abused. And a couple of other people, in all fairness.

No, I don't know anything about it. I haven't heard it. I mean, I'll speak to him. I don't—I don't think so. They would have told me. I would have known about it.

Please.

Nevada Gaming Industry

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Nevada delegation is unhappy because smaller casinos and businesses that make a profit——

The President. In Nevada?

Q. ——from gaming—in Nevada—found out they're not eligible for the CARES Act PPP money. Is this—and I talked to one member who said gaming——

The President. You mean because of the number of employees?

Q. Because of the number of employees——

The President. And yet they're small businesses.

Q. And they thought gaming would be—would not be treated any differently than any other business with this. Was this an oversight?

The President. Well, I can look at that. I could look. It's a great State, and I will take a look at that strongly. Are you talking only the smaller casinos?

Q. That's—yes.

The President. Yes. I'll take a look at that. Fine. I don't mind that.

Q. Is the first you've heard about it?

The President. Please. Yes. We'll take a look. Yes. We haven't heard. Nobody has told me about it, but I'll look at it.

They—it's a great State. They do a great job. So I'm going to look at it very strongly. I understand what they mean.

Please.

Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity/Coronavirus Mortality Projections/Spanish Influenza Pandemic

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Turning to the economy, what if you urge Americans to go back to work, and they don't listen to you? Would you leave that up to the Governors, to businesses, to citizens to decide when it's safe to stop social distancing?

The President. Well, when you say they don't listen, I think they're going to listen. They want to go back. Everybody wants. They're going stir crazy. They have been in those houses and those apartments and their buildings. I mean, they've really been—they have done a great job.

Again, when you look—the question was just asked about—you know, about how we're doing compared to projections. Those were just original projections, the big projection being 2.2 million people would die if we did nothing. That was another decision we made: Close it up. That was a big decision that we made.

Two very smart people walked into my office, and they said, "Listen, these are your alternatives." And that was a projection of, I guess, 1.5 to 2.2 million people would die if we didn't close it up. That's a lot of people. So, if we do a number that's tremendously smaller than that—now, if we did close it up, the numbers got to 100 to 220 million people.

So, if we can stay substantially under the 100, which was the original projection, I think we all did a very good job, even though it's a lot of people.

Q. Do you think that will happen by May 1?

The President. Say it?

Q. Do you think we will be on track for that by May 1?

The President. Well, right now we're—I mean, we're doing well in terms of the numbers. I can't tell you in terms of the date. You know, we don't want to go down, and then we can start going up, if we're not careful. So we have to be careful.

As far as distancing—social distancing and other things—certainly, for a while. You know, at some point, that's going away. We'll be able to sit next to each other and every—like we have all our lives. This is a very unique thing. This has not happened, anything like this, of this magnitude, since 1917, 1918, the great pandemic. That was something.

But yes—no, people want to sit next to each other at restaurants. They want to sit next to each other like normal at a football game, baseball game, basketball game, hockey game. No, we want to go back to life.

Now, the first period of time, maybe we'll go a little bit slower, and maybe we'll be talking about distancing. But at some point, we expect to be back like it was before. And hopefully, it will never happen. Hopefully, it will—if it does happen it's going to be in a hundred years from now. The last one, 1917—that's something. That's a long time ago. And that was—that was a horrible thing.

Jim, go ahead.

Absentee Voting/Voter Fraud

Q. Yes, I wanted to get back to something you were saying yesterday about people going to Wisconsin and voting——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——in the middle of this pandemic, I mean, really putting their lives on a line. And you said: Well, if they do that, vote by mail, perhaps, we'll have voter fraud in this country.

And I just wanted to ask you, voters in five States—Utah, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, and Oregon—all vote by mail. Can you or the White House staff or your campaign provide any evidence to back up your claim that mail-in voting is rife with fraud, like the example you gave of people working in rooms, filling out false ballots?

The President. Yes, sure. Well, what happened——

Q. You've been talking about voter fraud——

The President. Well, what happened—yes. True.

Q. ——since the beginning of this administration.

The President. It's very fair.

Q. And where is the evidence of it?

The President. The—I think there's a lot of evidence, but we'll provide you with some, okay? And there's evidence that's being compiled just like it's being compiled in the State of California, where they settled with Judicial Watch, saying that a million people should not have been voting in—you saw that.

Q. But all the experts say voter fraud is rare.

The President. Wait, excuse me. I'm just telling you. I'm telling you, in California, in the great State of California, they settled, and we could have gone a lot further. Judicial Watch settled where they agreed that a million people should not have voted, where they were 115 years old and lots of things, and people were voting in their place.

What I see and—you know, every one of those States that you mentioned is a State that happens to be won by the Democrats. And if you have a position like me, where it's registered, you're here, and we're voting someplace where I'm not—I haven't left the White House in, I guess, months, other than to, you know, ask a ship to—you know, wave it goodbye to New York—which, by the way, is now going—as you know, being used for the purpose that we're talking about, which a lot of people wanted.

Q. Do you—you tweeted: "Mail-in voting"——

The President. Wait a minute.

Q. ——"doesn't work out well for the Republicans."

The President. Well it's—it hasn't.

Q. So isn't your——

The President. It certainly hasn't.

Q. Isn't your concern really just political?

The President. But if you're a senior citizen and if you're somebody that needs it, I'm all for it. But they have to be very careful, because you know the things with bundling and all of the things that are happening with votes by mail where thousands of votes are gathered. And I'm not going to say which party does it, but thousands of votes are gathered, and they come in and they're dumped in a location, and then, all of a sudden, you lose elections that you think you're going to win.

Q. But where is the proof that that's happened?

The President. I won't to stand for it. Well, we're going to find out about the proof, because you're going to see what's going on. And I'm not going to stand for it. Our voting system—first of all, we should have voter ID. When you vote, you should have voter ID. And if you send something in, you should be sure—as a State and as a country, you should be sure that that vote is meaningful and it's not just made fraudulently, because there's a lot of fraudulent voting going on in this country. This country should have voter ID.

Okay, let's do another one. Go, please. Thank you, Jim.

Experimental Drugs and Therapies

Q. Mr. President, currently, the only way that we can track these millions of doses of hydroxychloroquine that are being distributed across the country——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——is through the E-Health DataSystem. How systematically is your Task Force watching this system, understanding it's early?

The President. Well, I think it's very systematic. Yes, we're distributing the hydroxy all through the country. It's being distributed in large amounts. We have it coming in now. And we were up to 29 million doses; then, we went to 30 million doses. But we have it coming in all throughout the country, and much of it's being distributed. In fact, it will start going down, what we have in our stockpile.

Q. But the only—[*inaudible*].

The President. And, again, it's had—you know, I—I hope it works. Again, I'm not a doctor, as you possibly have found out. I'm not a doctor, but I'm a person with common sense.

And we've had some very good results over the course——

Q. Through the E-Health DataSystem?

The President. ——including a woman who just reported it 2 days ago.

Yes?

Q. Through the E-Health DataSystem, are they—is that operating——

The President. I think no. We're looking—we're looking to provide it in many different ways. In many ways, we're—in certain instances, we've been asked—in the case of Michigan, we've been asked who the Governor of Michigan would like to—I think she's become a big fan of it as a medication, as a—as something that's going to help with this horrible virus. And we're delivering it to the governments of various States when they ask. So certain States are asking, certain governments are asking, and we're delivering it directly to the government.

Yes, please. Go ahead.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. We know many people around the world are paying close attention to this press conference.

The President. Yes. Yes.

Q. So on behalf of——

The President. Good. Where are you from?

Q. ——foreign media——

The President. Where are you from?

Q. I'm from Taiwan.

The President. Good.

European Union's Export of Medical Supplies to Iran

Q. Yes. On behalf of foreign media group, I would like to ask you two questions. First question is that the French President Macron called Iranian President Rouhani and say the Europe has started to ship the medical goods to Iran. Would you consider——

The President. Medical goods?

Q. Yes.

The President. That doesn't bother me.

Q. Yes, so will you——

The President. No, if they're sending medical goods to Iran, it doesn't bother me. Okay?

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidate Senator Bernard Sanders/Former President Barack Obama/Trade Policy

Q. Yes, so the other question is that the world is also paying attention to the U.S. election. So we are also—we know that Bernie Sanders has dropped out today.

The President. I did see that today.

Q. Yes.

The President. Well, he didn't really drop out. He didn't really—what about his delegates? I mean, he—he said he's going to keep his delegates and—which is sort of interesting. He's going to keep his delegates, and he'd like to get more now.

Now, is he dropping out or not? That's not dropping out. When you keep your delegates and then you want more delegates before you get to the convention, that's a weird deal going on there. I don't know what's happening.

Q. So what's——

The President. And I don't know why President Obama hasn't supported Joe Biden a long time ago. There is something he feels is wrong. Why isn't—he'll come out. I'm sure he's got to come out at some point, because he certainly doesn't want to see me for 4 more years. We're not—we think a little bit differently.

You know what? I'll tell you, it does amaze me that President Obama hasn't supported Sleepy Joe. It just hasn't happened. When is it going to happen? When is it going to happen? Why isn't he? He knows something that you don't know, that I think I know, but you don't know. So it will be interesting.

But with Bernie, I saw his standard fare today. I watched. And I hope that a lot of Bernie Sanders's people, just like they did last time—we got a tremendous percentage of Bernie people. And I think they voted for me largely because of trade, because Bernie and I agree on trade. We agree that the United States has been ripped off by virtually every country they do business with. The difference is, I've done a lot about it, and I'm doing more about it. And we've made incredible trade deals, including USMCA, the deal with China, and then, all of a sudden, that gets disturbed by this virus situation.

But China has to spend almost $250 billion on purchasing our products, $40 to $50 billion with our farmers. And the Bernie Sanders people are big believers on what I'm saying on trade. And I got a lot of them in the last election. That surprised people, but it didn't surprise me.

No, those are great people. They're great people. But I just—look, I'm looking at Bernie Sanders. I watched this morning, and I said, "What is that all about?" Mike, you saw that—the delegates. The delegates. He's not giving up his delegates. He's keeping them, and he said he wants to get more of them. And I think he's doing it to negotiate, I assume. But I don't know, that's a hard thing to do.

Yes, Jeff, go ahead.

Global Oil Markets/Domestic Oil Production/Russia/Saudi Arabia/Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

Q. Yes, Mr. President, OPEC is meeting with Russia tomorrow and some other countries to discuss oil prices.

The President. Yes.

Q. Oil prices are at $23 a barrel.

The President. Oh, that's good. Finally——

Q. What——

The President. ——somebody knows something when they ask a question.

Q. What is your message to them ahead of their meeting tomorrow? Will the U.S. consider a coordinated cut of production here?

The President. I don't think. Look, we already cut. You know, we're, like, very market-oriented. If you look at Texas and if you look at North Dakota, and if you look at some of our States that do this very well, they've already cut way back. You know, they cut back automatically.

Q. So you don't think it's necessary?

The President. But in the case of Russia, in the case of Saudi Arabia, they increased production at a time when you didn't need it, and then they got hit by the virus, which knocked out 40 percent of the market. And now they're flooded with oil.

Look, I just say this: You have two countries that are getting hurt very badly. Russia is getting hurt, and that's their primary source. And Saudi Arabia, that's their—definitely their primary source. And it doesn't make sense that they flooded the market. For whatever reason, they did that for themselves. It's a argument that they had. And I think they'll straighten it out.

A lot of progress has been made over the last week, and it will be interesting to see what comes out of OPEC tomorrow. But OPEC, obviously—for many years, I used to think OPEC was very unfair. I hated OPEC. You want to know the truth? I hated it, because it was a fix. But somewhere along the line, that broke down, and it went the opposite way.

And we have a tremendously powerful energy industry in this country now. Number one in the world. And I don't want those jobs being lost. Okay?

Q. What will you do—just to follow up to that, sir. What will you do if they don't end up cutting tomorrow?

The President. We'll see. I mean, I have a lot of options.

Please.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I've got a lot of good options, Jeff. Beauties. I might like it even more.

Q. Tariffs presumably being one of them?

The President. No, you'll watch. Let's see what happens. Hopefully, they can make a deal.

Let's go.

Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity/Federal Coronavirus Response/Availability of Medical Supplies and Equipment

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Clearly, Americans are getting very anxious to go back to work.

The President. I agree.

Q. You're sounding optimistic——

The President. Including me.

Q. ——yet still very vague. Now that the IMHE model specifically has been adjusted down to 61,000, when are we going to open back up? Can you give us a better date? Is it going to be April 30, May 1?

The President. You said adjusted back down, 61,000. What was adjusted back?

Q. The IMHE model. The one that originally predicted, like, between 100- and 200,000.

The President. Yes. Go ahead. It's still a big number, right? Sixty-one. Right?

Q. It's a big number.

The President. That's a big number. Go ahead.

Q. But can you give us a more specific date? Will it be April 30, May 1?

The President. Well, I don't want to do that. Look, I had a date, and I thought it was a very aspirational day. It's turning out to be very interesting, because a lot of good things are happening by Easter. But I had a very aspirational date. I didn't think you could make it. I didn't say we would do it by Easter, but I said, "Boy, wouldn't it be great to shoot for Easter"? That would be a great day, a beautiful day, a very important day to a lot of people like me and like some of you in the room. Maybe all of you in the room, frankly.

But Easter is a very important day. So I had—aspirationally, I said, "Let's see if we can do it at Easter." You know, but I said it would be very tough. And I was criticized for that, so I don't like giving dates. And that wasn't a date, that was just an aspiration. That would have been incredible.

But I don't think we're going to be very far behind. And some of these models are looking like Easter is going to be a very important date anyway, because of the curve. I mean, it's hitting the top, and it's starting to come down. And one person said Easter is looking like a good time. So a good time for that, for heading down. So we'll see what happens.

Look, there's no reason to do that. We have a lot of good things happening. When I spoke to the Governor of Louisiana, he said, "Tony, they need far less beds than they needed." I said, "Well, good, because we're building 1,000-room additional." We built them 1,000—the beds. And now we're building another thousand.

And I said, "Listen, is there a way that we don't build—I don't want to build them if they don't need them." In New York, the Javits isn't too heavily used; it's ready to go—2,900 beds—plus, we now have the ship set for COVID if they want to use it. And we're using it for Governor Murphy in New Jersey. So we'll see what happens.

But you know, the numbers are coming way down. The ventilators, we're all set. We have a lot to go if we want. But we're not getting—I'm not getting calls where they need ventilators anymore. So we were right on those ventilators.

I'd love to have additional ventilators for some of the countries that are our allies and our friends. And even if they're not our allies and our friends, you're saving human lives. But I'd love to see if we had some—I mean, we're making a lot of ventilators right now. We have a—and they take a while to make, and they're very expensive, and they're very complex to make. But I'd love to be able to help other countries once we're taken care of.

But I just sent 100 ventilators to Colorado, and that was great. A Senator there who is a terrific Senator—Cory and—Cory Gardner. And he called me last night. He said, "Could you get 100 ventilators for Colorado?" And we just sent them out, and there'll be there very shortly.

So—but it looks like we're in great shape from the bed standpoint. It looks like we're in great shape from the ventilator standpoint. And you just heard, I ordered 500 million masks—500 N95's and others—and surgical. But we ordered 500 million masks: 300 and 200. And they're going to be here very shortly.

So we're really in great shape, and we started off with an empty cupboard.

So I'm going to leave the Vice President and his group to handle it. And I will see you probably tomorrow. Okay? Thank you.

Q. One more question on ventilators. One more question on ventilators.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Experimental Drugs and Therapies

Q. You don't have any investments in hydro—hydroxychloroquine?

The President. No, I don't.

Q. Okay.

The President. No, I don't. Thanks. Good question.

[*The President left the briefing room, and the briefing continued with remarks by Vice President Pence and other Task Force members.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. John Bel Edwards of Louisiana; Jeffrey J. Lyash, chief executive officer and president, and William D. Johnson, former chief executive officer and president, Tennessee Valley Authority; Joseph A. "Joe Exotic" Maldonado-Passage, who is serving a 22-year sentence in Federal prison for his alleged involvement in a murder-for-hire plot and several other Federal charges; Director- General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of the World Health Organization; White House Senior Adviser Jared C. Kushner; Gov. Gretchen E. Whitmer of Michigan; 2020 Democratic Presidential candidate former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci. A reporter referred to Carole Baskin, founder and chief executive officer, Big Cat Rescue; and U.S. Special Representative for International Negotiations Avrahm J. Berkowitz, in his capacity as a spokesman for Senior Adviser Kushner. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary included the entire briefing.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : White House Coronavirus Task Force press briefings.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Birx, Deborah L.; Edwards, John Bel; Fauci, Anthony S.; Gardner, Cory S.; Johnson, Boris; Johnson, William D.; Kushner, Jared C.; Lyash, Jeffrey J.; Maldonado-Passage, Joseph A. "Joe Exotic"; Modi, Narendra; Murphy, Philip D.; Navarro, Peter K.; Obama, Barack; Pence, Michael R.; Pompeo, Michael R.; Redfield, Robert R., Jr.; Sanders, Bernard; Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus; Trump, Donald J., Jr.; Whitmer, Gretchen E.; Whitsett, Karen.

Subjects: Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Government and private sector, coordination efforts; Business and industry : Small businesses, promotion efforts; Canada : Trade agreement with U.S.; China : Coronavirus outbreak; China : Trade agreement with U.S.; China : Trade with U.S.; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Elections : 2020 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Energy : Domestic production, promotion efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Health and Human Services, Department of : Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Health and Human Services, Department of : National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; Health and Human Services, Department of : Strategic National Stockpile; Health and medical care : Experimental drugs and therapies; Health and medical care : Health care workers, service and dedication; Health and medical care : Medical equipment and supplies; Holidays and special

observances : Easter; Holidays and special observances : Passover; Immigration and naturalization : Foreign nationals and refugees, U.S. admission policy; India : Prime Minister; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Louisiana : Governor; Mexico : Trade agreement with U.S.; Michigan : Governor; Navy, Department of the : Naval hospital ships, deployment; Nevada : Gaming industry; New Jersey : Governor; Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries; Russia : Oil supply and refining; Saudi Arabia : Oil supply and refining; State, Department of : Secretary; Tennessee Valley Authority; United Kingdom : Prime Minister; White House Coronavirus Task Force; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Senior Adviser; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Trade and Manufacturing Policy; White House Office : Coronavirus Response Coordinator; White House Office : Vice President; World Health Organization.

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