

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2020

Remarks on Coronavirus Vaccine Development and an Exchange With Reporters
May 15, 2020

The President. Thank you very much. It's very hot today. Please, sit down. This is going to be a very hot one, and we apologize to everybody out there that's going to suffer through it. But you know what? It's better than bad weather.

And it's great to be in the Rose Garden. I want to especially thank this group for joining us as we announce a historic, groundbreaking initiative in our ongoing effort to rapidly develop and manufacture a coronavirus vaccine.

We're joined by Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Secretary Mark Esper, Secretary Alex Azar, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, FDA Director Dr. Stephen Hahn, Director of the National Institute of Health Dr. Francis Collins, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Birx. We're joined by a very terrific group of professionals.

Tomorrow will mark 30 days since we released the White House guidelines for a safe and phased opening of America. That's what we're doing. It's the opening of America. We're going to have an amazing year next year. We're going to have a great transition into the fourth quarter.

As of this morning, almost every State has taken steps to begin reopening, and the American people are doing an extraordinary job of continuing to take precautions while, at the same time, wanting to start—and they will be starting—to resume their American way of life.

We will be reigniting our economic engines. We're going to be taking care of our most vulnerable, which are our senior citizens and some others. We are going to be working very, very hard on our senior citizens and our nursing homes and various communities to support those that are struggling in this very difficult time. Others don't have the same kind of struggle.

For example, today Secretary Perdue, together with Ivanka Trump, launched the Farmers and [to]* Families Food Box Program, which will provide \$3 billion to help small farmers. And it'll be helping farmers, ranchers, but it'll be bringing food to some of the food lines and some of the food kitchens that you've been seeing on television. And I said: "Why aren't we doing that? We have all of this tremendous food produced by our farmers and our ranchers." And so we're going to be buying \$3 billion worth of that food. Great for everybody: our farmers, our ranchers, and the people that need great food.

A key feature of our reopening plan is the largest and most ambitious testing system in the world, by far. America is now conducting close to 350,000 tests per day—an unthinkable number just a short while ago—more than anybody in the world, by far, suggesting many States now have excess testing capacity to monitor for new outbreaks. Florida, many other States have so much testing, they—the testers are waiting for people to show up. It's great.

Another essential pillar of our strategy to keep America open is the development of effective treatments and vaccines as quickly as possible. Want to see if we can do that very quickly. We're looking to—when I say "quickly," we're looking to get it by the end of the year, if we can. Maybe before. We're doing tremendously well.

From the earliest days of the pandemic, we have marshalled the genius of American scientists and researchers from all across Government and the private sector, from academia,

* White House correction.

from everywhere, to vanquish the virus. And tremendous strides have been made, I can tell you. I get to see it every day. Tremendous strides are being made.

Scientists at the NIH began developing the first vaccine candidate on January 11—think of that—within hours of the virus's genetic code being posted online. So, January 11. Most people never even heard what was going on January 11. And we were out there trying to develop a vaccine, not even knowing what we were up against.

Then, my administration cut through every piece of redtape to achieve the fastest ever, by far, launch of a vaccine trial for this new virus, this very vicious virus. And I want to thank all of the doctors and scientists and researchers involved because they've never moved like this, or never even close. The NIH and HHS have also been working constantly with private industry to evaluate more than 100 potential treatments.

The Food and Drug Administration has swiftly approved more than 130 therapies for active trials; that's what we have right now, 130. And another 450 are in the planning stages. And tremendous potential awaits. I think we're going to have some very interesting things to report in the not-too-distant future. And thank you very much to Dr. Hahn.

Through a historic series of funding bills, my administration is providing roughly \$10 billion to support a medical research effort without parallel. I especially want to thank Senator Steve Daines of Montana for his incredible work. He has worked so hard to secure additional funding for vaccine development. He has been right at the forefront.

Today I want to update you on the next stage of this momentous medical initiative. It's called Operation Warp Speed. That means big, and it means fast. A massive scientific, industrial, and logistical endeavor unlike anything our country has seen since the Manhattan Project. You really could say that nobody has seen anything like we're doing, whether it's ventilators or testing. Nobody has seen anything like we're doing now, within our country, since the Second World War. Incredible.

Its objective is to finish developing and then to manufacture and distribute a proven coronavirus vaccine as fast as possible. Again, we'd love to see if we could do it prior to the end of the year. We think we're going to have some very good results coming out very quickly. In addition, it will continue accelerating the development of diagnostics and breakthrough therapies.

The great national project will bring together the best of American industry and innovation, the full resources of the United States Government, and the excellence and precision of the United States military. We have the military totally involved.

We're also working very strongly with other countries who are also—have some great, great scientists, doctors. And we're all working very closely together, and they're viewing us as the leader, and we are—the relationship with other countries on solving this problem has been incredible.

To date, Operation Warp Speed has brought together all of the experts across the Federal Government from places like the NIH, CDC, FDA, and many other agencies. This historic partnership will now bring together the full resources of the Department of Health and Human Services with the Department of Defense. And we know what that means. That means the full power and strength of military—the military. And that—really, talking about the logistics—if we get it, when we get it. That means the logistics, getting it out, so that everybody can take it.

And today we're proud to announce the addition of two of the most highly respected and skilled professionals in our country—worldwide respected. Operation Warp Speed's chief scientist will be Dr. Moncef Slaoui, a world-renowned immunologist who helped create 14 new vaccines—that's a lot of our new vaccines—in 10 years, during his time in the private sector. One

of the most respected men in the world in the production and, really, on the formulation of vaccines.

Joining Dr. Slaoui as Chief Operating Officer will be General Gus Perna, a four-star general who currently oversees 190,000 servicemembers, civilians, and contractors as commander of the U.S. Army Materiel Command. That means logistics. That means getting it out. We got to get it out there.

So, General, thank you very much, and, Doctor, thank you very much. It's great to have you onboard. Really highly respected people. Thank you. These two outstanding individuals will provide more details following my remarks.

In preparation for this initiative, experts throughout the Government have been collaborating to evaluate roughly 100 vaccine candidates from all over the world. They have identified 14 that they believe are the most promising, and they're working to narrow that list still further. So we started off with over a hundred, we're down to 14, and we have some really interesting choices to be made. They're doing very well. Through Operation Warp Speed, the Federal Government is providing unprecedented support and resources to safely expedite the trials, moving on at record, record, record speed.

While we accelerate the final phases of vaccine trials, Operation Warp Speed will be simultaneously accelerating its manufacturing and manufacturing process. In other words, we're getting ready so that when we get the good word—that we have the vaccine, we have the formula, we have what we need—we're ready to go, as opposed to taking years to gear up. We're gearing up. It's risky, it's expensive, but we'll be saving massive amounts of time. We'll be saving years if we do this properly, and that's what we're doing. So we're gearing up on the assumption that we'll have, in the near future—relatively near future—a vaccine.

Typically, pharmaceutical companies wait to manufacture a vaccine until it has received all of the regulatory approvals necessary, and this can delay vaccines' availability to the public as much as a year and even more than that. However, our task is so urgent that, under Operation Warp Speed, the Federal Government will invest in manufacturing all of the top vaccine candidates before they're approved. So we're knowing exactly what we're doing before they're approved. That means they better come up with a good vaccine because we're ready to deliver it.

This will eliminate any unnecessary delay and enable us to begin providing Americans with a proven vaccine the day our scientists say: "We're ready. We got it."

And as we work to bring critical medical production back to America, these vaccines will manufacture—that we're going to be focused on and manufacturing, they're all going to be right here in the U.S.A.

Now, we're working, as I said, with other people outside, and that's fine too. We want to get to the solution. We know exactly where the other countries are, and we'll be very happy if they are able to do it. We'll help them with delivery. We'll help them with—in every way we can. We have no ego when it comes to this, no ego whatsoever.

Operation Warp Speed is also making the necessary preparations to distribute these lifesaving treatments at scale. So we're talking about massive numbers so that millions of Americans will quickly have access to them. This includes ramping up production of supplies needed for distribution.

And I have to say, we're also very, very much involved in other things other than the vaccine. If you take a look at what we're doing beyond vaccines, it's going to be very interesting and we may talk about that in a little while. But this includes ramping up production of supplies needed for distribution, such as cold chain storage, glass vials, needles, syringes, and more. We'll

have everything right on hand, ready to go. When a vaccine is ready, the U.S. Government will deploy every plane, truck, and soldier required to help distribute it to the American people as quickly as possible.

America is blessed to have the most brilliant, talented doctors and researchers anywhere in the world. We have the mightiest military by far in the world. Our military is completely rebuilt. Much of the equipment has been delivered; some of it's on the way. All made right here in the U.S.A.

We took over very, very empty cupboards, I say, medically. We also had empty cupboards in a military sense; our military was in sad shape. It was depleted. We now have the strongest military the United States has ever had by far and the best equipment.

[At this point, the honking of horns by truck drivers participating in a demonstration against low shipping rates along Constitution Avenue, south of the White House grounds, was heard.]

And you hear that outside, that beautiful sound; those are truckers that are with us all the way. They're protesting in favor of President Trump, as opposed to against. There's hundreds of trucks out there. And that's the sign of love, not the sign of your typical protests. So I want to thank our great truckers. They like me, and I like them. We're working on something together.

But we have the mightiest—and they'll be helping us with this, by the way, speaking of truckers. We have the mightiest military in the long history of humankind. We have the best and most devoted workers ever to walk the face of the Earth. And now we're combining all of these amazing strengths for the most aggressive vaccine project in history. There's never been a vaccine project anywhere in history like this.

And I just want to make something clear. It's very important: Vaccine or no vaccine, we're back. And we're starting the process. And in many cases, they don't have vaccines, and a virus or a flu comes, and you fight through it. We haven't seen anything like this in a hundred-and-some-odd years—1917.

But you fight through it. And people sometimes, I guess—we don't know exactly yet, but it looks like they become immune, or at least for a short while, and maybe for life. But you fight through it. But what we'd like to do, if we can, is the vaccine. I think we're going to be successful in doing it and, hopefully, by the end of the year.

Just as generations of Americans before us faced down the most difficult trials, set their sights on the highest summit, and overcame the biggest obstacles, America will meet the moment—and this moment, specifically, in our time. With unrivaled speed, unmatched scale, and the unyielding spirit of the American people, our Nation will come back stronger and greater than ever.

We're going to have a tremendous year next year. We're going to have a really good fourth quarter. We're going to have a very interesting and productive transition quarter, where—Steve is there. And I'm sure our Secretary of the Treasury, I think you feel the same way, Steve. So—and thank you for your good work. Really good work. And it's not finished yet, is it? I want to thank Steve Mnuchin, everybody.

Now I'd like to ask Dr. Slaoui and General Perna to come up and say a few words, followed by Secretary Azar and Secretary Esper.

Thank you all very much. We're doing something that has never been done before. It's going to result in a tremendous end. I think we're going to come up with a solution to a problem like this country probably has never seen before.

But it's an honor to be your President. We're doing a great job. These people are doing an incredible job. The people right here—I want to thank you all. Total professionals. Great men, great women. Thank you all very much.

Please.

Operation Warp Speed Chief Adviser Moncef Slaoui. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, everyone. It's a great honor and a privilege for me to have the opportunity to serve our country and the world in this remarkable endeavor—extraordinary endeavor—helping them and supporting them to do it.

The Operation Warp Speed's objectives are very clear. The President has described them. And I believe they are very credible. I also believe they are extremely challenging. However, I am really confident that our team across the many governmental agencies that are involved in these efforts—the NIH, the CDC, the FDA, ASPR, and, of course, with the support of the Army—and our partners in the private sector, we'll be able and we'll do the utmost to deliver these objectives.

In fact, Mr. President, I have very recently seen early data from a clinical trial with a coronavirus vaccine. And this data made me feel even more confident that we will be able to deliver a few hundred million doses of vaccine by the end of 2020.

The President. That's great.

Chief Adviser Slaoui. And we will do the best we can—[applause]—the best we can to do that. Thank you.

We will, of course, also focus on progressing and accelerating development of medicines for those who unfortunately already caught the virus, as well as optimize the diagnostic tests. This will be our focus 24/7 over the next many months.

Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Doctor, very much.

Chief Adviser Slaoui. Thank you.

Operation Warp Speed Chief Operating Officer General Gustave F. Perna, USA. Good afternoon, Mr. President. Thank you. Thank you for this great honor for allowing me to be a part of this team. I'm very excited about this team. It will be historic as we execute the mission that's been given to us. I also feel very confident that the team will be able to provide the results as directed. It is going to be a herculean task, but the combination of the two main partners, between Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense, their combined strengths, partnered with the other teammates, will ensure our success.

One of the great advantages that we have as a military is our ability to do logistical and sustainment operations afar. We're just going to apply those capabilities to this mission. This mission is about defeating the enemy. We will defeat the enemy. Why? Because winning matters.

And I'm excited to be a part of this team. And, Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Thank you very much, General. We appreciate it.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II. Well, thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership of this historic effort. Your vision for Operation Warp Speed, setting a goal of a vaccine by January 2021, will be one of the great scientific and humanitarian accomplishments in human history.

[Secretary Azar continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

So thank you, Mr. President. And thank you to all of the American scientists and inventors at HHS, at DOD, and elsewhere who are hard at work already. And I really want to express my personal appreciation to Secretary Esper and the Department of Defense because this partnership is what's going to make this truly an historic endeavor.

Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper. Well, thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership of this bold and historic initiative. The Department of Defense is very excited and committed to working closely with our partners at HHS, across the Government, and in the private sector to accomplish the mission we have been given. Winning matters, and we will deliver, by the end of this year, a vaccine at scale to treat the American people and our partners abroad.

[Secretary Esper continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

We were all in then, we are all in now, and we will be all in in the future. And we will deliver on time, bringing the full weight to bear—the full weight of the Department of Defense, all of our first-class, world-class researchers and scientists, our ability to manage logistics at scale, and our great distributional capabilities. We will deliver. We will win this fight. And, Mr. President, thank you again for all that you've done.

The President. Thank you.

Secretary Esper. We will get the job done.

The President. Thank you. I know you will. I know you will.

Any questions? Please. Yes, go ahead.

Coronavirus Vaccine Development

Q. Mr. President, you said, "No vaccine"—"Vaccine or no vaccine, we're back." What did you mean by that?

The President. We think we're going to have a vaccine in the pretty near future. And if we do, we're going to really be a big step ahead. And if we don't, we're going to be like so many other cases, where you had a problem come in, it'll go away. At some point, it'll go away. It may flare up, and it may not flare up. We'll have to see what happens. But if it does flare up, we're going to put out the fire, and we'll put it out quickly and efficiently. We've learned a lot.

Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters], do you have a question?

Coronavirus Vaccine Development

Q. We've heard that the vaccine typically would take 12 to 18 months to develop. How can you do it in a speedier fashion? What makes you think this will work?

The President. Well, they started actually, I guess you heard, in January—early January. And they've been working on it—I know so many—and private companies have been working on it. The Government's been working on it. So we've got the time because we put a very—and they've literally been working 24 hours a day. So we've got the time, and we hope to be able to do something by the end of the year or shortly thereafter.

But again, you know, it's not solely vaccine-based. Other things have never had a vaccine and they go away. So I don't want people to think that this is all dependent on vaccine, but a vaccine would be a tremendous thing.

And I will tell you, therapeutically, or therapeutics, what's going on there is equally as impressive. We have some things happening. You know, we have the remdesivir from Gilead. We have other things that are very good. I think that a lot is happening therapeutically. I can't say that it's, relatively speaking, equal to what's going on with vaccines, but I think it's doing very well. Very well. So therapeutics are a big factor.

Yes, please.

Coronavirus Vaccine Development/International Cooperation

Q. Is there a global competition to develop this vaccine? Like if France develops it first, will they share it with us?

The President. Yes, if—and we have that very well worked out. Whoever gets it is going to be very proud to give it and develop it—they've developed it. And we'll see what happens. We've got countries that are allies that are—we have some countries, frankly, that aren't allies, where we're working very closely together.

So we're working together with many different countries. And again, we have no ego. We have no ego. Whoever gets it, we think it's great. We're going to work with them; they're going to work with us. Likewise, if we get it, we're going to be working with them. So it's very important. It's a very good question, actually.

Yes, please.

Federal Guidance for Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity

Q. Mr. President, what do you say to those business owners and other people who are really questioning the guidance that the CDC put out last night? There was a concern that it would be overly prescriptive. Now there's a concern it's not prescriptive enough. What are business owners to do?

The President. Well, I thought the guidance was very good. I've heard very good reviews on the guidance. And, you know, the media will never be satisfied. If we gave you more description, that would be no good. If we gave you less, that would be no good. But I thought it was very good, and I've heard a lot of good things.

Go ahead. Please. Green.

Coronavirus Testing

Q. Mr. President, do you have a problem or any concerns—do you have any concerns about the Abbott test, given some of the new numbers that have come out about its accuracy?

The President. No, Abbott is a great—it's a great test. It's a very quick test. And it can always be very rapidly double-checked. If you're testing positive or negative, it can always be double-checked. But it's a very good test. It's very portable, very quick. Okay?

Coronavirus Vaccine Development/China

Q. And then what happens if China is the country that develops the vaccine? What happens if it's China? Will the U.S. still have access to that vaccine?

The President. I would say the answer to that would be yes. I would say the answer would be yes.

Yes, go ahead, please.

Q. Can you clarify: Do you mean a fully approved vaccine for everyone?

The President. You—excuse me, you're going to have to remove it. You can't hear through your mask.

Q. Do you mean a fully approved vaccine for the entire general public, or a partially approved vaccine for emergency use?

The President. What did she say?

Secretary Azar. [Inaudible]—vaccine or not.

Coronavirus Vaccine Development

Q. Let me go to the mike. Sorry. Let me repeat that now, I'm closer to the mike. Do you mean a fully approved vaccine for everyone, the full public? Or a partially approved vaccine with emergency use?

The President. No, we're looking for a full vaccine for everyone that wants to get it. Not everybody is going to want to get it.

Q. [Inaudible]—the year can you—

The President. But we're looking at a full vaccine. Is that a correct statement?

Secretary Azar. Yes. We'll—

The President. Please. Yes.

Secretary Azar. So the answer is yes. We're working for a fully approved vaccine, but we'll also use the tools we have—for instance, emergency use authorization—as appropriate. We use all of our regulatory tools to bring vaccine available for the entire American population by January.

Protective Face Masks

Q. Okay. And then, Mr. President, could you just clarify: Why are some of you wearing a mask, and why are some of you not wearing a mask?

The President. We've all been tested. I've been tested. We've all been tested. And we're quite a distance away, and we're outdoors. So I told them—I gave them the option: They could wear it or not. So you can blame it on me, but I gave him the option: We could wear it or not.

Yes, please.

Coronavirus Vaccine Development

Q. Mr. President, would a U.S. vaccine be available to the rest of the world at an affordable rate, at a low cost?

The President. The last thing anybody is looking for is profit, in terms of what we're doing. Every company, they want to get it out. We've had that—we've had a great experience on remdesivir. We've had a great experience on everything we've done. People are looking to come up with the answer. They're not looking and—you know, typically they're saying: "Oh, how much am I going to make? How much?" They really have been—there's been a great spirit on this. They want to get to the bottom of it. And I think we'll be able to do that.

India-U.S. Relations/Indian American Community

Q. And one more, Mr. President. The Indian-American communities are appreciating your help in fighting the vaccine—coronavirus. What is your message to those 4 million Indian Americans here?

The President. So, India has been so great. And, as you know, your Prime Minister has been a very good friend of mine. I just got back, a short while ago, from India recently. And we're working very much with India too. And we have a tremendous Indian population in the United States. And many of the people that you're talking about are working on the vaccine too. Great scientists and researchers.

Yes, we're working very closely also with India. Correct. And say hello to your Prime Minister.

Yes, please go ahead.

Coronavirus Vaccine Development/Federal Assistance to States

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What steps, if any, is your administration taking to ensure that the communities and the States that are hardest hit will have first access to the vaccine? Have these discussions been had or are there any plans——

The President. Yes, I think we've done a good job with that. Certain areas have been hit very hard: New York, New Jersey, et cetera, et cetera. You know, working very closely with the Governors. We've worked with all of the Governors. We made a lot of people look very good with what we've done on ventilators, with what we've done on testing. We're working with all of the Governors.

We just sent a big transit package to New Jersey. I just spoke to the Governor of New Jersey, who is a terrific person, by the way, I have to tell you. And I just told him, "A lot of money is coming your way for the transit." And also, I spoke with the Governor of New York, Governor Cuomo. We just had a conversation yesterday. We're sending them a lot of transportation money, so it's important. But we've had a very good relationship working with all of the States, regardless. All of the States.

And if we do get fortunate enough—and I think we're skilled enough—but fortunate enough to have a vaccine, it'll get out fairly and quickly.

Q. Do you foresee that States that are hardest hit will have first dibs? So will, like, New York and New Jersey have——

The President. I think that makes sense, perhaps. You know, perhaps it does. But, you know, I would say probably, but I think they're all going to get well distributed. You know, if you remember where we started, we had no ventilators. We had to make them. And we became a very major manufacturer of ventilators. Now we're helping countries all over the world with ventilators. We're sending them to many countries all over the world. When we started, we didn't have ventilators. We—I inherited nothing. I inherited practically nothing from the previous administration, unfortunately.

Yes, go ahead.

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Mr. President, it's been 3 months since you signed the China trade deal. Between what's happened with coronavirus and the lagging agricultural purchases, are you at any point considering reimposing additional tariffs on China or tearing up the deal in any other way?

The President. Well, I don't want to talk about it. I can say China is buying a lot of our product. But the trade deal—the ink was barely dry when this came in from China. So it's not like we're thrilled.

Okay, go ahead. Please.

Q. Mr. President, can I ask one more?

The President. Yes.

Voice of America

Q. I'm wondering if you're standing by the nomination of Michael Pack to lead Voice of America after news that the DC Attorney General is investigating—[inaudible].

The President. Well, I don't know what happened. I know that Voice of America is run in a terrible manner. Terrible. They're not the "voice of America," they're the opposite of the "voice of America." And we have a man who is very good. I don't know—he's in the nominating process—but I'll have to check that out.

Yes, please.

Coronavirus Vaccine Development/Resumption of Economic and Commercial Activity

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If public confidence is the main thing of getting people back to work and back to schools and so on, is this even possible without a vaccine? How would it be possible without a vaccine—public confidence?

The President. Well, I think a very big factor, frankly, is that very few people are—you know, we read about all of the very sad, very tragic—I've lost friends. Many of us have lost friends. We read about that and we see that, and that's what the news covers, but a very, very small—it's a very small percentage. It's a very, very small percentage. I say it all the time: It's a tiny percentage.

The vast majority, many people don't even know they have it. They have it or they have sniffles or they have a very minor sign and they recover. Not only recover, they probably have immunity, whether it's short term, long term. But they have, probably, immunity. And I think people have to understand that. That's why I think the schools should be back in the fall. I think that lots of things should happen.

I don't think that you should have 70-year-old teachers back yet. They should wait until everything is gone. I don't think you should have a professor that's 65 and has diabetes or has a bad heart back necessarily, or somebody that's older than that. But we want to see our schools back. We want to see our country start to work again.

We created the greatest economy in the history of the world, and we're going to do it again. And you're going to see that next year, and it's going to start—you'll start to see it in the fourth quarter, maybe even before that.

Yes.

Resumption of Commercial and Economic Activity/School Closures and Reopening

Q. Mr. President, are you at all concerned about children or teachers who are in the school bringing it home to their families, their spouses, their grandparents?

The President. I'm concerned about everything, and I'm also concerned about our country. Our country has to get back. And, you know, what you're talking is—when you are doing what we did with the shutdown, that causes death also. It causes massive depression. It causes drugs. It causes suicide. It causes a lot of problems also.

No, our country has to get back to work again. And you see that, just looking and reading, everything that's happening. Our people want to get back. They want to get back.

Yes.

Q. Sir, do you have a plan to prevent the spread if you reopen the schools?

The President. We do. We do. We have a great plan to prevent the spread, but that doesn't mean we're going to close our country for 5 years. Okay? Not going to happen.

Q. Particularly in the schools, you have a plan?

The President. Go ahead.

Coronavirus Mortality Rates

Q. Do you accept that the current death toll is about 86,000?

The President. At current, it's about 86,000. Yes.

Q. Do you think that's accurate, or do you think it's higher than that?

The President. I don't—or lower than that. I don't know. I don't know. Those are the numbers that are being reported. I assume they're correct.

Unlike other countries—I mean, you have some countries—obviously, you have some that are very obviously ridiculous, but our numbers are accurate numbers. We don't do anything with the numbers one way or the other. Whatever it is——

Q. Do you have any indication——

The President. ——that's what we do. We take the numbers as reported. Okay?

Q. Do you have any indication that they could be lower than that?

The President. Oh, I don't know. I don't know. If they were, I'd be very happy if they were lower. I'd like to see numbers lower. I'd like to see no death at all. One death is too many. This should have never happened. This came from China. It should have been stopped in China before it got out to the world. We have 186—it's been updated this morning—186 countries are affected.

And each country that's affected is the same thing. Russia now is badly affected. France is badly affected. You look at what each country—and you can say "affected" or you can say "infected," either way you want to put it.

But you look at these countries. Look at Italy and you look at Spain and you look at all of these great countries, in many cases, how they've had to fight through this. It's a terrible thing that happened. It could have been stopped at the source. It should have been stopped right at the source, but it wasn't.

Thank you all very much. We appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci; White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Deborah L. Birx; Adviser to the President Ivanka M. Trump; Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India; Gov. Philip D. Murphy of New Jersey; and Michael Pack, the President's nominee to be Chief Executive Officer of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (Broadcasting Board of Governors). A reporter referred to Attorney General Karl A. Racine of the District of Columbia.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Coronavirus vaccine development; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Azar, Alex M., II; Birx, Deborah L.; Collins, Francis S.; Cuomo, Andrew M.; Daines, Steven D.; Esper, Mark T.; Fauci, Anthony S.; Hah, Stephen M.; Hahn, Stephen M.; Milley, Mark A.; Mnuchin, Steven T.; Modi, Narendra; Murphy, Philip D.; Pack, Michael; Perdue, George E. "Sonny"; Perna, Gustave F.; Slaoui, Moncef; Trump, Ivanka M.

Subjects: Agriculture : Domestic production, strengthening efforts; Agriculture, Department of : Secretary; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Government and private sector, coordination efforts; China : Coronavirus outbreak; China : Trade agreement with U.S.; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Coronavirus pandemic, international cooperation efforts; Defense, Department of; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Global Media, U.S. Agency for (Broadcasting Board of Governors); Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Health and Human Service, Department of : Secretary; Health and Human Services, Department of : National Institutes of Health; Health and Human Services, Department of : Secretary; Health and Human Services, Department of: Food and Drug Administration; Health and medical care : Experimental drugs and therapies; Health and medical care : Medical equipment and supplies; Health and medical care : Research and development; India : Prime Minister; India : Relations with U.S.; Italy : Coronavirus outbreak; New Jersey : Governor; New York : Governor; Russia : Coronavirus outbreak; Spain : Coronavirus outbreak; Treasury, Department of the : Secretary; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Adviser to the President; White House Office : Coronavirus Response Coordinator.

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