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The President's News Conference
August 14, 2020

The President. Okay. Thank you very much, everybody. So we have some very interesting news. Kevin Clinesmith, a corrupt FBI attorney who falsified FISA warrants in James Comey's very corrupt FBI, is expected to plead guilty. You probably heard that. It just came out. So that's just the beginning, I would imagine, because what happened should never happen again. So he is pleading guilty. Terrible thing. Terrible thing. The fact is, they spied on my campaign, and they got caught. And you'll be hearing more.

Today the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy released a new report on how my administration has harnessed the full power of the Defense Production Act to achieve the greatest industrial mobilization since World War II, in our fight against the China virus.

New factories, businesses, and laboratories are being built all over America to match our Nation's demand for personal protective equipment, pharmaceuticals, drugs, testing supplies, therapeutics, and vaccines. It's been incredible what we've been able to do in a very short period of time. We're helping other countries also, because we've been really—we've been doing it at a level that nobody has ever seen before.

It was just announced, a little while ago, industrial production rose for the third straight month. It's a big thing. Factory output was up 3.4 percent this month after a 5.7 increase last month. Those are getting to be record numbers. And manufacturing capacity utilization is now up to almost 70 percent. So we're coming back very strong. We should have a very good third quarter. We should have an unbelievably good next year. Next year, if we don't mess it up with somebody that has no idea what they're doing, it could be a fantastic year.

My administration has exercised the authority under the Defense Production Act to a number—and a—related authorities—at a—78 times, dispersing over $3.5 billion to speed the development and manufacturing of essential materials. So, put it a little bit differently: The administration has exercised the authority under the Defense Production Act and related authorities 78 times. That's a lot, Peter, right? It's a big number: 78 times. It came in very handy. A lot of times, we just mentioned it, and they did what we asked them to do. Dispersing over $3.5 billion to speed the development and manufacturing of essential materials.

I've used the DPA more comprehensively than any President in history. There was a time when the media would say: "Why aren't you using it? Why aren't you using it?" Well, we have used it a lot, where necessary. Only where necessary. For the most part, we've had tremendous cooperation.

By invoking the DPA, we mobilized the extraordinary productive might of General Motors to manufacture ventilators. GM repurposed the Kokomo, Indiana, plant in just 17 days—an alltime record—and has now produced over 21,000 ventilators.

We're also working with Ford Motor Company and General Electric to produce over 30,000 ventilators a month in Michigan. They've done a great job. Our Nation is now the king of ventilators. I say that: the king of ventilators. We're sending them all over the world and helping a lot of countries that could never have ventilators. And it's—really, I guess we're looking to produce over 200,000 ventilators by the end of the year. Those are some numbers. So we're helping a lot of countries.

In April, I directed 3M to increase its manufacturing of N95 masks. By May, they had increased production by over a million masks a day. Think of that: They increased production of masks by over 1 million a day. 3M is now manufacturing an additional 39 million masks a month. We also worked with Honeywell to open factories in Arizona and Rhode Island. They're now producing over 20 million masks a month.

By the end of the year, domestic U.S. manufacturing will have produced over 1 billion N95 respirators, and all of them are made right here in the U.S.A. That's a big difference from the past. Overall, we've increased N95 mask production by 400 million masks a year. Now, the media might say: "Why not 500? Why not 600?" Nobody has seen numbers like this ever.

We delivered more than $75 million in support to Puritan Medical in Maine. I was up there. I was—as you remember, we had a tremendous visit and tremendous throngs of people along the roads on the way to Puritan Medical. Puritan has doubled their production of testing swabs from 20 million to 40 million per month. They're doing a fantastic job, and so is Maine.

I've also used the DPA to fight price gouging and hoarding. My administration located and seized over a half a million pieces of hoarded personal protective equipment, including 299,000 pairs of medical-grade gloves, 192,000 N95 respirators, and 130,000 surgical masks. That's hoarding.

My administration's decisive actions have yielded truly incredible results. People have done an incredible job. We've replenished the Strategic National Stockpile that was very badly depleted when we took office and totally neglected in the last administration. Since the start of the pandemic, we have tripled the number of N95 masks on hand to over 40 million, tripled the number of gowns to over 15 million, and quadrupled the number of ventilators to 69,000.

By September, the Strategic National Stockpile inventory is on track to contain over 300,000—excuse me, 300 million N95 respirators and surgical masks, over 4.5 billion gloves, and over 190,000 ventilators. That's far more than we've done before. It's not even close.

As we talk about the economy, we continue to restore America's industrial might. We're bringing jobs to the U.S.A. We understand that the economic health is critical—very critical—to public health. We'll be discussing next week some of the outstanding numbers we have, compared to any other country. There is no country even close when you look at what we've done compared to them on the—from the standpoint of the economy and also during—even during the period of the China virus.

In the last 3 months, we've added an average of 100,000 jobs every single day. We've also added over 620,000 manufacturing jobs in the past 3 months. That's despite people saying, "You can't do manufacturing jobs anymore." You'd "need a magic wand," they said, but they were wrong. Weekly jobless claims just fell below 1 million for the first time in a long time.

I'm pleased to announce that as part of Operation Warp Speed, the Federal Government will be partnering with McKesson Corporation—great company, which is a major medical supplier—to rapidly distribute a China-virus vaccine as soon as one is approved—fully approved. They're in stage three trials. We have many of them going along different passes. Also many different companies doing them, very, very incredible companies.

We currently have three candidates in phase three clinical trials and are on pace to have more than 100 million doses of a vaccine ready before the end of the year and 500 million doses very shortly thereafter. And we're ready, logistically, to distribute them. Our military is ready. We have a great general who's in charge. That's what he does, is he distributes things; usually, it's people and weapons, tanks, but in this case, it's a vaccine or a therapeutic, as it may be.

We continue to actively monitor the virus, executing our strategy to protect the vulnerable and prevent hospital overcrowding. As of today, hospitalizations continue to be very stable, and we will be watching always very carefully. Remain vigilant.

We ask every citizen to practice good hygiene, socially distance, wear a mask when distancing is not possible, and to protect the elderly. Always protect the elderly.

So now we'll take a few questions if you'd like. Let's see.

John [John Roberts, Fox News], please.

U.S. Postal Service/Executive Action on Coronavirus Relief/Economic Stimulus Legislation

Q. Mr. President, on the issue of more money for the U.S. Postal Service and mail-in balloting——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——if the Democrats were to give you some of what you want, which you articulated in a series of tweets in the last hour, would you be willing to accept the $25 billion for the Postal Service, including the $3½ billion to handle mail-in voting?

The President. Sure, if they give us what we want. And it's not what I want, it's what the American people want.

So in addition to—and I just—I think, John, as part of your answer, I can read this: But in addition to the Executive orders that we signed, which are going to be doing terrific things in terms of payroll tax cut, which is a lot of money coming to a lot of people very quickly, I've directed the Secretary of the Treasury to get ready and send direct payments—$3,400 for a family of four—to all Americans. Democrats are holding this up. I am ready to have the UST and SBA send additional PPP payments to small businesses that have been hurt by the China virus. Democrats are holding this up.

So we're talking about—those are two things directly involved and, really, victim of the China virus. We're ready to send; Democrats are holding up. I'm ready to send rental assistance payments to hard-working Americans that have been hurt by the China virus. All of these things are in a list. Democrats are holding this up.

I'm ready to send $105 billion to the States to help open schools safely, with additional PPP—E. And Democrats are holding this up. So that's $105 billion to the States to help open schools safely, with additional PPE. Democrats are holding that up. Right?

And I'm ready to send more money to States and local governments to save jobs of our great police, our firefighters, our first responders and teachers. It's all ready to go. Democrats are holding it up. So they're holding, John, all of that up.

Q. So if they were to give you that——

The President. Yes, if they would do it.

Q. ——you would sign off for the money for the Postal Service?

The President. Yes, but they're not giving it to me, they're giving it to the American people. I mean, giving it——

Q. But if they were to agree with that.

The President. Yes, I would—I would certainly do that. Sure, I would do that.

Q. Do you have a——

The President. Yes.

Economic Stimulus Legislation

Q. Mr. President, I just want to follow up on that, and then a quick question. Just when you said that you've directed Secretary Mnuchin to ready direct payments, are you— speaking about something you're going to do independently or that you're just waiting for the legislative package?

The President. I'm waiting for the Democrats to approve it. Okay?

Georgia Republican Congressional Candidate Marjorie Taylor Greene

Q. Okay. And then, I wanted to ask you, you congratulated Marjorie Taylor Greene in a tweet. You called her a future Republican star. Greene has been a proponent of the QAnon conspiracy theory. She said that's something that should be—would be worth listening to. Do you agree with her on that?

The President. Well, she did very well in the election. She won by a lot. She was very popular. She comes from a great State. And she had a tremendous victory, so absolutely, I did congratulate her.

Please. Go ahead.

Q. But specifically—specifically on QAnon——

The President. Go ahead, please.

Q. ——and her decision to embrace that conspiracy theory, do you agree with her on that? That was the question.

The President. Go ahead, please.

Health of the President's Brother Robert S. Trump/Russia/Iran

Q. I just wanted to ask you what ails your brother Robert, and how is he doing?

The President. Yes. I have a wonderful brother. We've had a great relationship for a long time, for—from day one. It's a long time ago. And he's in the hospital right now, and hopefully, he'll be all right. But he's pretty—he's having a hard time.

Q. I wanted to ask you——

The President. He's terrific.

Q. ——also really quickly about Putin's invitation to join a video summit with Iran and other world powers. Would you accept that invitation?

The President. I haven't been told of it yet. I heard there's something, but I haven't been told of it yet.

Please, go ahead.

Q. Mr. President——

Potential Coronavirus Vaccine Deployment/Russia's Coronavirus Vaccine Development Efforts

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Two questions on vaccines: First, once a vaccine is ready, who should get it first?

The President. I will rely on the doctors to tell me that. I would say probably the elderly. I would say nursing homes. A lot of people said, "Would you take it?" I said: "I'll take it if they want, or I'll go first or last. I'll do whatever they want me to do." But I would think that the elderly, the people that are most vulnerable to the disease. And we're actually making those lists right now, mostly nursing homes and retirement centers. Yes.

Q. Second, Russia has approved a vaccine. What do you know about the vaccine? And have you spoken to Russian officials about it?

The President. We don't know much about it. We hope it works; we do. We hope it works. They cut off certain trials, and we just feel it's important to go through the process. We have numerous different vaccines that we think are going to work, but we want to go through a system of trials. We're very advanced. We're very—we'll be announcing something in the not-too-distant future, also with therapeutics, which I think are very, very important.

Yes, please.

WeChat/China-U.S. Relations

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. I had two—one on China and then one on oil. The first one on China: There's a lot of alarm among American companies about your order on WeChat. Apple, Ford, Disney—they're worried because it's such a big communications platform and a payment platform in China that if you ban U.S. businesses from working with them, that they won't be able to sell, you know, iPhones into China or similar markets.

The President. Whatever.

Q. So you don't mind if this——

The President. I do what's good in terms of the security of our country.

Q. So has Congress——

The President. We've been very badly let down by China. What's your next question?

U.S. Seizure of Iranian Oil Tankers

Q. On oil: The U.S. this week seized four Iranian——

The President. Right.

Q. ——oil tankers going towards Venezuela.

The President. Yes. Not supposed to do that.

Q. Wondering—yes, they're going to go to Houston. I'm wondering what you're going to do with that oil and if this is something——

The President. We'll be announcing. We have four tankers. They going to Houston, and they're there. We—they're not supposed to be doing that. Iran is not supposed to be doing that. And so we did—we seized the tankers, and we're moving them, and moved, to Houston.

Democratic Vice Presidential Candidate Senator Kamala D. Harris

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much. Two questions, if you don't mind, Mr. President. First of all, Kamala Harris—you've been very blunt about how you feel about her: "mean, nasty, mad woman." Biden now saying——

The President. No, I haven't been blunt. I said, "She treated Joe Biden worse than anybody else." I watched those debates. They were very boring, but they were debates nevertheless. And I

watched, you know, pretty good parts of them, and she treated Biden worse than anybody else, by far. There was nobody—including Pocahontas—nobody treated Biden so badly as Kamala.

Q. Well, let me ask you this then: Do you have an issue with a strong woman of color being in this Presidential race? Do you see——

The President. None whatsoever.

Q. You don't see her as a threat?

The President. As you—as you know, none whatsoever. No, not at all.

Economic Stimulus Legislation/Crime

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. And a stimulus question, if you don't mind: You have told me—even before you were President, you always talked about being the ultimate dealmaker. Why not just sit down with Democrats personally and cut a deal?

The President. Because they want $1 trillion to go to their friends doing a bad job running certain cities and States that are doing very badly. You know, most of our country is running very well. Even in terms of crime, most of our country is setting records in terms of low. But when you look at Chicago, when you look at what's going on in Illinois and New York and other places, both economically and in other ways, it's horrible. It's horrible.

Look at Oregon. Look what's going on in Oregon. They have—I don't think they have a clue. We could stop that—if they would request it, we would stop that problem in 1 hour, like we did in Minneapolis. We would stop it in 1 hour. It would be over. It's so easy to do.

All right, please, go ahead. In the back, please.

Israel-United Arab Emirates Relations/Democratic Presidential Candidate Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr./Iran

Q. Alicia Powe at the Gateway Pundit. Yesterday you announced a historic peace deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. And later in the day, Joe Biden tried to take credit for it.

The President. I heard that. That was a beauty. That's right.

Q. What's your response?

The President. We announced the deal. And I appreciate even the New York Times gave it great coverage and editorials today. Wall Street Journal, Washington Post—everybody was saying great. And this is something we've been working very hard on.

And I saw where Sleepy Joe tried to claim credit for it, and I'm trying to figure out how that one works. No, what he did is, they made a terrible deal with Iran. And the deal was a horror show, and I ended it. They gave them $150 billion for nothing. They gave them $1.8 billion in cash for nothing. They got nothing from that deal except trouble. They did nothing. They—just like they've been weak on China, they've been weak on Russia. They've been weak on everyone. And they were the weakest of all on Iran.

No, that was a great deal made by very talented people that work with me. And it's been praised all over the world. And what you'll see now is, other countries will come into that deal, and you'll have peace in the Middle East. And Biden doesn't even know—he doesn't even know the name of the countries I'm talking about.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Thank you very much, everybody. We'll see you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:34 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Kevin Clinesmith, former Assistant General Counsel in the National Security and Cyber Law Branch, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); former FBI Director James B. Comey, Jr.; Director of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy Peter K. Navarro; Gen. Gustave F. Perna, USA, commanding general, U.S. Army Materiel Command, in his capacity as Chief Operating Officer of the Federal Government's interagency "Operation Warp Speed" coronavirus vaccine development program; and Sen. Elizabeth A. Warren. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

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Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Clinesmith, Kevin; Comey, James B., Jr.; Greene, Marjorie Taylor; Harris, Kamala D.; Navarro, Peter K.; Perna, Gustave F.; Trump, Robert S.; Warren, Elizabeth A.

Subjects: Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Government and private sector, coordination efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Small businesses, promotion efforts; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Coronavirus pandemic, international cooperation efforts; Defense Production Act of 1950, executive authorities; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Schools, efforts to reopen; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Health and Human Services, Department of : Strategic National Stockpile; Health and medical care : Experimental drugs and therapies; Health and medical care : Medical equipment and supplies; Health and medical care : Research and development; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iran : U.S. seizure of oil tankers bound for Venezuela; Israel : Relations with United Arab Emirates; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Oregon : Civil unrest and violence in Portland; Science and technology : Research and development; Taxation : Payroll tax cut; United Arab Emirates : Relations with Israel; Venezuela : U.S. seizure of Iranian oil tankers; WeChat; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Trade and Manufacturing Policy.

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