

The President's News Conference

August 19, 2020

The President. Well, thank you very much. Before I provide an update on our continued progress against the China virus, I'd like to discuss our latest actions against the Iranian regime.

Today I'm directing the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, to notify the U.N. Security Council that the United States intends to restore virtually all of the previously suspended United Nations sanctions on Iran. It's a snapback, not uncommon.

Two years ago, I withdrew the United States from the disastrous Iran nuclear deal, which was a product of the Obama-Biden foreign policy failure, a failure like few people have seen, in terms of the amount of money we paid for absolutely nothing and a short-term deal. This deal funneled tens of billions of dollars to Iran—\$150 billion, to be exact—plus \$1.8 billion in cash, which I don't know that the President had the authority to give; gave \$1.8 billion in cash. Just another great deal that turned out to be a total disaster, that would have funded all of the chaos and the bloodshed and the terror in the region and all throughout the world.

And I won't say anything, because I don't like saying it, but Iran doesn't have so much money to give to the world anymore, to the terrorists, to give to Al Qaida and various other groups of people that they were funding. They have to keep their own regime together, and it's not easy for them.

And if and when I win the election, within the first month, Iran will come to us and they are going to be asking for a deal so quickly because they are doing very poorly.

But that deal was a disaster: \$150 billion; \$1.8 billion in cash. And we got nothing, except a short-term, little deal. A short-term, expiring. It's starting to expire already. It's terminated, but it would have, if we didn't terminate it, start to expire very shortly.

A good deal was the deal we made with U.A.E. and Israel. And, by the way, other countries, I will tell you now, want to come into that deal, countries that you wouldn't even believe want to come into that deal. And, all of a sudden, you're going to have peace in the Middle East, and you couldn't have done it with this ridiculous Iran nuclear deal, as they call it, that President Obama made along with Sleepy Joe Biden.

I imposed the toughest ever sanctions on Iran, and this has caused great difficulty for them giving money to terrorist organizations. And if they do, they'll have hell to pay.

Earlier this year, I ordered the strike that took out the world's number-one terrorist, Qasem Soleimani, in addition to previously terminating leader and founder of ISIS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the two leading terrorists by far in the world. The founder of ISIS. Nobody even talks about that. And we also defeated—we now have 100 percent of the ISIS caliphate in Syria. When I took over, it was a mess. It was a total mess. It was—they were all over the place.

My administration will not allow this Iran nuclear situation to go on. They will never have a nuclear weapon. Iran will never have—mark it down. Mark it down: Iran will never have a nuclear weapon. When the United States entered into the Iran deal, it was clear that the United States would always have the right to restore the U.N. sanctions that will prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. We paid a fortune for a failed concept and a failed policy, a policy that would have made it impossible to have peace in the Middle East.

Here at home, through Operation LeGend, we are confronting the wave of crime in Democrat-run American cities. It's absolutely shocking. When you look at Portland or New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, sometimes Los Angeles—Democrat-run cities—they're a mess because they don't get it. Either they don't get it or there's something that nobody else understands.

We've deployed more than 1,000 additional Federal agents to help these Democrat-run disasters. We just have done this. We have to give them a hand. And we can stop it immediately, like at Portland would be so easy to stop. We'd stop it immediately.

We only sent in some Homeland people—who are great, by the way—to save the courthouse, because it would have been blown up or burned down, and they did that very easily. But if we were called upon, we would send in, whether it's Homeland, whether it's FBI, whether it's just law enforcement—and we'd send them in quickly. We would eradicate it, just like happened in Minneapolis. As soon as they were called in—they should have been called in a lot sooner; you would have had far less damage.

Today we announced that Operation LeGend has successfully resulted in nearly 1,500 arrests already. Bad ones. Bad ones. Really bad people. Prosecutions and prison sentences will follow. And they'll be a very long time in prison for what they've done to these cities. Most cities are well run; most of the Nation is well run. And the areas that we're talking about are all—in all cases, run by Democrats, usually radical-left-leaning Democrats, like in New York or in Portland.

We've made arrests in Kansas City, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Memphis, and Albuquerque for many violent crimes, including gun crimes, arson, and 91 murders.

We're also using the full power of the Federal Government to defeat, as you know, the China virus. New cases have declined in 80 percent of the jurisdictions in the past week. Eighty percent. New Zealand, by the way, had a big outbreak. And other countries that were held up to try and make us look not as good as we should look—because we've done an incredible job—but they're having a lot of outbreaks, but they'll be able to put them out, and we put them out.

The hospitalization rate has fallen in our country, 54 percent since its peak in April. Fifty-four percent. Older Americans are still the most vulnerable to the virus: 92 percent of deaths have occurred among those 55 and older. Only 2.7 percent of deaths have occurred among those 44 years—think of that—44 years and younger. So 44 years old and younger: only 2.7 percent of deaths have occurred. And many of those people had preexisting conditions, they had problems—heart, diabetes, and other problems, but—many of those. So think of that: only 2.7 percent under 44 years of age.

Excess mortality in Europe this year is 33 percent higher than the United States, evidence that the tragic cost of this virus is higher in other Western nations. South Korea—you've been reading about South Korea doing well. Well, they just had a very big breakout, but they'll be able to solve the problem.

We must all remain vigilant and continue to exercise extreme caution around those at highest risk, as we know. Multiple colleges and universities announced that they would suspend in-person teaching. We have learned one thing: There's nothing like campus, there's nothing like being with the teacher as opposed to being on a computer board. It's been proven a lot better. It's a lot better. The iPads are wonderful, but you're not going to learn the same way you do by being there. So, nevertheless, certain colleges and universities have announced that they would suspend the in-person teaching.

For older people and individuals with underlying conditions, the China virus is very dangerous, but for university students, the likelihood of severe illness is less than or equal to the risk of a seasonal flu—a seasonal flu. And the seasonal flu happens and comes and it goes, and it can be very bad, but people don't talk about it in the same way, and they shouldn't. But if you look at that, the odds are less than or equal to.

Instead of saving lives, the decision to close universities could cost lives. It is significantly safer for students to live with other young people than to go home and spread the virus to older Americans. Makes sense.

And the shutdown thing is causing tremendous depression for those places that are still shut down. You look at certain areas that—in all cases, Democrat run—still shut down, and the numbers there aren't even good. But causing tremendous depression, suicide, drugs, alcohol abuse. A lot of problems are being caused—probably far more, I would say, Scott, than is caused by the virus itself, now that we understand the virus.

Colleges should take reasonable precautions. Students who feel sick should not attend class and should limit social interaction, as they would for any other illness. And universities should implement measures to protect the high-risk students or professors and teachers.

The ultimate goal of testing is to prevent transmission in high-risk settings—and to prevent transmission, period, but especially in nursing homes—and to care for the vulnerable and our elderly, which really fit into that definition of who is vulnerable.

We have tremendous unused testing capacity in our country. We have a tremendous unused testing capacity. It's something that a lot of other nations are very impressed with, they tell us.

In our path forward, we will continue to follow a science-based approach to protecting the high-risk, while enabling healthy Americans to safely go back to work and school. Our country will be open. Our country is getting open quickly. Our stock markets are almost back to where they were, prior to the China virus disaster coming in.

And I want to thank you all for being here, and we'll take some questions.

Yes, please.

QAnon Conspiracy Theory/Protests and Civil Unrest in U.S. Cities/Deployment of Federal Law Enforcement Officers to U.S. Cities

Q. During the pandemic, the QAnon movement has been—appears to be gaining a lot of followers. Can you talk about what you think about that and what you have to say to people who are following this movement right now?

The President. Well, I don't know much about the movement, other than I understand they like me very much, which I appreciate, but I don't know much about the movement. I have heard that it is gaining in popularity. And from what I hear, it's—these are people that, when they watch the streets of Portland, when they watch what happened in New York City in just the last 6 or 7 months—but this was starting even 4 years ago when I came here. Almost 4 years; can you believe it? These are people that don't like seeing what's going on in places like Portland and places like Chicago and New York and other cities and States. And I've heard these are people that love our country, and they just don't like seeing it.

So I don't know, really, anything about it other than they do, supposedly, like me. And they also would like to see problems in these areas—like, especially the areas that we're talking about—go away. Because there's no reason the Democrats can't run a city. And if they can't, we will send in all of the Federal—whether it's troops or law enforcement, whatever they'd like—we'll send them in. We'll straighten out their problem in 24 hours or less.

Okay?

Q. And, Mr. President, at the crux of the theory is this belief that you are secretly saving the world from this satanic cult of pedophiles and cannibals. Does that sound like something you are behind or a believer in?

The President. Well, I haven't heard that. But is that supposed to be a bad thing or a good thing? I mean, you know, if I can help save the world from problems, I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to put myself out there.

And we are, actually. We're saving the world from a radical-left philosophy that will destroy this country. And when this country is gone, the rest of the world would follow. The rest of the world would follow. That's the importance of this country.

And when you look at some of the things that these people are saying, with "defund the police" and no borders, open borders—everybody just pour right into our country; no testing, no nothing. You know, you talk about testing—no testing. Mexico, as you know, has a very high rate of infection.

The wall is now going to be, next week, 300 miles long. Our numbers are extraordinary on the border. Had that—and this is through luck, perhaps, more than talent, although the talent is getting built when one party refuses to allow it. You don't hear talk about the wall anymore.

But I will say this: We need strength in our country, not weakness. Too much weakness.

Yes, John [John Roberts, Fox News]. Please.

Coronavirus Vaccine and Treatment Development

Q. Mr. President, you have been very bullish on the promise of convalescent plasma——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——to treat coronavirus. The FDA appeared to be on the brink of issuing an emergency use authorization for convalescent plasma. But after hearing from top officials at the NIH that there wasn't enough evidence to go ahead with that, the FDA has put that on pause. Your reaction to that? And do you believe that convalescent plasma should be in the arsenal of treatments for coronavirus?

The President. Well, I hear great things about it, John. That's all I can tell you. And it could be a political decision, because you have a lot of people over there that don't want to rush things because they want to do it after November 3. And you've heard that one before.

But I've heard fantastic things about convalescent plasma. And I've heard numbers way over 50-percent success. And people are dying, and we should have it approved if it's good. And I'm hearing it's good. I heard from people at the FDA that it's good. So we'll see. I'm going to check that right after this conference.

Q. It's my understanding that the White House will encourage the NIH and the FDA to get this out there as quickly as possible. Is that correct?

The President. Well, if the numbers are as good as I'm hearing—I mean, I'm hearing over 50 percent, and that's very good. And we've approved—certain things are at 31 percent, and that's okay, too; that's not bad. And it's really had a tremendous impact.

But, no, I have—you're telling me something right now that surprises me, but we'll check it out right after this.

Q. Are you concerned about a delay?

The President. I don't want delays. I don't want people dying. I don't want people dying.

Yes, please. Go ahead.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company

Q. Mr. President, I want to ask you about your tweet earlier today on Goodyear. It was essentially calling for a boycott on Goodyear tires.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you want the Federal Government to stop buying and using Goodyear product as well? And is there anything——

The President. Well, I'm not happy with Goodyear, because what they're doing is playing politics. And the funny thing is, the people that work for Goodyear, I can guarantee you I poll very well with all of those great workers in Goodyear.

And when they say that you can't have "Blue Lives Matter," you can't show a blue line, you can't wear a MAGA hat, but you can have other things that are Marxist in nature, there's something wrong with the top of Goodyear.

And what the radical left does is, they make it impossible for people to do business if they're Republican or if they're conservative. They put out all sorts of effort: "Don't shop there." They do vicious things, not so different than what you saw on the streets of Portland 2 nights ago.

Q. But what kind of boycott do you envision?

The President. Oh, I don't know. That's up to people. But I wouldn't recommend it. If they want to hold political speech, if they want to let you not do what everybody is doing; if they want to wear a MAGA hat or if they want to wear a "Blue Lives"—you know what "Blue Lives Matter," right? That's police men and women. That's a terrible thing. That's a terrible thing.

So they're using their power over these people, and these people want to wear whatever it is that we're talking about. You know that. And so I would be very much in favor if people don't want to buy there. And you know what? They'll be able to get a good job, because we set a jobs record over the last quarter, as you know. The most jobs ever in the history of our country. You'll be able to get another good jobs. I think it's disgraceful that they did this.

Please, go ahead, in the back.

Next Digital Ltd. Founder Jimmy Lai/Hong Kong

Q. Yes. Mr. President, you've said that the arrest of Jimmy Lai in Hong Kong is, quote, "a terrible thing." Do you have a message for Jimmy Lai? Has your administration spoken directly with him? Is your State Department working for his release?

The President. Well, I send him best wishes. I hear he's a wonderful gentleman. He's certainly a brave man. And I send him best wishes.

With that being said, because of that and obviously what happened in Hong Kong, we've taken all of the vast amounts of money that we use to subsidize Hong Kong. We essentially subsidized Hong Kong by giving them all sorts of incentives. And that's what made Hong Kong—the exchange and business in Hong Kong—successful. I've taken it all back. That means that the United States is going to do a lot more business. You know, we really gave them tremendous incentive and subsidy in order that they be successful for freedom.

But now that the freedom obviously seems to have been taken away, we will keep all of the incentives that we were giving them, which is billions and billions of dollars. And all of that

business will come into our country, including the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ. And it'll all come here.

But I feel badly for him because I hear he's a good person. I don't know him, but I hear he's a good person; obviously, a very brave person.

Did you have something? Go ahead, please.

Iraq/Drawdown of U.S. Troops From Afghanistan/Syria/Turkey/U.S. Military Strength

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. With the Iraqi Prime Minister coming in tomorrow, what about——

The President. Say it?

Q. The Iraqi Prime Minister is coming in tomorrow to meet with you. And how do you feel about this notion that Iraq can once again become the buffer between Iranian influence and Russian influence in the Middle East? Do you feel that under this Prime Minister that that's possible once again? What are your thoughts on it?

The President. Well, this is a man that I get along with very well. We're largely out of Iraq. We're down to a very few soldiers. I said we're getting out of these endless wars, these ridiculous, endless wars. We should have never been there in the first place. I think it was the worst decision made in the history of our country. Should have never been there. In the Middle East, we should have never been. But we're getting out rapidly, out of—you know, over the course of 3 years. And getting out—it's very sticky getting out. And some people agree, and many people don't agree, but I think most people very much agree.

We're doing very well in our negotiations with Afghanistan. We're getting out. We're down to a much smaller number of people left there. And you know, I greet men and women coming home, and coming home after they've been hit. I've also greeted many, many at Dover, greeted many bodies coming back in.

And we've been there 19 years, and we're basically policemen. We're acting as police, as opposed to soldiers. And they're going to have to police their own states, and they've been doing that for thousands of years. But it's time, after 19 years, that our soldiers come home.

They've done an incredible job, but you know, they don't—they're not allowed to fight to win. And maybe they shouldn't be, because a lot of the people—it's not their fault. But with the Taliban and with going to Iraq—again, we're down in Afghanistan; very low numbers. And that'll be taking place.

And I let them know, "Do anything, and you'll be hit like you've never hit—be hit—been hit before." So we're doing very well. Syria, the same thing. Remember when I took all of the soldiers off of the border between Syria and Turkey. Right? And everybody said, "Oh, this is"—that was 2 years ago. It was a long time ago. They said: "Oh, this is terrible, terrible, terrible. We're going to leave."

Why do we have our soldiers between Syria and Turkey? Turkey can definitely take care of itself. I have a very good relationship with President Erdogan. And Syria has been fighting forever. And I say, "Why are we guarding their border?" And I brought our soldiers back home. I got them out. And guess what? Nothing's happened. They've been fighting like they have been for a thousand years. Okay? Nothing's happened. And nobody mentions that.

Everybody said, "This is going to be a disaster." There's no disaster; nothing's happened. And so we're getting out of the endless wars. And we are building a military, the likes of which

the world has never seen: \$2½ trillion we have spent. And we, hopefully, don't ever have to use it. But we want to focus on a much bigger picture, because we have a much bigger picture.

It's—when you look at what China is doing, when you look at what Russia is doing, when you look at what some other countries are doing, we want to be ready just in case there is a catastrophe. We don't want to see that; we don't want to ever use it. We've rebuilt our military: new missiles and new rockets and new tanks and new everything. New everything—\$2½ trillion—all made in the U.S.A.

And we've upgraded incredibly our nuclear capability. And some of our nuclear needed nourishment. It needed new strength. And we've upgraded it very, very significantly. I mean, to a level that nobody would even believe. And hopefully, we don't—you pray to God we never have to use it. Okay? But we've never been in a position where we've been this strong.

Please.

Saudi Arabia-Israel Relations/United Arab Emirates Purchase of U.S. Military Equipment/United Arab Emirates-Israel Relations/Iran

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much. I wanted to ask you about the Middle East. I have a couple questions. You mentioned that other countries are interested in following suit——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——after the Emiratis——

The President. Having to do with U.A.E. and Israel.

Q. Exactly.

The President. Correct.

Q. So is—do you expect that Saudi Arabia will join? And——

The President. I do.

Q. Yes. And also, the Emiratis have expressed interest in the F-35. Do you think that that should be something that they could look forward to in the future? Is there some sort of time delay?

The President. No, I think they'll—I think—look, they've definitely got the money to pay for it. You know, it's nice because usually when we—a lot of times, we make deals; they don't have 10 cents, these countries we deal with. We give it to them like, "How about paying this back later?" But they never pay because they don't have the money.

No, they have the money, and they would like to order quite a few F-35s; it's the greatest fighter jet in the world, as you know, by far. Stealth. Totally stealth. You can't see it. Makes it very difficult. I was asking a pilot: "What do you think is better, this one? This one? That one?" Talking about Russian planes, Chinese planes. He said, "Well, the advantage we have is you can't see it." So when we're fighting, they can't see us. I say, "That sounds like a really big advantage to me." To these guys——

Q. But the Israelis don't want them to have it.

The President. You know, they look—by the way, I said to these pilots that I meet—they look better than Tom Cruise, and they're definitely tougher. And he's a nice guy. But these people are amazing. And I speak to them a lot about it—"What do you think?"—you know, as I go around to the various places. I saved the big one in Florida, as an example. That was a big one. Knocked down, pretty much, by the hurricane.

So I spent a lot of time on that. And it's the greatest plane in the world. One thing about that kind of thing—technology, high-technology—the greatest plane doesn't last long. Somebody comes up with something else, but we're always the one to come up with something else.

So yes, they'd like to buy F-35s; we'll see what happens. It's under review, but they made a great advance in peace in the Middle East. Even the New York Times thought it was an incredible deal. Can you imagine that? Tom Friedman had a very nice thing to say about it. I spoke to him about it. He thought it was terrific. And it is terrific.

I see a lot of countries coming in fairly quickly. And when you have them all in, ultimately, Iran will come in too. There'll be peace in the Middle East. That will be a nice. Iran will be very much neutralized. They never thought this could have happened.

And with the horrendously stupid Iran deal signed by Obama, this could have never happened.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company

Q. The Israelis are still——

Q. Can I follow on something, Mr. President? On the Goodyear issue: You ride on Goodyear tires——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——in the Presidential limousine.

The President. Correct.

Q. If there were an alternative, would you want those tires swapped out?

The President. Yes, I would do that. I would. I would swap them out, based on what I heard. We'll see what happens. Hey, look, you're going to have a lot of people not wanting to buy that product anymore, and they'll buy from a competitor, made in the U.S.A. too. Okay?

Please. Go ahead.

Former President Barack Obama/National Economy/Coronavirus Outbreak in China

Q. Mr. President, excerpts from Obama's speech that he will—he'll give later at the Democratic Convention show that he will—he says that he hoped that you would take being President more "seriously" once you have the job and "discover . . . reverence for democracy." And then he said, I quote, "But he never did." What is your reaction to that?

The President. You know, when I listen to that and then I see the horror that he's left us, the stupidity of the transactions that he made. Look what we're doing: We have our great border wall. We have security. We have the U.A.E. deal, which has been universally praised, praised by people that aren't exactly fans of Donald Trump for various reasons. I don't know why; can't be my personality. But they're not fans. Right?

And when I look at what we have—now, look at how bad he was, how ineffective a President he was. He was so ineffective, so terrible. Slowest growing recovery in the history—I guess, since 1929—on the economy.

Don't forget, until the China virus came in, we had the greatest economy in the history of the world. And now we're doing it again. I'm going to have to do it a second time. We're doing it again—hard to believe. We're doing very well. You heard the numbers; they're way, way down on the virus. But when you look at the kind of numbers that we're producing on the stock

markets, we're almost at the level—in fact, NASDAQ and S&P are higher than they were at their highest point prior to the China virus coming in, the plague coming in.

No, President Obama did not do a good job. And the reason I'm here is because of President Obama and Joe Biden. Because if they did a good job, I wouldn't be here. And probably, if they did a good job, I wouldn't have even run. I would have been very happy. I enjoyed my previous life very much, but they did such a bad job that I stand before you as President.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:54 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Democratic Presidential nominee Joseph R. Biden, Jr., in his former capacity as Vice President; White House COVID-19 Pandemic Adviser Scott W. Atlas; Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi of Iraq; actor Tom Cruise; and Thomas L. Friedman, columnist, New York Times. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

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Names: Atlas, Scott W.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Cruise, Tom; Erdogan, Recep Tayyip; Friedman, Thomas L.; Kadhimi, Mustafa al-; Lai, Jimmy; Obama, Barack; Pompeo, Michael R.

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