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Remarks on Coronavirus Vaccine Development

November 13, 2020

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. It's beautiful out here this time of year. In the past 9 months, my administration has initiated the single greatest mobilization in U.S. history, pioneering, developing, and manufacturing therapies and vaccines in record time. Numbers like nobody has seen before.

No medical breakthrough of this scope and magnitude has ever been achieved this rapidly, this quickly. And we're very proud of it, and I had tremendous help from the military—generals, admirals—and many of the great people at the White House.

Operation Warp Speed is unequaled and unrivaled anywhere in the world, and leaders of other countries have called me to congratulate us on what we've been able to do, and we've helped many countries with their ventilators and all of the problems they were having.

And I'd like to congratulate everyone involved in this effort. It's been an incredible effort. As a result of Operation Warp Speed, Pfizer announced on Monday that its "China virus" vaccine is more than 90-percent effective. This far exceeds any and all expectations. Nobody thought they'd get to that level. And we have others coming which we think will be at equal level—maybe more, if that's possible.

In July, my administration reached an agreement with Pfizer to provide $1.95 billion to support the mass manufacturing and distribution of 100 million doses, with the option to purchase a total of 600 million doses shortly thereafter. Our investment will make it possible for the vaccine to be provided by Pfizer free of charge.

Pfizer said it wasn't part of Warp Speed, but that turned out to be a unfortunate misrepresentation. They are part. That's why we gave them the $1.95 million—billion dollars. And it was an unfortunate mistake that they made when they said that.

We will work to secure an emergency use authorization, which should be coming down extremely soon. And my administration will then coordinate the distribution of the vaccine, and it will be approved, I think—again, it will be approved very, very quickly, we hope.

The average development timeline for the vaccine, including clinical tests and manufacturing, can take 8 to 12 years. Through Operation Warp Speed, we're doing it in less than 1 year. If you had a different administration with different people, what we've done would have taken, in my opinion, 3, 4, 5 years, and it would have been in the FDA forever.

This is five times faster than the fastest prior vaccine development in history. Five times faster. Say it again: five times faster. Nobody can believe it, actually.

Three other vaccines are also in the final stages of trial. They'll arrive within a few weeks, and they will also be mass produced, and the delivery will be very rapid. We're ready to go.

The vaccine will be distributed to frontline workers, the elderly, and high-risk Americans immediately. It will be very—a matter of weeks. Get out very, very much ahead of schedule. Any schedule that I said, we're going to be far ahead of that.

We know that this virus primarily targets older populations and those with underlying health conditions, while over 99.98 percent of those under the age of 50 make a full and quick recovery. By giving the vaccine to high-risk individuals right away, we will dramatically reduce hospitalizations and deaths.

Case levels are high, but a lot of the case levels are high because of the fact that we have the best testing program anywhere in the world. We've developed the most and the best tests. And we test far more than any other country, so it shows, obviously, more cases.

By vaccinating the elderly and the high risk, we will effectively end this phase of the pandemic and allow seniors to reclaim their golden years, the golden years of their lives, which is so incredible. And it's about time that they can have those golden years.

Again, this process is starting right away. Millions of doses will soon be going out the door. They're all ready, waiting for that final approval. As soon as April, the vaccine will be available to the entire general population, with the exception of places like New York State, where, for political reasons, the Governor decided, they say—and you know, I don't think it's good, politically; I think it's very bad from a health standpoint—but he wants to take his time with the vaccine. He doesn't trust where the vaccine is coming from.

These are coming from the greatest companies anywhere in the world, greatest labs in the world. But he doesn't trust the fact that it's this White House, this administration. So we won't be delivering it to New York until we have authorization to do so, and that pains me to say that.

This is a very successful, amazing vaccine at 90 percent and more. But—so the Governor, Governor Cuomo, will have to let us know when he's ready for it. Otherwise, we can't be delivering it to a State that won't be giving it to its people immediately. And I know many—I know the people of New York very well. I know they want it.

So the Governor will let us know when he's ready. He's had some very bad editorials recently about this: this statement and what's happened with respect to nursing homes and his handling of nursing homes, and I hope he doesn't handle this as badly as he's handled the nursing homes.

But we're ready to provide it as soon as they let us know that they'll actually use it. And again, it's a very safe and a great vaccine.

Already, we have among the lowest case-fatality rates—our country—anywhere in the world, the entire world. And we performed significantly better than our peer countries.

As far as therapeutics are concerned, my administration has also made critical investments in therapies that have helped reduce the mortality rate by 85 percent. That's, to me, one of the most exciting things. It's incredible, some of the antibody vaccines and others that have come out and have really helped people—85 percent. Last month, the FDA approved remdesivir, and we've secured enough remdesivir to treat 850,000 patients.

My administration finalized an agreement with Eli Lilly to purchase the first doses of their antibody therapy, which shows amazing results. This treatment will be available completely free of cost to patients. Five thousand units have already been shipped, and many more are going out the door as we speak.

We also reached an agreement with AstraZeneca for the large-scale manufacturing of their antibody treatment, which is excellent. We expect to issue emergency use authorizations for a number of additional treatments in the near future. Tremendous promise. But remember the 85 percent number. That's an incredible, incredible number. But we have some tremendously promising drugs on line and ready to come out.

We have ensured that our frontline workers have all the tools they need. My administration has invoked the Defense Production Act and related authorities over 100 times and have made a historic investment into our industrial base. All States that requested PPE from the Federal Government have received the PPE almost immediately upon request.

Every American who needed a ventilator has had access to a ventilator. Think of that. A very complicated piece of equipment, very expensive. And we haven't had one person in this whole country that has requested or needed a ventilator that hasn't had it. Every single request has been immediately filled. So that was something. That was a great job.

And now we're helping the rest of the world with ventilators, because it's a very hard thing. We're producing them, thousands of ventilators a month.

The Federal Government has 22,000 beds immediately available for States and jurisdictions that need additional capacity, but we think that it's going to start going down, possibly very quickly. We'll see what happens. But with the vaccine, it will—you'll see numbers going down within a matter of months, and they'll go down very rapidly.

As we continue to combat the virus, our economy is rebounding far beyond any expectations. I see the stock market is up almost 400 points today again, and it's ready to break the alltime record. Our jobs records are incredible. The job numbers are incredible. In the last 6 months, we've created over 13 million jobs and slashed the unemployment rate by more than half.

Last quarter, we witnessed the fastest economic growth ever recorded in the history of our country: 33.1 percent. It's a number that is more than double our highest—that was in 1952, and we've more than doubled it.

The United States experienced the smallest economic contraction and the most rapid economic recovery of any major western nation. We went down less, and we went up more, which is quite a combination of facts.

While healthy Americans have gone back to work and to school, we continue to spare no expense to protect the elderly and the vulnerable. According to some estimates, a national lockdown costs $50 billion a day and hundreds of thousands of jobs every single day.

Ideally, we won't go to a lockdown. I will not go—this administration will not be going to a lockdown. Hopefully, the—whatever happens in the future—who knows which administration it will be? I guess time will tell. But I can tell you, this administration will not go to a lockdown. There won't be necessity. Lockdowns cost lives, and they cost a lot of problems.

The cure cannot be—you've got to remember—cannot be worse than the problem itself, and I've said it many times. And when you look at what happens during a lockdown—I just say it very loudly—it's horrible what happens with drugs, alcohol, depression, loss of jobs, business closures. It's a terrible thing.

So this administration will not go, under any circumstances—will not go to a lockdown, but we'll be very vigilant, very careful. We understand the disease. It's a complicated disease, but we understand it very well.

We ask all Americans to remain vigilant, especially as the weather gets colder and it becomes more difficult to go outside and to have outside gatherings.

And with that, I just want to ask some very talented people to come up and say a few words. General Perna and Dr. Slaoui have been incredible. The general is really getting started right now, but he's really—what we don't know and what people don't know, he started putting this all together 6 months ago, and you're going to see some real action.

So, General, maybe you'll start it off? And then, Doctor, you'll go right after that. Thank you very much.

And then, we're going to finish it off with Mike Pence. Okay? Thank you, please. Thank you. Sure.

Operation Warp Speed Chief Adviser Moncef Slaoui. Thank you, Mr. President. Hi, everybody. So Operation Warp Speed's mission is to enable and accelerate the development of vaccines and therapeutics to help control the COVID–19 pandemic and save lives.

[*At this point, Chief Adviser Slaoui continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I will now pass to my coleader, General Perna, who will tell you more about the support that the operation has provided to manufacturing of the vaccine and also to their distribution.

Thank you very much.

Operation Warp Speed Chief Operating Officer General Gustave F. Perna, USA. Mr. President, thank you for allowing me to continue service of our great Nation as the coleader with Dr. Moncef Slaoui on this mission.

[*Gen. Perna continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I will end where I started: This is about saving lives, the lives of the great American people. And we will not rest until we are successful and that we have irreversible momentum to returning our Nation back to normal. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, General, very much. Great job.

Alex, please.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II. Thank you, Mr. President, for providing the leadership that's gotten us where we are today. The success that Operation Warp Speed has realized so far has been made possible only because of the bold vision you announced not even 6 months ago, right here in the Rose Garden.

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

Because of the incredible American spirit, because of what great scientists and public servants and innovators have done through Operation Warp Speed, we have such a bright future ahead of us. If we continue to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities, then I firmly believe that future will be here very soon.

Thank you, Mr. President, for making that very bright future possible for the American people.

The President. Thank you very much, Alex. Appreciate it. Thank you.

Mike Pence, please.

Vice President Michael R. Pence. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And on behalf of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, I was grateful to just have a few minutes today to commend the team of Operation Warp Speed.

[*Vice President Pence continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

We all have a role to play. We all know what to do to protect the vulnerable and to look after our families and our neighbors and friends. And we encourage every American, with all the good news this week, to continue to be persistent in putting the health of yourself, your family, your neighbors, coworkers, and friends first.

And we'll get through this, and we'll get through this together. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much, Mike. And thank you, everybody. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

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