



## REMARKS

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# Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing

## — HEALTHCARE

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James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I had a very good telephone conversation — extremely good — with Senator Schumer a little while ago. We're working on various elements of the deal, and the Democrats are very much wanting something to happen, and the Republicans, likewise, are very much wanting something to happen. And I think it will.

I spoke with — at length with Mitch McConnell. And there's tremendous spirit to get something done, so we'll see what happens. But my conversation was very good with Senator Schumer.

I thank you all for joining us, and I'd like to begin by providing an update on what we are doing to minimize the impact of the Chinese virus on our nation's students.

With many schools closed due to the virus, the Department of Education will not enforce standardized testing requirements, very importantly, for students in elementary through high school for the current year. They've been through a lot. They've been going back and forth; schools open, schools not open. It's been all standardized testing. And, you know, it's — we're not going to be enforcing that, so I think you can let people know. I think probably a lot of the students will be extremely happy; some probably not. The ones that work hard, maybe not. But it's one of those things. Unfortunate — very unfortunate circumstance.

We've also temporarily waived all interest on federally held student loans. They'll be very happy to hear that. And I've instructed them to take that action immediately. And today, Secretary DeVos has directed federal lenders to allow borrowers to suspend their student loans and loan payments without penalty for at least the next 60 days. And if we need more, we'll extend that period of time. Borrowers should contact their lenders, but we've given them very strong instructions.

So we've temporarily waived all interest on federally held student loans. That's a big thing. That's going to make a lot of students very happy. And we have more to come on student loans — more good news for the students — but we'll do that at a different time.

This morning, the Treasury Department also announced that we're moving Tax Day from April 15 to July 15. So we're moving it out to July 15th so that people will have time and people will be able to — hopefully, by that time, we'll have people getting back to their lives. Families and businesses will have this extra time to file with no interest or penalties. We're getting rid of interest and penalties.

However, if you have refunds or credits you would like to claim, you may still file. In other words, you can file early if you are owed money by the IRS. Other than that, we're moving it all the way out to July 15th — no interest, no penalties. Your new date will be July 15.

Today, our team will also provide an update on our continuing effort to prevent the transmission of virus across America's borders. And I watched what's been happening in California with Governor Newsom and, this morning, with Governor Cuomo, and I applaud them. They're taking very strong, bold steps, and I applaud them. And we're all working together. We're working very closely together, including those two governors.

But I would say, based on the call — the media was there — I think we can say that, with respect to virtually every governor on that call, I think every governor — we had almost all of them, if not all of

them — and I would say that you could see for yourselves that the level of respect and esprit de corps working together was extraordinary. There was nobody angry, nobody upset. We're able to help them, and that's what we're all about. We want to help.

We're doing things that a lot of people wouldn't be able to do. But the relationship with governors and states is, I think, very extraordinary, especially under the circumstances where this just came upon us.

We're working with Canada and Mexico to prevent the spread of the virus across North America, very closely. You heard what we did yesterday with Canada. And Secretary of State Pompeo will be making a statement in a little while having to do with Mexico and the border. And Chad likewise — Chad Wolf will likewise be making a statement. This is a joint comprehensive effort in collaboration with our neighbors.

The measure and all of those measures that we're putting in place will protect the health of all three nations and reduce the incentive for a mass global migration that would badly deplete the healthcare resources needed for our people. And so we are working very closely with Mexico, very, very closely with Canada. The relationship has never been better. We're all working for the same — toward the same goal.

Our nation's top healthcare officials are extremely concerned about the grave public health consequences of mass uncontrolled cross-border movement. And that would be mostly — and even beyond — but mostly during this global pandemic.

Every week, our border agents encounter thousands of unscreened, unvetted, and unauthorized entries from dozens of countries. And we've had this problem for decades. For decades. You know the story. But now it's — with the national emergencies and all of the other things that we've declared, we can actually do something about it. We're taking a very strong hold of that. And we have before, but this is now at a level that nobody has ever approached.

In normal times, these massive flows place a vast burden on our healthcare system, but during a global pandemic, they threaten to create a perfect storm that would spread the infection to our border agents, migrants, and to the public at large. Left unchecked, this would cripple our immigration system, overwhelm our healthcare system, and severely damage our national security. We're not going to let that happen.

So we have a lot of information, and they'll be discussing that in a moment.

To confront these public health dangers [dangers], the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has decided to exercise its authority under the Title 42 of the U.S. Code to give Customs and Border Protection the tools it needs to prevent the transmission of the virus coming through both the northern and the southern border. So we're treating the borders equally — the northern border and the southern border. It's being treated — they're both being treated equally. A lot of people say that they're not treated equally. Well, they are.

As we did with Canada, we're also working with Mexico to implement new rules at our ports of entry to suspend non-essential travel. These new rules and procedures will not impede lawful trade and commerce. Furthermore, Mexico is taking action to secure our own southern border and suspend air travel from Europe. So we're coordinating very closely the air travel going to Mexico and then trying to come into the United States.

The actions we're taking together with our North American partners will save countless lives.

At the conclusion of my remarks, Secretary Azar, Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Wolf — we're going to be also taking some questions with Tony and Deborah, who you've gotten to know very well — but they'll be discussing certain things, and I think you'll find them of great interest. We're going to be providing tremendous amounts of detail over the coming days, but a lot of it will be provided right now if you'd like to find out about it.

This has been a week of resolute action, tremendous action. Tremendous relationships have developed with people that, frankly, didn't get along. People that didn't like each other, they're now working together and maybe, even in some cases, learning about each other and liking each other. It's a nice thing.

I invoked the Defense Production Act, and last night, we put it into gear. We moved the National Response Coordination Center to the highest level of activist [sic]. I mean, if you — if you take a look at what we did, the level of activation has been increased to a grade one level, which is the highest level.

We're providing historic support to small businesses and to the states. The states need support. Normally they do this themselves, but because of the magnitude of it, the federal government has

gotten very much involved in terms of getting the equipment they need. So we're helping them. It's — it's a responsibility they have, but we are helping the states a lot. That's why the governors, I think in every case, have been impressed and very nice.

We enacted legislation guaranteeing paid sick leave for workers at no cost to employers. And I think it's very important. So they get paid sick leave at no cost to employers.

We're accelerating the use of new drug treatments. We're advancing legislation to give direct payments to hardworking families. Throughout our country, Americans from all walks of life are rallying together to defeat the unseen enemy striking our nation. In times of struggle, we see the true greatness of the American character, and we are seeing that. A lot of people are talking about it.

We're at 141 countries, from what they're telling me, and some of those countries are really working in a unified manner. And they're working very unified with us, almost — I could say a good — a good number of them.

Doctors and nurses are working nonstop to heal the sick. Citizens and churches are delivering meals to the needy. Truckers are making the long haul to keep shelves stocked. We've been dealing with the big stores and the big chains, Walmart — they've been fantastic — and others. They've all been fantastic. We've made it much easier for them to stock. In terms of travel and travel restrictions, we're lifting restrictions so they can get their trucks on time.

You're seeing very few empty shelves, and yet the amount of volume that they are doing is unprecedented because people want to have what they have to have, what they feel they have to have. And they're also buying in slightly smaller quantities, which is good — because we're not going anywhere. We're going to be here. So I want to thank all of those very great companies for working so well.

Americans from every walk of life are coming together. And thanks to the spirit of our people, we will win this war, and we are. We're winning and we're going to win this war. America will triumph and America will rise higher than ever before. We'll be stronger than ever before, and we've learned a lot. We've learned a lot. We've learned a lot about relying on other countries, and I can say that I think in both a very good and a very bad way. Some good things came out of it and some not so good things came out of it.

So I'd like to move now to invite our team to provide information on the new measures to prevent viral spread at our borders. And I'll start by asking Secretary of State Pompeo to speak. He's doing a fantastic job. And like everyone else, he's been working very, very long and very, very hard. And he's doing the other more normal jobs of a great Secretary of State, but he got — he got tied into this like everybody else, and he's been really doing a fantastic job.

Mike, please.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Mr. President. Before I address the efforts that we've been engaged in to push back against the Chinese virus, I want to assure the American people that, as President Trump just said, your State Department, your entire national security team is staying focused on the other diplomatic challenges around the world. Those include reducing risk to America from Afghanistan, holding the Iranian regime accountable for its malign activity. And our counterterrorism efforts against ISIS remain a priority for our team.

Our number one priority across those mission sets remains the protection of the American people. The President and our team are very focused on it.

I'll take this moment, too, to thank my team, the State Department team, who is working long hours all around the world to take care of Americans who are stuck at places around the world. I'll talk about that more in just a minute. You've all seen Dr. Birx with me. State Department officials are doing great work, but I want to — I want to give a shout-out to all of the State Department team, here in Washington and around the world, that are working overtime to help us push back against this pandemic.

Under the President's leadership this week, we've taken two important steps. First, as President Trump announced on Wednesday, the United States and Canada jointly agreed to restrict all non-essential traffic across our border. This decision goes into effect tonight at midnight. The restrictions will be reviewed after 30 days, and they exclude traffic and movement across the border for work or other essential reasons. We're grateful to have such an outstanding friend to the north who is committed, as we are, to defeating this virus.

I also want to announce today that the United States and Mexico have agreed to restrict non-essential travel across our shared border. Both our countries know the importance of working together to limit the spread of the virus to ensure that commerce that supports our economy

continues to keep flowing. Here, too, the United States is glad to have a friend who is working side by side us in the fight. Secretary Wolf will talk a little bit more about the details of how we're working alongside our partner in Mexico to keep our southern border safe and secure as well.

On another note, yesterday the State Department issued a Level 4 global travel advisory. This means that all international travel from U.S. citizens should be avoided. In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who reside in the United States should arrange for immediate return to the United States unless they're prepared to remain abroad for an extended time. If you choose to travel internationally, your travel plans may well be severely disrupted.

And finally, I want to talk about the disinformation that people are seeing both on Twitter and around the world — some of it coming from government, some of it coming from other individuals. I just urge everyone, as they're seeing information — information that at one time suggested somehow this virus emanated from the United States Army, this information about lockdowns that are taking place: Every American indeed, and people all around the world, should ensure that where they turn to for information is a reliable source and not a bad actor trying to create and flow information that they know is wrong.

This is a tough fight. The American people are tougher. Our diplomatic teams are working around the clock to help them keep safe both home and abroad. And we're showing, once again, the global leadership that America has always delivered. It's been great to see countries around the world rally behind what President Trump and our team are doing.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Thank you very much. And we'll take questions right after this.

Chad Wolf, please.

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: Well, let me start off by thanking the President and the Vice President for their continued leadership and commitment for protecting the American people during this crisis.

Early on, the President, again, took unprecedented actions to restrict travel from areas affected with the coronavirus. And today, DHS has screened over 200,000 individuals coming back from those affected countries. This has been an immense undertaking but one that the men and women of DHS have successfully accomplished.

Today's announcement is yet another example of the extraordinary steps the administration is taking to ensure the safety of the American public. Before I comment on the CDC order that I'm sure Secretary Azar will later elaborate on, let me first address the progress as Secretary Pompeo and others have made with our Canadian and Mexican partners regarding cross-border travel.

As we continue to evaluate common-sense measures that reduce risk and prevent further spread, it only makes sense that we have looked at the measures that our neighbors to the north and south are undertaking. And so we've been working closely with those partners since the earliest days of this virus and the outbreak. And again, as the President said earlier this week and Secretary Pompeo, we've reached an agreement — an agreement with both Canada and Mexico to limit non-essential travel across our land borders.

Let me be clear that neither of these agreements with Canada or Mexico applies to lawful trade or commerce. Essential commercial activities will not be impacted. We will continue to maintain a strong and secure economic supply chain across our borders.

A few examples of essential travel include but certainly are not limited to: individuals traveling for medical purposes, to attend educational institutions, for emergency response, public health services, and individuals engaged in lawful cross-border trade. As the Secretary said, the agreements with both Canada and Mexico will go into effect on Saturday, March 21st.

Furthermore, we're also working collaboratively with Canada and Mexico to take decisive joint action regarding individuals seeking entry between our ports of entry. The CDC order directs the Department to suspend the introduction of all individuals seeking to enter the U.S. without proper travel documentation. That's for both the northern and southern border.

The CDC Director has determined that the introduction and spread of the coronavirus and the Department's Border Patrol stations and detention facilities presents a serious danger to migrants, our frontline agents and officers, and the American people.

So it's important to note that the Department currently apprehends foreign nationals from over 120 different countries around the world — the vast majority of those having coronavirus cases. Many of these individuals arrive with little or no identity, travel, or medical documentation, making public health risk determinations all but impossible.

It's also important to note that the outbreak on our southern border would likely increase the strain on health systems in our border communities, taking away important and lifesaving resources from American citizens.

Tonight — again, at midnight — we will execute the CDC order by immediately returning individuals arriving without documentation to Canada, Mexico, as well as a number of other countries without delay. So, again, CBP is positioned to execute these measures as we continue to keep our borders secure and safe.

Before I conclude, let me just wrap up by thanking the brave men and women of DHS, specifically CBP, and across the government for the work that they do day in and day out to keep the American people safe from the coronavirus. The Department has a number of frontline officers that have been — have tested positive, as well as the others who are self-quarantining. And I am doing everything that I can to protect these patriots as they continue to defend our homeland during this crisis.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Chad. Really good. Thank you. Please, Secretary?

SECRETARY AZAR: Today's announcement is just the latest in a long line of bold, decisive actions the President has taken to protect Americans from the coronavirus spreading across our borders.

In January, within two weeks of China's notifying WHO about the virus and with only 45 cases in China, we began screening travelers from Wuhan. Then, over time, as the outbreak evolved, the President restricted travel from China, Iran, and Europe. Our health experts say that these measures have been truly effective at slowing the virus's spread to our shores.

Just think about this: Italy and the United States both saw their first travel-related case of coronavirus around the exact same time, the last week of January. And yet, we have had precious

time to continue our work around vaccines, therapeutics, and other preparations, while Italy has tragically been overwhelmed with critical patients for several weeks now.

The President today is taking action to slow the spread of infectious disease via our border. Under Section 362 of the Public Health Service Act, the CDC is suspending the entry of certain persons into the United States because of the public health threat that their entry into the United States represents.

This order applies to persons coming from Mexico and Canada who are seeking to enter the country illegally and who would normally be held in a congregate setting like a Customs and Border Protection station. It does not apply to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

During this pandemic, a number of health challenges arise when illegal immigrants arrive at our northern and southern borders and are taken into immigration custody. We're talking about significant numbers of illegal immigrants. From this past October through February, DHS has processed more than 21,000 inadmissible aliens at the northern border and more than 151,000 inadmissible aliens at the southern border.

CBP facilities were never designed to hold large numbers of people and to protect agents and migrants from infection during a pandemic, nor to treat them for a novel virus if large numbers are infected. When held at border facilities, these migrants risk spreading the virus to other migrants, to CBP agents and border healthcare workers, and even the United States population as a whole. In such circumstances, the kind of social distancing measures the CDC and the President have recommended are simply not possible.

On top of that, any resources that we are using to reduce the risk of infection among CBP agents, healthcare workers, and migrants in these facilities are drawing on American — an American healthcare system that is already fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

That's why the President and his administration are taking these important steps to keep Americans and our immigration system safe from these health risks as part of our whole-of-government approach to combatting the coronavirus.

Thank you, Mr. President, for the work that you've been doing throughout this crisis to slow the spread of the coronavirus and to keep our country safe.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. If I could ask Tony or Deb, please.

DR. BIRX: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. So we continue to review the data very carefully from around the globe, as I know many of you are. We continue to see signs that, again, individuals under 20 — 19 and under — may have severe disease, but majority and all have recovered to date. We still see that same trend.

And, frankly, from Italy, we're seeing another concerning trend: that the mortality in males seems to be twice in every age group of females. This should alert all of us to continue our vigilance to protect our Americans that are in nursing homes.

This requires all of the community. And when you see the sacrifices that many Americans have made — the sacrifices that the service industry has made to close their restaurants, close their bars, and so that the spread is discontinued — and then you really understand how all of Americans must make the same sacrifice.

We continue to ask you to follow the presidential guidelines of no groups coming together of more than 10; that, if anyone in the household is sick, that everyone quarantines in the household together; and that we continue to focus on those who have the most vulnerability to this illness.

Now, to the moms and dads out there that have children with immunodeficiencies or other medical conditions: We don't know the level of risk. And I know you will also protect them in the same way. There just is not enough numbers at this time to really tell them if they're at additional risk or not in the same way that adults are.

I don't have any new data. I can see the look on your face as saying, "Is she seeing something new?" I don't have any new data, but I think it's important for us to be as honest with the American people as we can. And when we don't have data, be very clear that we don't know.

Finally, no one is immune. I sometimes hear people on radio or others talking about, "I'm immune to the virus." We don't know if the contagion levels are difference in age groups, but we know it's highly contagious to everyone.

Do not interpret mild or moderate disease as lack of contagion, or that you're immune. You just happen to have a better immune system and the ability to fight the virus in a way that maybe older

people or people with existing medical conditions can't.

And that's why it's very important at this moment, that all of you carry that message about the sacrifices that many have made, particularly our service providers and our frontline healthcare workers. They are making that sacrifice every day so that every American can move through this well. But we need every American following the presidential guidelines.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Tony, please.

DR. FAUCI: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I just want to underscore a couple of things that I've said a few times to this group. You may recall that just a week ago or so I said the two pillars, the two elements of our capability to contain the infection and the surge of infections in this country rely on two things: keeping infections from coming from without in. We've been very successful in doing that with China and with Europe. Now we have the northern and southern border issues. There's a fundamental public health reason for doing that, because we cannot be preventing people from coming in from one area when they can actually go into the other. So that's an important reason. Understand that there's a public health reason for doing that.

The second thing — and I think it's really important — is what happened in New York today, where Governor Cuomo mentioned about an hour ago some rather strong issues that have been addressed with his recommendations — not recommendations; essentially, orders.

Now, we have a group of recommendations and guidelines that are applicable to the entire country. You know them; we've been over them. Yet there are places, regions, states, cities in this country that are being stressed much, much more than the country as a whole. Clearly, one of them was Washington; another one was California. Governor Newsom made some very important, difficult decisions. Today, Governor Cuomo did the same thing. And I want to say I strongly support what he's doing.

And one thing, as a New Yorker myself — for those of you who haven't figured out from my accent that I'm from New York — as a New Yorker, I know what New Yorkers can do. We're tough. I was in New York City on September 11, 2001, and I know what the New Yorkers can do. So please cooperate with your governor, cooperate with your mayor. It's very important.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Mike?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That's great. Thank you, Mr. President. The White House Coronavirus Task Force met this morning and we continue, at the President's direction, to bring the full resources, not just of the federal government, but in full partnership with our state governments, businesses around America, and a partnership with the American people to respond to the threat of the coronavirus.

And I know I can speak on behalf of the President with confidence when I say how inspired we are by the way the American people and American businesses are coming together to help defeat this virus in our country. Millions of Americans are putting into practice the President's 15-day guidelines, and we encourage everyone, even those that are not in areas with significant outbreak, to review these guidelines over the next week and more, and put them into practice. And you'll continue to do your part.

Later today, we'll be talking with manufacturers around the country. And the President I continue to be inspired by the way American industry is stepping forward. We have businesses around the country that are literally volunteering to retrofit plants to help us meet the needs of our healthcare workers and our healthcare system in confronting the coronavirus.

As the President mentioned yesterday, following his decision to put FEMA in the lead — the emergency declaration — we actually met with all the nation's governors from the FEMA National Response Coordination Center. The President and I, our entire team at the federal level, couldn't be more grateful for the efforts of all of our governors in implementing the guidance that is being issued not only from our task force, but also in taking strong measures in their own communities to protect their citizens.

We want to urge every American to heed your local authorities. Listen to their guidance. And also do your part to slow the spread.

We reiterated to all of the governors that the President, by putting FEMA in the lead, will continue to implement a plan that is locally executed, state managed, and federally supported that puts the health of America first.

We have received a report today, as the President mentioned, on our legislative team on Capitol Hill. We're working with Republicans and Democrats at this very hour to pass an economic recovery package that the President described. And we hope to see the Congress act on that early next week.

On the subject of supplies, we continue to make steady progress on testing. Thanks to the President's involvement of commercial labs, the public and private partnership, more and more Americans are being tested every single day.

And tomorrow, Admiral Giroir and FEMA will update the American public on the status of testing and our support of state-based testing efforts that are literally expanding by the hour.

On the subject of medical supplies, we continue, at the President's direction, to pursue every means to expand the supply of personal protective equipment for the extraordinary and courageous healthcare workers that are ministering to the needs of people impacted by the coronavirus. We have a policy of procuring, allocating, as well as conserving the resources that we have in our system.

And now that the President worked with the Congress to make industrial masks fully available for hospitals to be able to purchase, to be able to use as protective equipment, we're more encouraged than ever about the availability of those important N95 masks to our healthcare facilities.

And over this weekend, we'll be announcing a major procurement from the federal government of N95 masks, as well.

We're also encouraged that we're finding new alternatives to increase the supply of ventilators. We've mentioned that we have a federal stockpile, some 20,000 ventilators on standby, but that doesn't count the tens of thousands of ventilators that are in our healthcare system around the country.

But the President has challenged us to work to free up other ventilators from other sources around the country. And there are two different ways that we're doing that. Number one, in our recent discussion with anesthesiologists, we've literally identified tens of thousands of existing ventilators that can be retrofitted and converted to be ventilators for people struggling with the coronavirus.

But also, on the President's behalf and on behalf of all of our task force, we want to continue to urge every American and every American hospital and healthcare facility to postpone any elective medical procedures. This will free up bed space, free up hospital capacity for people that are struggling with the coronavirus, and it will also free up equipment that our healthcare workers need.

It is inspiring that we continue to receive reports that businesses around America are donating N95 masks to their local hospitals. Businesses large and small are donating hundreds, in some cases millions, of N95 masks. And I know — I know how grateful the President is and we all are.

And let me close by saying, as all of our experts have said many times, while the threat of serious illness to the average American from the coronavirus remains low, every American can do your part to reduce the burden on your health, on your family, the burden on our healthcare system and especially the threat to the most vulnerable among us by putting into practice the President's "15 Days to Slow the Spread."

And as the President said at the outset of his remarks, I know that millions of Americans are doing that just now. And the greatness of the American character is shining forth.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Thank you very much.

Okay, thank you. Go ahead. Kaitlan.

Q You had a call with Senator Schumer. He says you've now agreed to invoke the Defense Production Act to actually make those medical supplies that hospitals say are in severe shortage. So two questions: Is that what you're doing now?

THE PRESIDENT: It is. I did it yesterday. We invoked it, I think, the day before we signed it — the evening of the day before — and invoked it yesterday. We have a lot of people working very hard to do ventilators and various other things. Yes.

Q So you're using it now to tell businesses they —

THE PRESIDENT: We are using it.

Q — need to make ventilators, masks, respirators?

THE PRESIDENT: We are. We are. For certain things that we need, including — including some of the very important emergency — I would say ventilators, probably more masks, to a large extent. We have millions of masks, which are coming and which will be distributed to the states. The states are having a hard time getting them. So we're using the act. The act is very good for things like this. We have millions of masks that we've ordered. They will be here soon. We're having them shipped directly to states.

Q So you said you had only — you were signing this but not invoking it — this is what you said yesterday — and that you would only do so in a worst-case scenario.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Last —

Q So are we now at a worst-case scenario?

THE PRESIDENT: We — we need — no, it's no different, other than we need certain equipment that the states are unable to get by themselves. So we're invoking it to use the powers of the federal government to help the states get things that they need, like the masks, like the ventilators.

Yeah, Steve.

Q Given what Governor Cuomo has done in New York, is there any more consideration to a national lockdown to keep people in their homes?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. Essentially, you've done that in California, you've done that in New York. Those are really two hotbeds. Those are probably the two hottest of them all, in terms of hotspots. I don't think so, because you go out to the Midwest, you go out to other locations and they're watching it on television but they don't have the same problems. They don't have, by any means, the same problem.

New York, California, Miami — the governor is doing an excellent job. Governor DeSantis in Florida. We have some pretty hot spots in Florida too. But we're generally — and the State of Washington, of course, but that was largely — if you look at it, it was one nursing home that had problems like you wouldn't believe.

So, no, we're working with the governors and I don't think you'll — I don't think we'll ever find that necessary.

Q So we're about a week into your 15-day guidelines. Are you happy with the progress? Would you like to see the 15 days extended?

THE PRESIDENT: I am happy. I am happy with it. We'll have to see what the results are at the end of 14 days, let's say. We'll know by the 15th day to see what we do. But I'm certainly honored by the way the American people are working — because it's work. It's work not to work. This is the first this has ever happened. And we're working out a tremendous financial package for them so they don't work. Whoever heard of this? Usually, you work out a financial package to get people working. We're asking people not to work. Social distancing — a new terms that's become probably the hottest term there is.

So, no, I'm very honored by the way the American people are taking this, I mean, so seriously.

Yes, John.

Q Mr. President, a question for you and a question for Dr. Fauci, if I could. There's been some concern among Democrats on Capitol Hill that the phase three fiscal stimulus is weighted too much in favor of corporations and not enough in terms of individuals. What did your conversations with Senator Schumer yield on that front?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that really all of that is being discussed right now. And we talked about, as an example, buyback — stock buybacks. I don't want to have stock buybacks. I don't want people spending — I don't want some executives saying, "We're going to buy 200,000 shares of stock." I want that money to be used for the workers, and also for the company — to keep the company going. But not for buybacks. I would — I mean, I haven't spoken to a lot of the Republicans or Democrats on it. We discussed it. And I — I don't like buybacks. I didn't like them the first time.

Q Are you and Senator Schumer —

THE PRESIDENT: So we're discussing — we're discussing that and we're discussing many things.

Q Are you on the same page with Senator Schumer?

THE PRESIDENT: We're not so far away, I'll tell you. We're not very — we're not very far away.

Q And to Dr. Fauci, if I could. Dr. Fauci — this was explained yesterday — there has been some promise with hydroxychloroquine as potential therapy for people who are infected with coronavirus. Is there any evidence to suggest that, as with malaria, it might be used as a prophylaxis against COVID-19?

DR. FAUCI: No. The answer is no. And the evidence that you're talking about, John, is anecdotal evidence. So as the Commissioner of FDA and the President mentioned yesterday, we're trying to strike a balance between making something with a potential of an effect to the American people available, at the same time that we do it under the auspices of a protocol that would give us information to determine if it's truly safe and truly effective.

But the information that you're referring to specifically is anecdotal; it was not done in a controlled clinical trial. So you really can't make any definitive statement about it.

THE PRESIDENT: I think, without saying too much, I'm probably more of a fan of that than — maybe than anybody. But I'm a big fan, and we'll see what happens. And we all understand what the doctor said is 100 percent correct. It's early. But we've — you know, I've seen things that are impressive. And we'll see. We're going to know soon. We're going to know soon — including safety.

But, you know, when you get to safety, this has been prescribed for many years for people to combat malaria, which was a big problem. And it's very effective. It's a strong — it's a strong drug. So we'll see.

Q It was also fairly effective against SARS.

THE PRESIDENT: It was a very — it was, as I understand that. Is that a correct statement — it was fairly effective on SARS?

DR. FAUCI: John, you've got to be careful when you say "fairly effective." It was never done in a clinical trial. They compared it to anything. It was given to individuals and felt that maybe it worked. So —

Q But was there anything to compare it to?

DR. FAUCI: Well, that's the point. Whenever you do a clinical trial, you do standard of care versus "standard of care plus the agent you're evaluating. That's the reason why we showed, back in Ebola, why particular interventions worked.

Q Mr. President, about the possible therapies yesterday, Mr. President, you said that they were for, quote, "immediate delivery." Immediate. We heard it from doc- —

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, well, we were ordering — yes, we have millions of units ordered. Bayer is one of the companies, as you know. A big company. A very big, very great company. Millions of units are ordered, and we're going to see what happens. We're going to be talking to the governors about it, and the FDA is working on it right now.

The advantage is that it has been prescribed for a totally different problem, but it has been described [sic] for many years, and everybody knows the levels of — the negatives and the positives. But I will say that I am a man that comes from a very positive school when it comes to, in particular, one of these drugs. And we'll see how it works out, Peter.

I'm not — I'm not saying it will, but I think that people may be surprised. By the way, that would be a game changer. But we're going to know very soon. But — but we have ordered millions of units. It's being ordered from Bayer, and there is another couple of companies also that do it.

Q For clarity, Dr. Fauci said there is no magic drug for coronavirus right now, which you would agree. I guess, on this issue then —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, I think we only disagree a little bit.

Q — so let me just ask, though: Is it possible that — sorry.

THE PRESIDENT: I disagree. Maybe and maybe not. Maybe there is, maybe there isn't. We have to see. We're going to know. We're going to know soon.

Q Is it possible — it possible that your impulse to put a positive spin on things may be giving Americans a false sense of —

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't think so.

Q — hope, and misrepresenting the preparedness right now?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No, I don't think so. I think that — I think it's gotten —

Q The ship is not yet ready to sail. The not-yet-approved drug

THE PRESIDENT: Such a lovely question. Look, it may work and it may not work. And I agree with the doctor, what he said: It may work, it may not work.

I feel good about it. That's all it is. Just a feeling. You know, I'm a smart guy. I feel good about it. And we're going to see. You're going to see soon enough. And we have certainly some very big samples of people, if you look at the people. You have a lot of people that are in big trouble. And this is not a drug that —

obviously, I think I can speak for a lot of — from a lot of experience, because it's been out there for over 20 years. So it's not a drug that you have a huge amount of danger with. It's not like a brand-new drug that's been just created that may have an unbelievable monumental effect, like kill you.

We're going to know very soon. And I can tell you the FDA is working very hard to get it out. Right now, in terms of malaria, if you wanted, you can have a prescription. You get a prescription. And by the way — and it's very effective. It works.

I have a feeling you may — and I'm not being overly optimistic or pessimistic. I sure as hell think we ought to give it a try. I mean, there's been some interesting things happened and some good — very good things. Let's see what happens. We have nothing to lose. You know the expression: What the hell do you have to lose? Okay?

Q So what do you say to — the units that were ordered — the units that were ordered.

THE PRESIDENT: Jon, go ahead.

Q I'll just follow up. Nearly 200 dead. What do you say to Americans who are scared, though? I guess, nearly 200 dead; 14,000 who are sick; millions, as you witness, who are scared right now. What do you say to Americans who are watching you right now who are scared?

THE PRESIDENT: I say that you're a terrible reporter. That's what I say.  
Go ahead.

Q Mr. President, the units that were just declared —

THE PRESIDENT: I think it's a very nasty question, and I think it's a very bad signal that you're putting out to the American people. The American people are looking for answers and they're looking for hope. And you're doing sensationalism, and the same with NBC and "Con-cast." I don't call it — I don't call it "Comcast," I call it "Con-cast."

Let me just — for who you work — let me just tell you something: That's really bad reporting, and you ought to get back to reporting instead of sensationalism.

Let's see if it works. It might and it might not. I happen to feel good about it, but who knows. I've been right a lot. Let's see what happens.

John?

Q Can I get back to science and the logistics here?

THE PRESIDENT: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Q The units that were ordered, are they for clinical trials or are they for distribution to the general patient population?

THE PRESIDENT: We are going to — as I understand it, we are going to be taking samples in New York. Governor Cuomo very much is interested in this drug. And they are going to work on it also, after they get a certain approval. We're waiting for one final approval from the FDA. We'll see what happens.

But we'll use it on people that are not doing great, or even at the beginning of not feeling well.

Q So this would sort of fall under the modified auspice —

THE PRESIDENT: And, John, what do we have to lose?

Q So this would sort of —

THE PRESIDENT: Wait, John — it's been out there for so long. We hear good things. Let's see. Maybe it works and maybe it doesn't.

Q I understand all of that. I'm just thinking the application here. So that would be under, sort of, a modified compassionate access?

THE PRESIDENT: We're doing that, I guess. And that's — that's what it's called. Yes.

Q I would like Dr. Fauci, if you don't mind, to follow up on what the President is saying. Should Americans have hope in this drug right now? And, sir, I would like to follow up on Peter's question here. Could you please issue — address Americans in this country who are scared right now? This is a very valid concern that people have.

DR. FAUCI: No, there really isn't that much of a difference in many respects with what we're saying. The President feels optimistic about something — his feeling about it.

What I'm saying is that it might — it might be effective. I'm not saying that it isn't. It might be effective. But as a scientist, as we're getting it out there, we need to do it in a way as — while we are making it available for people who might want the hope that it might work, you're also collecting data that will ultimately show that it is truly effective and safe under the conditions of COVID-19. So there really isn't difference. It's just a question of how one feels about it.

Q Is there any reason to believe it's not safe?

DR. FAUCI: Well, certainly as a drug — any drug, John, has some toxicities. The decades of experience that we have with this drug indicate that the toxicities are rare and they are, in many respects, reversible. What we don't know is when you put it in the context of another disease, whether it is safe.

Fundamentally, I think it probably is going to be safe, but I like to prove things first. So it really is a question of not a lot of difference. It's the hope that it will work versus proving that it will work. So I don't see big differences here.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree. I agree.

Q Sir, your message to Americans who are working at home, who have their children in their homes right now, who are homeschooling —

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. Here we go. Go ahead. Let's go.

Q — doctors who say they don't have the masks they need to do their jobs. Your message to them?

THE PRESIDENT: My message to the American people is that there is a very low incidence of death. You understand that. And we're going to come through this stronger than ever before.

If you get it, if you happen to get it, it is highly unlikely. It's looking like it's getting to a number that's much smaller than people originally thought, in terms of the ultimate — the ultimate problem, which would be death.

My message to the American people is, number one, you've done an incredible job. Incredible. What you've gone through — it's been incredible. It wasn't their fault. It wasn't their fault. It wasn't the fault of 140 other countries where this has happened. And there is tremendous hope. And I think we're going to come out stronger, better, bigger, in every way. I think we're going to be a better country than we were before. And we learned a lot. We learned on reliance — who to rely on, who not to rely on.

But our country — our country has been incredible, the way they pulled together — including the fact that I just spoke to Senator Schumer. We had a wonderful conversation. We both want to get to a good solution. But it's been, really, for me — watching and seeing people, that weren't speaking, getting along well because we all have one common aim, and that's to get rid of this invisible enemy, get rid of it fast, and then go back to the kind of economy that we had, and maybe even better.

Yeah, please, in the back. No, in the back, please.

Q Mr. President, I have two questions if you'll indulge me. The first question is: Many small businesses are concerned that they have weeks, not months, and are worried about how long it'll take assistance to get to them.

THE PRESIDENT: We're going to be helping them a lot. We're going to be focused — a big focus on — including my conversation with both Mitch and with Chuck — a big focus of that conversation with small businesses, because they are really the engine behind our country, more so than the big ones. They are the engine behind our country.

Q The second, if I may, sir: Are you concerned about members of Congress that may have used information they learned on updates to sell stocks and profit off of this?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm not aware of it. I saw some names. I'm not — I know all of them. I know everyone mentioned — Dianne Feinstein, I guess, and a couple of others. I don't know too much about what it's about. But I find them to all be very honorable people. That's all I know. And they — and they said they did nothing wrong. I find them — the whole group — very honorable people. Yeah, please.

Q Can I follow-up, Mr. President? So the whole group would include Richard Burr, the head of the Intelligence Committee, and it also would include Kelly Loeffler. And so the question is whether or not they should be investigated for that behavior.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it also includes Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat. You didn't mention her name. Why didn't you mention her name? And I think she's a very honorable person, by the way, so I'm not saying — but, you know, it's interesting that —

Q So, any senator. Any senator —

THE PRESIDENT: — you mentioned two people but you don't mention one that happens to be a Democrat.

Q Any senator. Any senator, should they be investigated for this behavior?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, because I'd have to look at it. Possibly. But I find them to be honorable people.

Yeah.

Q You said the other day you compare yourself — you see yourself as a wartime President right now, leading the country through this pandemic that we're experiencing. Do you really think, you know, going off on Peter or going off on a network is appropriate when the country is going through something like this?

THE PRESIDENT: I do, because I think Peter is — you know, I've dealt with Peter for a long time. And I think Peter is not a good journalist when it comes to fairness.

Q But he's asking for your message to the country, and then you went off on Peter.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think it's a good message because I think the country has to understand that there is indeed, whether we like it or not — and some of the people in this room won't like it — there's a lot of really great news and great journalism, and there's a lot of fake news out there.

And I hear it all and I see it all, and I understand it all because I'm in the midst of it. So when somebody writes a story or does a story on television and I know it's false, I know it's fake, and when they say they have, "15 sources have said" and I know there's no sources. There's no sources; they're just making it up. I know that and I call Peter — I call Peter out but I call other people out too.

And, you know, this is a time to come together, but coming together is much harder when we have dishonest journalists. It's a very important profession that you're in. It's a profession that I think is incredible. I cherish it. But when people are dishonest, they truly do hurt our country.

Yeah, in the back. Please, go ahead.

Q Mr. President, China has been in communication with the United States and also WHO about coronavirus —

THE PRESIDENT: Right. That's true.

Q — since January.

THE PRESIDENT: That's true.

Q And the U.S. shuttered its border to travelers from China on February the 2nd. Also, Wuhan has been in lockdown since January the 24th, and this all happened almost two months ago. Why did you say if you could have known earlier? And also, you have been calling coronavirus —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have to say this: We have — and I can speak for myself, but I have a very good relationship with China and with President Xi. I have great respect for President Xi. I consider him to be a friend of mine. It's unfortunate that this got out of control. It came from China. It got out of control. Some people are upset. I know — I know President Xi. He loves China. He respects the United States. And I have to say, I respect China greatly and I respect President Xi. Okay?

Please.

Q Can I ask more about the stock buybacks? Many of the airlines and Boeing did stock buybacks. Is this a deal-breaker for you in this (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: No, but I never liked stock buybacks from their standpoint. When we did a big tax cut, and when they took the money and did buybacks, that's not building a hangar, that's not buying aircraft, that's not doing the kind of things that I want them to do.

And we're now talking about buybacks. We didn't think we would have had to restrict it because we thought they would have known better. But they didn't know better, in some cases — not in all cases, obviously; some people did an incredible job. They built plants all over the country.

I mean, you see what's happened. I mean, we were doing — until this invisible enemy appeared, we were — I mean, we never had an economy like this. But there were some companies that used that money to buy back stock, driving up the price of the stock artificially, in many cases. I don't like that. I don't like it.

And as far as whether or not we'll have that, allow them — when we give them money — because we have to keep these great companies in business because of the workers; frankly, for the most part, because of the workers. The workers are my number one concern. But the way we take care of the workers is we have to keep the companies going.

I am fine with restricting buybacks. In fact, I would — I would demand that there be no stock buybacks. I don't want them taking hundreds of millions of dollars and buying back their stock,

because that does nothing.

Yeah. Please.

Q Thank you very much. One for Dr. Fauci and then hopefully one for you.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Sure.

And one thing: Secretary of State Pompeo is extremely busy, so if you have any question for him right now, could you do that? Because — you know what I'd like to do? I'd like him to go back to the State Department or, as they call it, the "Deep State Department." If you don't mind, I'd like to have him go back and do his job. So does anybody have any question?

Please.

Q Mr. Secretary —

(Cross-talk.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Go ahead. Do you want to call on somebody?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. How about you. Only — only for the Secretary.

Q The exemptions on work travel — can you define that? Is all work travel — anyone with a work visa can still cross the border? Can you define the measures that you're taking?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's a great question. We're working — we have real concern about H-2A visas, particularly agriculture workers that need to get across. We're going to make sure that we do everything we can to keep that part of our economic lifeblood working between our two countries. DHS and the State Department will work together. We want to make sure and keep commerce between Canada, the United States, and Mexico alive, functional, and prepared for the day that this economy bounces back like we expect that it will.

Q Mr. Secretary —

Q Mr. Secretary —

SECRETARY POMPEO: Right back there, and then —

Q Mr. Secretary, the Mexican government has not announced any travel ban on Europe. Have you been in touch with them as to when they're going to do this and what it is that they're telling you?

And then a second question: They also are telling us — said in a press conference this morning that they will not take back any non-Mexican citizen. Any other third parties will have to — we don't know what will happen to them. So can you address what will happen to those third-country immigrants that you are saying they will not be allowed to enter the U.S., and Mexico is saying that they will not be allowed to stay in Mexico either, or sent back from the U.S.?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'll take the first one, and then, Chad, I'll give you the second one. With respect to travel into Mexico from outside, I spoke with Foreign Minister Ebrard a couple of times about this. I'm very confident we're going to get to a really good place that protects the Mexican people and the American people from those who might be traveling into places where we've got designations — the Schengen Zone, from China — so that they're not coming into Mexico and then coming into the United States. I'm very confident we'll do that, and we'll make that announcement shortly, together.

Q Mr. Secretary —

THE PRESIDENT: Chad. (Inaudible.)

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: Again, as we implement the CDC's order, again, we're going to take a number of individuals that cross the border illegally and repatriate them or remove them quickly back to Mexico, back to the Northern Triangle, and back to any other country. So we're going to do that in a rapid fashion.

We'll continue to work with Mexico to make sure that Mexican nationals go back as well as other populations.

Q But are you sending Guatemalans back to Guatemala or Cubans back to Cuba? What would you do —

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: Yes.

Q — with those third countries that are non-Mexicans?

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: So, we're doing all of the above. We're going to be sending, again, individuals back to Mexico, individuals back to Northern Triangle countries, Cuba, Haiti, all of the — again, 122 different nations that we see nationalities that come across that border, we'll be sending them back individually to their countries, but also working with Mexico to send additional populations back there as well.

THE PRESIDENT: And just to put it, you know, when you said — before, you said the non-Mexicans going to Mexico. We're not sending them to Mexico; we're sending them back to their own countries, not to Mexico. Why would Mexico take people that aren't from Mexico? We're sending them back.

In the case of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, a lot of other countries, they go back to the country from where they came. Okay?

And, Mike, please.

Q For the Secretary of Defense —

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, John.

Q Secretary Pompeo, on the issue of disinformation, is there any particular locus for this disinformation, or is it diffused?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's pretty diffused, unfortunately. But we've certainly seen it come from places like China and Russia and Iran, where there are coordinated efforts to disparage what America is doing in our activity to do all the things that President Trump has set in motion here.

Q Other than what you're doing this morning, what you are doing to fight back?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Lots of things. Lots of work. One of the things we want to make sure is the American people go to trusted sources for their information. But we've made clear, we've spoken

to these countries directly that we don't — that they need to knock it off, that we don't approve of it. And then there are a handful of other things we're engaged in to make sure that the right information is out there and accurate information is given.

This idea of transparency and accurate information is very important. It's how we protect American people from something like this ever happening again.

Q Mr. Secretary, the Peace Corps volunteers?

Q You're saying you want the American people to be coming to trusted sources of information. Does it undermine you at all when the President stands up here and he attacks news outlets, calling us untrustworthy?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Does somebody else have a question?

Q Mr. Secretary, the Peace Corps volunteers have all —

Q Is that not a legitimate question?

Q Sir, the Peace Corps volunteers —

THE PRESIDENT: Please. You're another one.

Q In terms of Americans who find themselves stranded in places where there are no longer flights to get back to the United States, what efforts are being made to help them?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I appreciate that question. So, we're doing lots of things. We've had a couple places in particular: Peru and Morocco. I think we've had the first two, maybe three now, flights out of Morocco. We're going to work to get people back. We're urging individuals, when they can get back on their own — they traveled there on their own — when they can get back there on their own, they ought to try to do that. But we are — we have a team stood up at the State Department, the repatriation task force that is working each of these instances.

So we've heard from individuals, members of Congress. We're trying to get Americans back from these places where air travel has been disrupted. And we'll get that done over time. We'll get it

done successfully.

Q Do you have sense of how big that problem is?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, Steve. Go ahead, please.

Q How long —

Q Is there any sense of just how that problem is, how many people —

SECRETARY POMPEO: We don't know the — we don't know the full scale of it yet, but we think we have the largest number identified, and we're working. If there are — those who are watching that are someplace, you can go on the State Department website, you can log into, I think, STEP.gov, and go to STEP and log in, and we'll track and we'll try to get everybody back just as fast as we can.

THE PRESIDENT: Steve?

Q Mr. Secretary, how long are these border restrictions likely to last along the south and north borders?

SECRETARY POMPEO: They'll last as long as we need to do it to protect the American people from the virus. I couldn't tell you how long it's going to last.

Q And since we have you, have you determined whether Iran is responsible for that rocket attack last week?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So —

THE PRESIDENT: Maybe we shouldn't say that.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So let me just — let me just get back to you on the answer to that. And what we can —

Q Sounds like a "yes."

THE PRESIDENT: We know plenty.

SECRETARY POMPEO: What we can say — what we can say with certainty is this: We've made clear all along that the Iraqi Shia militias are funded, trained, equipped by the Iranians. And we've urged the Iranians not to do that. We've told the Iranians that they will be held responsible for those attacks when they threaten American lives.

Q About the Peace Corps volunteers? For the Peace Corps volunteers that are in 60-plus countries, have they all been returned?

SECRETARY POMPEO: You know, I don't know if they're all back or not yet. I know that they were directed to come back. I know that most of them are back. I couldn't tell you if we have all of them back yet. I don't know.

Q And then Secretary — Secretary Esper is not here, but to get tests to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are you able to give us a progress report on the status of that, if they're all able to get tests?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't know the answer to that. I know we have State Department officials, too, who are concerned and want to make sure we get them tests, our team as well. And we're working on that. We've had significant success on that to date. There are a few places we've not been able to get them, but we will. We'll get them.

Q Secretary Pompeo, how exactly are you going to get those Americans back? And do you have any plans to get the military involved in that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're going to use all the tools we can. These first efforts are combined commercial/private flights that will fly in, bring them back — bring them back to a destination here in the United States. So we'll do that.

There are some that will travel back other ways as well. And we have worked with the Department of Defense to say, where there is space available, we'll be able to bring them back on those flights, as well. It's a whole-of-government effort to make sure we get them back.

Q So DOD will be involved?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Again, they're going to help us every place they can. Secretary Esper and I have talked about a couple times.

Q Thank you, Secretary. Question on Iran again. Is there any consideration to relaxing sanctions on Iran during the coronavirus crisis since they've been particularly hard hit?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's an important question. The whole world should know that humanitarian assistance into Iran is wide open. It's not sanctioned. We've offered to provide assistance to the Iranians as well. I talked with Dr. Ted Rose from the World Health Organization about this. We're doing everything we can to facilitate both the humanitarian assistance moving in, and to make sure that financial transactions connected to that can take place as well.

There is no sanction on medicines going to Iran. There's no sanctions on humanitarian assistance going into that country. They've got a terrible problem there, and we want that humanitarian medical healthcare assistance to get to the people of Iran.

Q But the sanctions themselves, no — no movement?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We are — we are working to do all the things we've had in place for the first three years here to deliver security for the American people.

THE PRESIDENT: They know the answer. Ira- — they know the answer — Iran. The leaders. They know the answer to your question.

Q Mr. Secretary, was it appropriate for the President to call your department the “Deep State Department” at a time when thousands of diplomats are working very hard around the world to combat this pandemic?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've worked for the President for three years now. I know how much he values the people that work on my team. I know, when I was the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, how much he valued the work we did. I know that he watches our team — Dr. Birx — all of the team that's working to push back against this virus to keep America safe. I know how much he values them.

THE PRESIDENT: What a good answer.

Yes, go ahead.

Q Mr. President, can I —

SECRETARY POMPEO: True.

THE PRESIDENT: It's very true too.

Go ahead.

Q Mr. President —

THE PRESIDENT: No, behind you.

Q I apologize.

THE PRESIDENT: Please, go ahead.

Q I have two questions. The first is to Secretary Pompeo. NewsHour has learned that the CDC picked up that there was some sort of virus happening in Wuhan — the coronavirus happening in Wuhan as early as December. When did the CDC start letting other agencies know that there was something in China happening — that this coronavirus was happening? And then when did the whole-of-government approach start to happen?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I'll let the CDC — or, Dr. Fauci, do you want to talk to that?

Q (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, Secretary Azar, please. Yeah.

SECRETARY AZAR: So we were alerted by some discussions that Dr. Redfield, the Director of the CDC, had with Chinese colleagues on January 3rd. It's since been known that there may have been cases in December, not that we were alerted in December.

Q Then, Mr. President, the other question I had for you. When —

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me — we'll do it in a second. Let Mike — he has to get back — he has to get back to work.

SECRETARY POMPEO: May I just say — may I just say one more thing? There's been some discussion about China and what they knew and when they knew it. And I've been very critical. We need to know immediately. The world is entitled to know. The Chinese government was the first to know of this risk to the world. And that puts a special obligation to make sure that data — that data gets to our scientists, our professionals. This is not about retribution. This matters going forward. We're in a — we're in a live exercise here —

THE PRESIDENT: Should have —

SECRETARY POMPEO: — to get this right.

THE PRESIDENT: Should have let us know.

SECRETARY POMPEO: We need to make sure that even today, the datasets that are available to every country, including datasets that are available to the Chinese Communist Party, are made available to the whole world. It's an imperative to keep people safe.

We talk about the absence of datasets, not being able to make judgments about what to do. This is absolutely critical. This transparency, this real-time information sharing isn't about political games or retribution. It's about keeping people safe.

And so when you see a delay in information flowing from the Chinese Communist Party to the technical people who we wanted to get into China immediately to assist in this, every moment of delay connected to being able to identify this risk vector — the risk vectors, creates risk to people all around the world.

And so this is why it's not about blaming someone for this, this is about moving forward to make sure that we continue to have the information we need to do our jobs.

Q And staying with you, Mr. Secretary, what message do you think it sends to other countries when you have the President of the United States lashing out at reporters?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've had my frustration with reporters too. All I ask when I talk to the media is that you listen to what we say and report it accurately. And it's frustrating. It's frustrating when you —

Q But what message does it send to other countries though?

SECRETARY POMPEO: — when you say that that doesn't happen, it's enormously frustrating.

We have a responsibility to tell the American people the truth. And those who are reporting on what it is we're doing and saying have an equal responsibility to report accurately.

Q But what message does it send to countries when you're lashing out at reporters?

Q Do you have any evidence (inaudible) when it's not accurately being reported? That the news media is not accurately reporting?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've seen — I've seen many things at the State Department being reported wildly and inaccurately on —

Q Anything specific you can cite?

SECRETARY POMPEO: — on multiple occasions. And I have spoken to those reporters about it each and every time, and I'll continue to do so.

Q Mr. President, Senator Johnson is suggesting —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'd rather have — if you could finish up with the Secretary of State.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think I've worn them out, Mr. President.

Q Let me ask you both —

THE PRESIDENT: Is everybody finished — Secretary of State?

Q Let me ask you both if that's all right. Mr. Secretary, Senator Johnson has suggested that you and the administration may be overreacting. He said, "We don't shut down our economy because tens of thousands of people die on the highways. We don't shut down our economy because tens of thousands of people die from the common flu. At worst, 3.4 percent of Americans will die from this virus," he said. What do you say to people that have that view? That's 11 million people he's talking about.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can just say the entire world is agreeing with us because they're all — they all have their choice, and everybody is doing the exact same thing. We want to shut it out, and we can do that. And we'll see what happens in two weeks, in three weeks. But if we can save thousands of lives, and even millions of lives, potentially — you don't know where it goes. But you could be talking about millions of lives.

So if you look at the world — I mean, you have some very smart people in the world. You have some smart leaders in the world. And everybody is doing it the way we're doing it. I think we're doing a better job than hopefully most, if not all. We're doing a very effective job. But we'll — we'll know better in 14 or 15 days.

But, you know, you're talking about hundreds of thousands — and maybe more than that — numbers of people. And, you know, we can bring our finances back very quickly. We can't bring the people back.

Q Mr. President, to follow up on that, there are millions of people out there that share that view that say, "I don't really need to shut things down. I don't really need to stay away from the stores. I don't — I can go to the beach." And those people making multiple actions exponentially, it's the difference between life and death, isn't it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I agree with that. But I think I'd like to have Anthony answer that, because to be honest, that's what he does. And he — we have a lot of — a lot of very talented people telling us what they think we should do.

DR. FAUCI: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, first of all, I think that's a false equivalency to compare traffic accidents with — I mean, that's totally way out. That's really a false equivalency.

When you have something that is new and is emerging and you really can't predict totally the impact it's going to have — and you take a look at what's gone on in China, and you see what's going on right now — right now, in Italy, and what's happening in New York City — I don't think with any moral conscience you could say, "Why don't we just let it rip and happen, and let X percent of the people die?" I don't understand that reasoning at all.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay, so, Secretary of State will be leaving. Any other question for him? Go ahead. In the back. Please. In the back for Mike.

Q Thank you, Mr. President —

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me, I didn't call on you. Go ahead.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Two things. In New York, where cases are doubling every day, they fear that supplies are going to run out in a matter of weeks. Yesterday, Mayor Bill de Blasio called on you to mobilize the military to deliver urgent supplies. Yesterday, he said, quote, "The fate of New York City rests in the hands of one man. He is a New Yorker and right now he is betraying the city he comes from." I've personally spoken to emergency department nurses who say that they're being told not to wear N95 masks because supplies are so low. So how do you respond to those remarks by Mayor de Blasio? And there's nurses and doctors —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I just think this: I'm not dealing —

Q — looking to you. When will those supplies arrive?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I'm not dealing with him. I'm dealing with the governor. And the governor agrees with me, and I agree with him. So far, we've been very much in sync. I guess they're not agreeing with each other, necessarily.

But the relationship with New York — I love New York. I grew up in New York, as you probably have heard, and the relationship has been very good. And I think government and the governor have been getting along incredibly well with the federal government.

Okay.

(Cross-talk.)

Q A question for Secretary Wolf, if I could. Just on illegal entries of people who are OTM, how will the turn-back process work? Will they be taken to a common area and then put on the plane and sent back to Northern Triangle countries or others? I mean, how would that process work?

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: Again it's a — it's a public health crisis, so what we're trying to do is limit the amount of contact that we have with these individuals, not putting them in Border Patrol facilities, ICE detention facilities, and the like.

So it's going to be very rapid. We're going to obviously take them into custody and then — and then send them back to a port of entry or other means. So it'll be very quickly. It won't be the 6 or 7 or 10 days that we currently have. It'll be much more rapid.

Q But if they are OTM, will you — will they be taken to an airfield nearby or —

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: That's correct. That's correct.

Q And sent back (inaudible)?

ACTING SECRETARY WOLF: Absolutely.

THE PRESIDENT: Any — anybody?

Q Mr. President, can we ask about the checks, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: About the what?

Q The checks to Americans. The bill that is proposed creates sort of tiers of checks for incomes.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. It will be.

Q Do you believe, philosophically, that makes sense?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're working on it. Well, I believe in a lot of things. I want to get workers money. And whichever way the best way to get it — and I want to keep the businesses open too, because without the businesses, they're not going to be getting money for very long.

But we're going to be — we're going to be talking.

Q But in that bill, as it's written, is there enough money or do you want to see it juiced up?

THE PRESIDENT: If there's not, we'll do something later, I am sure. I am sure we'll do something.

Q Mr. President, the Wall Street analysts are predicting that unemployment numbers could skyrocket next week by — some analysts say as many as 3 million people applying for unemployment, which would be a historic number in a one-week spread. So is a thousand-dollar check going to cut it? Is that going to be enough?

THE PRESIDENT: We're not talking about a thousand-dollar check. We're talking about much more than that. We're also talking about doing phases. If this doesn't work, we're going to keep doing until we get it going. And, frankly, once we get the economy back and once this enemy is defeated — the invisible enemy, as I call it — once it's defeated, we get the economy back, it's going to all come back to us very quickly. It comes back very quickly.

We have a tremendous economy. We do numbers like no other country has ever done before. Number one in the world, if you go back two weeks — and still, obviously. But if you go back two weeks, number one in the world, by far. That money comes back to us very rapidly. We want to keep it — we want to have it so that when we — not “if,” but when we win the war with the invisible enemy — when we win it, these companies can immediately start — not that they have to start rebuilding, which takes a long time.

Steve.

Q Are you confident that those are —

THE PRESIDENT: Steve. Please. Please.

Q — jobs that will come back if someone applies for unemployment next week?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm — I'm confident. I am confident.

Q What projections for job losses in March and April are you hearing?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're looking at different numbers. We have a best case and not best case, but the big thing is to defeat the virus. Once that virus is defeated, Steve, I think everything else falls in place very rapidly. I think you're going to have a tremendous upswing.

A lot of people agree with me. A lot of — if you look at your stock market geniuses — some of whom are not geniuses, but they think they are — a lot of people think that I'm right about that, that once we defeat the virus, I think you're going to have a very steep — like a rocket ship. It's going to go up and everything will be back, and I really believe we're going to be stronger than ever before.

Yeah, go ahead.

Q On the issue of supplies, you've told governors to try to find whatever supplies they can on their own.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Absolutely.

Q But some of them are now saying when they go to try to buy them, they're being outbid by the federal government.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you heard my news conference yesterday. So, you know, that's not —

Q So what — so what do you expect those governors to do?

THE PRESIDENT: I mean, that was — that was sort of yesterday's news. No. That does happen because they want to buy supplies. We want to buy as a backup to them, in case they can — and sometimes that will happen.

But regardless of who gets them, when they need them, we're getting them to them. Now, we're doing the Production Act. We're doing it very much. And we have a lot of things cooking right now at a high level.

Remember this: Nothing like this has ever happened before. Over 140 countries. And you have supply chains that are broken down for two reasons: because they can't supply that much and because people are sick. They can't be on the chain. So you have a lot of interesting things all over the world. You have supply chains that broke down because of the illness and also because of the fact — the quantity.

But we're getting it ordered. We're getting it done. And the — if you just have to — look, some of you were at the call yesterday where I spoke with the governors — almost all of the governors — and every one of them was very impressed with what we've done.

Go ahead. In the middle, please.

Q Mr. President, there are reports that the Labor Department has told states not to disclose their unemployment numbers. Do you agree with that decision?

THE PRESIDENT: I'd have to talk to him. I would have to talk to Secretary Scalia.

Q And just one more clarifying question, if I could, on the DPA. I just want to be clear: Are you saying that the administration is requiring these industries to create these products or just asking?

THE PRESIDENT: You know, so far, we haven't had to. It's an amazing thing that happened. We're getting calls from automobile companies. We're getting calls from other companies, saying they have plant capacity, they want to make ventilators, they want to make other things. We are literally being besieged, in a beautiful way, by companies that want to do the work. They want to do the job. They want to help us. They want to help our country. So we haven't had a problem with that at all.

Q Mr. President, how do you help out states and localities that are trying to bid on things like ventilators and other items but are being outbid by the federal government?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, when they call us, they let us know. If there's a conflict, they will call us and we will drop our bid because we want them to go first because they're point — they're point of sale. So we've had four or five instances where literally that was happening because you know we're both trying to get stock. And if we're going against, they will call us — the smart ones, frankly,

will call us, and we will immediately — we want them to buy it because it gets to them quicker if they buy it. Okay? We're really —

Q Do they know that they're able to do this?

THE PRESIDENT: They know that. And it's happening more and more, where they're calling and they're saying we're bidding against each other. They want to get it. They'll get it much quicker that way.

Go ahead, please.

Q Mr. President, I have a question for Secretary Azar. There are labs across the country that don't have the testing supplies they need. What specific actions is the administration —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's going very well, I tell you what.

Q What specific actions are being taken?

THE PRESIDENT: We inherited an obsolete deal and we've made a good thing out of it. I haven't heard that question in a while, but go ahead.

SECRETARY AZAR: Yeah. So, first, we're making tremendous progress, in terms of lab testing. Tens of thousands of tests are being done every single day, both through the CDC and the public health labs, as well as now through the private sector commercial labs. They're getting to scale. They have supplies. They have high throughput.

We do hear anecdotally, occasionally, of, say, a public health lab or another one that has a concern about this supply or that supply.

Through FEMA, we actually are standing up a laboratory task force to answer those questions. Usually, it's that the lab people do not understand that there are actually alternative supplies in the marketplace that they are perfectly free to use. We've actually had to put out some common myths and truths about that.

For instance, the other day, we were getting calls from governors, saying, “We don’t have swabs. There are no swabs. There are no swabs.” Our supply people went in the open marketplace and bought 200,000 swabs in the open market, and I just sent a letter to every governor, sending them swabs.

So some of it is just they aren’t listening or checking with us about all the freedom, all the capacities out there. It’s a complex system, with 330 million Americans and all of these labs, so sometimes there’s a lab that doesn’t understand how much flexibility they have and how much supply there is out there. And we’re working through the new FEMA Integration Center to help correct that for folks.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to say about the tests? Tell them how that’s working.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, as I said, more and more tests are being performed every day. And as we learn about the results that are being reported around the country of coronavirus tests, our experts continue to look at the numbers and see that some 90 percent of Americans that are tested do not test positive for the coronavirus and so it can give you a sense of the magnitude of testing that’s going on. We have the number of cases that we’ve reported today, but it’s — it’s, in some cases, near to 10 times that that have been tested.

But let me also emphasize how important it was, in answering these questions for governors and local officials, that the President stood up FEMA and the National Response Center where we briefed governors yesterday. Now every governor and their state department — state health departments have the ability to reach out with — to our regional FEMA administrators. And that’s how, as the President said, we’re sorting out those potential conflicts between very significant federal purchases and procurements and — and as hospitals and state governments are purchasing as well.

I think the new, streamlined system — operating now in all 50 states in our territories, of governors and states, going through their regional administrator for FEMA — is going to make it more possible for us to ensure that our hospitals, our healthcare providers have access to what’s available on the open market and elsewhere.

Q Mr. Vice President, you’re the head of the task force. You’ve seen the numbers. You’ve spoken to average Americans. You’re a former governor. What do you say to Americans right now who are

watching and who are scared?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I would say: Do not be afraid; be vigilant. All the experts tell us that the risk of serious illness to the average American for the coronavirus is low. But we need every American to put into practice the President's coronavirus guidelines, "15 Days to Slow the Spread." Because the coronavirus is about three times more contagious than the flu, according to our best estimate. And you can contract the coronavirus; have very mild symptoms, if any; not even be aware that you have it; and expose someone who is vulnerable to a very serious health outcome.

That's the reason why we're encouraging people to avoid groups of more than 10; to not eat in restaurants, but to use drive-throughs; to wash their hands on a regular basis. And particularly, we're going to continue, as the President has directed us, to focus on the most vulnerable population, which are seniors with serious underlying health conditions or anyone with an underlying immunodeficiency. It's those people we need to care for, but it's going to take all of us working together to make sure they're safe.

Q But I just wanted to get a clarification because you just said that you haven't had to require companies to up their production of medical supplies, but you've said last night you invoked the DPA.

THE PRESIDENT: But I didn't say that. No.

Q I'm confused — are you requiring them or —

THE PRESIDENT: When we need something — when we need something — because of the act, when we need something, we order something.

And, as you know, two days ago, I invoked the act, which was a big step. I'm not sure that it had been done before, certainly not very much. And when we need something, we will use the act.

What has happened is, before we even go out, many, many companies — great companies — companies in a totally different business are willing to do things and make things. Because that's what they do; they make product. They're willing to make product for us — medical product — that we need very badly for the states that the states can't get — they haven't been able to get.

And, you know, most of the states, in no way did they do anything wrong. They were stocked up. They were all equipped. Unfortunately, they've never had a thing like this. So they need help from the federal government.

Q But you haven't actually directed any —

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead.

Q This is important. You haven't actually directed any companies to start making more ventilators or masks, right?

THE PRESIDENT: I have. I have. Yes. I have.

Q How many companies?

THE PRESIDENT: A lot. A lot.

Q So you are requiring them.

THE PRESIDENT: And they're making a lot of ventilators and they're making a lot of masks.

Go ahead, please.

Q Which ones? What companies?

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead. Please.

Q Mr. President, partially following up on that, are there automakers right now who are retooling their production facilities to make ventilators or to make masks?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't say they are, but they will be very shortly because we're working with one in particular — the ones to make ventilators. They called us yesterday and they're already — we're working on a transaction. They're going to make ventilators. They say they've done it before, which surprised me. But they can do it very easily.

Q Secretary Azar, sir —

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead.

Q This is partially for you, partially for Secretary Azar. You said yesterday that you had spoken to Carnival Corporation's chairman.

THE PRESIDENT: Carnival. Yeah.

Q Yes. And he said that he could donate some ships —

THE PRESIDENT: No, not donate. That's not the word — "donate."

Q Or not "donate." Okay. "Lend." Lend.

THE PRESIDENT: He didn't — he's not giving them. He's going to let you use them.

Q Okay.

THE PRESIDENT: I spoke with Micky Arison, who is the President — chairman, CEO, and owner. I think he's got every title you can have.

Q Okay. And he could lend some ships to potentially be hospitals.

THE PRESIDENT: He said to me that he was willing to, if we need ships — if we need ships for helping people, that Carnival would be absolutely willing to help us in Los Angeles, in New York, wherever they may be — in Miami, where they're very big. If we needed something, they would be willing to.

So far, we haven't needed to. And we're bringing the big hospital ships up in California. We haven't. We're working with the Governor of California, as you know — with Gavin — and we haven't made a determination. We're also talking — the folks would like it in Seattle. So we're discussing where it can be most useful.

We've spoken with Governor Cuomo and we're bringing the big hospital ship up in two weeks, and we're going to have it in New York Harbor or someplace in New York Harbor.

Q Okay. So my question is, one, it sounds like you haven't taken them up on it yet, but that you could.

THE PRESIDENT: No, I have taken them up. I said, "If we need it, I'll let you know." That's called taking them up.

Q And secondly —

THE PRESIDENT: Right now, we don't need it.

Q The cruise ships have a lot of frequently contacted surfaces. And so this is where you come in, Secretary Azar, potentially Dr. Fauci. Do you have concerns about the cruise ships being used as hospitals?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can tell you they're very clean and also those surfaces, the germ, as you know, the virus disappears over a period of time. And these ships are very clean. They've been kept very clean. They've been gone over. But the virus, as you know, if it is on a surface for a certain — they have, actually, charts. Different kinds of surfaces, it disappears over a period of time.

Q Why not just use hotels?

THE PRESIDENT: I mean, I — what are you trying to get at? Go ahead.

Q Well, that's what I'm asking. Why not just use hotels?

THE PRESIDENT: It disappears. The virus disappears when it's on surface after a certain number of days or, in some cases, hours, depending on the surface it's on.

Go ahead. Please.

Q Thank you. A quick follow-up. So, can you say — can you name any of the companies that you've asked to start making these ventilators or facemasks?

THE PRESIDENT: I will be, but first I want to get the approval from the company because I don't want to be doing that.

Q Okay. Well —

THE PRESIDENT: I assume they'd like it, but I'll let you know.

Q Okay. Well, thank you. And this is for Dr. Fauci —

THE PRESIDENT: We have one company that has openly stated, and it is General Motors.

Q So that's one of the — did you — did the government ask General Motors?

THE PRESIDENT: It's one of the companies, But I didn't speak to them about announcing it, but I'll announce it. I'm sure they wouldn't be — but we have others also.

Q Okay, thank you. And so, for Dr. Fauci, there is new research out from — that the CDC has released, that many of the people that have — or that 13 percent of the people with the coronavirus got it from someone that was asymptomatic. So my question is: Does that change the way — the approach that should be taken? And do you think that's the case? Or, I mean, do you think that — or do you not agree with that research?

DR. FAUCI: Yeah. The recommendations that are here applies to whether you're in physical contact with someone who could be infected with symptoms versus asymptomatic. I don't really think it changes anything.

Certainly, there is some degree of asymptomatic transmissibility. It is still not quite clear exactly what that is. But when people focus on that, I think they take their eye off the real ball, which is: The things you do will mitigate against getting infected, no matter whether you're near someone who is asymptomatic or not. It's the same thing. Physical separation and the care that's outlined here is going to take care of both of those things.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. I have a question about testing. When will every American who needs a test get a test and be able to get a test? And why not have medical equipment being shipped right now to hospitals who need it, to —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you're hearing very positive things about testing. And just so you understand, we don't want every American to go out and get a test.

Q We're talking about the people who need a test.

THE PRESIDENT: Three hundred and fifty million people — we don't want that. We want people that are sys- — that have a problem, that have a problem with — they're sneezing, they're sniffing, they don't feel good, they have a temperature. There are a lot of different things. You know them — you know them better than I do. So, ready? We don't need that.

But what we are having is we're having — these private labs have come and they've been really fantastic. And we also have a great system for the future. Because, as I said, we inherited — “we,” meaning this administration — an obsolete, broken system that wasn't meant for anything like this.

Now we have a system that you can see because — look, we're well into this and nobody is even talking about it, except for you —

Q There are Americans —

THE PRESIDENT: — which doesn't surprise me. Which doesn't surprise me.

Q There are Americans though who say that they have symptoms and they can't get tests.

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Well, okay —

Q What do you say to the Americans who are scared that they have symptoms and can't get a test?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Well, okay. I'm not — I'm not hearing it. But we don't want everybody to go out and get a test because there is no reason for it.

Yeah.

Q What about some Americans who have symptoms who can't get a test?

Q Mr. President, I want to ask —

THE PRESIDENT: We'll do one more after this.

Q So I wanted to ask Dr. Fauci, because Kevin Hassett is one of the people who is now suggesting that the real way to get to the end of this — for life to return to normal — is for every single person living in this country to be tested. That way, you could see who is contagious and you could then have people who don't have it go back to work.

Is there any possibility that this country could ever get to a point where every single person could be tested, and how long would that take?

DR. FAUCI: Thank you for the question. I've heard that before. I don't see — I don't connect the dots there. I don't see how testing everybody in the country is going to help you to implement this. This should be implemented universally, at least at this level, for everyone.

The things we spoke about a while ago, that you want to really ratchet it up — like Governor Newsom is doing California, like Governor Cuomo is doing in New York — are how you put an end to this outbreak. Testing is important. It would be nice to know and there are certain things you could do, but let's not conflate testing with the action that we have to take. Whether or not you test, do this.

I'm not — I'm not putting down testing as an important issue, but people seem to link them so much: that if you don't have universal testing, you can't respond to the outbreak. You really can.

THE PRESIDENT: But I do think — and that's after listening to Tony and everybody else that is an expert, I do think it's important that not everybody be tested. If you feel great and if you have no symptoms whatsoever, it's a — it's just not a good thing to be doing.

All right. Steve, please.

Q A question for Dr. Fauci. Yesterday you mentioned the possibility of aerosol transmission of the virus. How likely is that to happen?

DR. FAUCI: The possibility of aerosol transmission always comes up when you have situations like that. It comes up with influenza. It came up with SARS, in which there was a documented, you know, one-off episode of some aerosol transmission. Aerosol means that it could stay in the air for a period of time because it's in a droplet that's very small and doesn't go down.

Is it possible that there is aerosol transmission? Yeah, it certainly is. But clearly, what we have seen in the situations where people have gotten infected from the areas that we have experienced — China, South Korea, now Europe — most of it is in a situation where people are close enough to each other that a symptomatic person will have a real droplet transmission. So I'm not ruling out the possibility that it's aerosol. But again, it's not going to substantially change doing this.

Q Dr. Fauci, a quick follow-up, if I could, just on the testing issue. Let me just ask this in a very simple way: What is the demand pressure on testing in this country and are we meeting it?

DR. FAUCI: I get the same calls that many of you get. That someone goes into a place who has a symptom and wants to get a test. And for one reason or other — multiple logistic, technical, what have you — they can't get it. That is a reality that is happening now. Is it the same as it was a few weeks ago? Absolutely not. Because as the Secretary and others have said, right now that we have the private sector involved, the availability, not only just availability, but the implementation of the availability is getting better and better and better.

Having said that, I understand and empathize with the people who rightfully are saying, "I'm trying to get a test and I can't."

Q So is that a way of saying we are not yet at a point where we are meeting the demand pressure?

DR. FAUCI: Well, the answer is, yes, John. We are not there yet because otherwise people would be never calling up, saying they can't get a test.

Q Mr. President —

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to finish that, Mike? Go ahead. You might want to respond to that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I just can't emphasize enough about the incredible progress that we have made on testing — all of your reporting and media outlets around the country are as well — that many, many more tests are being performed every day. Literally, by the tens of thousands. And this has only been made possible because, several weeks ago, the President brought in the commercial labs, these enormous companies — Quest and LabCorp, working with companies like Roche and Abbott Laboratories and Thermo Fisher — and said we have this existing system of state laboratories and the CDC processing tests for certain infections.

But given the magnitude of this outbreak, the President apprehended early on that it wouldn't be enough to meet the need. And I just want every American to know that, literally hour by hour, in partnership with these extraordinary commercial labs, we are making more and more tests available every day. We'll detail the way that we're working with states to distribute those tests.

We've obviously focused on states that have been dealing with the most serious outbreaks of coronavirus — Washington State, California, New York, and others. We've been making sure the tests are in those areas, working closely with those governors. But I think the American people should be encouraged that — the progress that we are making. Tomorrow, we'll take some time to detail that progress for you.

But I would say to any American who might be concerned that they have symptoms, as the President said so well: We don't want every healthy American to get a test. But if people feel that they have symptoms that they identify with the coronavirus, call your doctor. Their doctor can call their state health authorities that can work very closely with our entire team, through HHS and FEMA, and work to identify the more and more tests that are available every day.

Q Mr. Vice President —

THE PRESIDENT: Just so you know — just for the probably hundredth time: I, this administration, inherited an obsolete, broken, old system that wasn't meant for this. We discarded that system. And we now have a new system that can do millions of people, as you need them.

But we had to get rid of a broken, old system that didn't work. It worked only in a very limited basis. And we're very proud of what we've done. It's incredible what we've done. And this system will now serve for the future — for future problems. Hopefully, you don't have a problem like this, but something will come up. We have now a great system and it's almost fully in gear, but it's able to test millions of people.

But we inherited a broken, old — frankly, a terrible system. We fixed it and we've done a great job. And we haven't been given the credit that we deserve — that, I can tell you. But the one that really deserves the credit are the American people because they are doing things that nobody thought they would do. What they're doing is incredible. And we're making a lot of progress. And we'll see you folks tomorrow.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

END

1:24 P.M. EDT