

RED INK REVIEW

TRUMP MAKES ANOTHER LARGELY SYMBOLIC EFFORT TO COMBAT CORONAVIRUS

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President Donald Trump made yet another symbolic effort Tuesday to combat coronavirus -- even as cases continue to rise and administration officials have admitted that the White House missed an opportunity to acquire more vaccine doses.

On Tuesday, the President signed a largely symbolic executive order aimed at prioritizing the shipment of the coronavirus vaccine to Americans before other nations. But the scope of enforcement for the order is unclear.

An administration official described Tuesday's event as a "publicity stunt" sought by Trump to take credit for the development of the vaccine.

The President also said during the signing, which took place during a coronavirus vaccine summit at the White House, that he would invoke the Defense Production Act against companies creating the vaccines if they have "any problems." It's not clear whether Trump could use the act to force companies to provide Americans with the coronavirus vaccine before other nations.

But despite Trump's victory lap at the summit, members of his administration are questioning whether there will be enough vaccines to go around.

The White House coronavirus task force is warning states that current vaccination plans won't reduce the spread of the disease until at least the late spring.

"The current vaccine implementation will not substantially reduce viral spread, hospitalizations, or fatalities until the 100 million Americans with comorbidities can be fully immunized, which will take until the late spring," a weekly report by the panel, obtained by CNN, read. "Behavioral change and aggressive mitigation policies are the only widespread prevention tools that we have to address this winter surge."

An administration official told CNN it was a mistake for the Trump administration not to leave the door open to purchase more Pfizer coronavirus vaccine doses earlier this summer.

The official said the US simply may have to hope that the other vaccines being produced by other companies are just as effective as the Pfizer doses.

"They shouldn't have closed the door," the official said, adding that "they could have left the door open" to purchasing more doses.

If the other vaccines being manufactured by Pfizer's rivals are not as effective, it could have a detrimental effect on inoculating the American public, the official said.

"It's going to look bad," the official added.

On Monday, some senior administration officials denied reports that the administration passed on the Pfizer offer, and White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany echoed that denial to CNN's Joe Johns on Tuesday morning.

But her deputy press secretary, Brian Morgenstern, told Fox News later Tuesday that there were "options" with Pfizer under discussion, but that the talks didn't get into the details of the potential purchase.

"When we went to discuss exercising those options, we never got to whether we'd have one dose or 100 million, whether it would be tomorrow or 10 years, so when we're in that kind of status, I think it's disingenuous to say there was an offer there that we really could have accepted moving forward," Morgenstern said.

The official familiar with the situation confirmed that Trump administration officials passed up a chance to purchase more than the 100 million doses of Pfizer's vaccine it agreed to earlier this summer. The decision was made as part of a plan to "diversify" the nation's vaccine arsenal, the official said, adding that members of the administration's "Operation Warp Speed" effort to mass produce a coronavirus vaccine were trying "not put all their eggs in one basket."

Dr. Scott Gottlieb, a former commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration, also told CNBC something similar, adding that he believes the government "made a bet" that they could potentially purchase vaccines from multiple manufacturers, not just Pfizer.

The decision to not purchase more Pfizer doses, which was first reported by The New York Times, has mounted concerns that the company would be unable to fulfill any additional US order until June because of their commitments to other countries.

A senior administration official told CNN that one of the primary reasons the US did not exercise the option to buy additional doses of the Pfizer vaccine was because the company could not commit to a specific number of doses and a timetable for delivering them.

Without a firm delivery date or quantity -- and with other vaccine candidates in the works as well -- the US held off on placing the order for additional doses.

Pfizer declined to comment on the timeline issues, pointing to an earlier statement from company spokeswoman Amy Rose that said: "Any additional doses beyond the 100 million are subject to a separate and mutually-acceptable agreement. The company is not able to comment on any confidential discussions that may be taking place with the US government."

Moncef Slaoui, the chief scientific adviser of Operation Warp Speed, said that summer was not the time to buy more vaccine doses -- and that the right time to do that is when it becomes clear how well the vaccines perform.

"Let me remind everybody what our strategy is and has always been," Slaoui told ABC News anchor George Stephanopoulos on "Good Morning America" on Tuesday. "We selected six different vaccines to build the portfolio, to manage the risk that some may work and some may not work, but also to ensure that as more than one would work that we would accumulate vaccine doses from this portfolio of vaccines."

Slaoui also refused to weigh in on Trump's executive order.

"Frankly, I don't know -- and frankly, I'm staying out of this, so I can't comment," Slaoui told Stephanopoulos.

Stephanopoulos pressed Slaoui, asking, "You don't know? But you're the chief science adviser for Operation Warp Speed?"

"Our work is, you know, rolling. We have plans we feel that we can deliver the vaccines as needed, so I don't know exactly what this order is about," Slaoui responded.

ONE-SIDED NARRATIVE

This issue is not unique to the Trump administration. The struggle to quickly develop and distribute a vaccine it is being felt globally.

ONE-SIDED NARRATIVE

When vaccines were being pre-ordered in July 2020, it was unclear if Pfizer's vaccine, or that of any other company, was going to be effective. HHS originally pre-ordered 100 million doses of a Pfizer vaccine, with the option to order an additional 500 million doses once Pfizer's vaccine secured FDA approval.

QUESTIONABLE ANONYMOUS SOURCING

This article relies on one anonymous source to retroactively critique the Trump administration and paint a catastrophic picture.

TWISTED CONTEXT

The government signed a contract with Pfizer with the option to buy an additional 500 million doses, far from simply making "a bet."

RED INK KEY

We will be highlighting examples of bias that fall under the following categories:

- **Misleading anecdote** – Framing of an isolated incident as representing an occurrence or trend that is more widespread than it actually is
- **Author's unattributed opinion** – Making unfounded assumptions about how someone mentioned in the article is feeling or thinking
- **Omitted key fact** – Leaving out crucial contextual information
- **One-sided narrative** – Overemphasizing one side of a two-sided story
- **Biased sourcing** – Citing biased sources to support a biased narrative
- **Twisted context** – Quoting someone without providing all the information necessary to understanding that person's intended message
- **Outdated stats** – Using outdated information or statistics to argue a point—e.g., making a point about health care access using information published in 2018, which collected data from 2017
- **Biased labeling** – When a reporter fails to correctly label a source "liberal" or "conservative" when citing it. Or, when a reporter labels a person or group with positive or seemingly nonpartisan labels, such as "an expert" or "advocacy organization", when it is a lobbying, party or industry organization
- **Shaky statistics** – Mathematically incorrect sourcing of statistics—e.g., saying "10 percent increase" when they mean a "10 percentage point increase"
- **Shaky statistical interpretation** – Using legitimate statistics, but coming to an unfounded conclusion
- **Questionable anonymous sourcing** – Over-reliance on anonymous sourcing in an article or giving vague attribution when more specificity is required
- **Questionable statistical sourcing** – Citing a biased or unreliable source of statistics
- **Misleading headline** – When the headline presents a sensationalized or otherwise inaccurate overview of what is actually written in the article