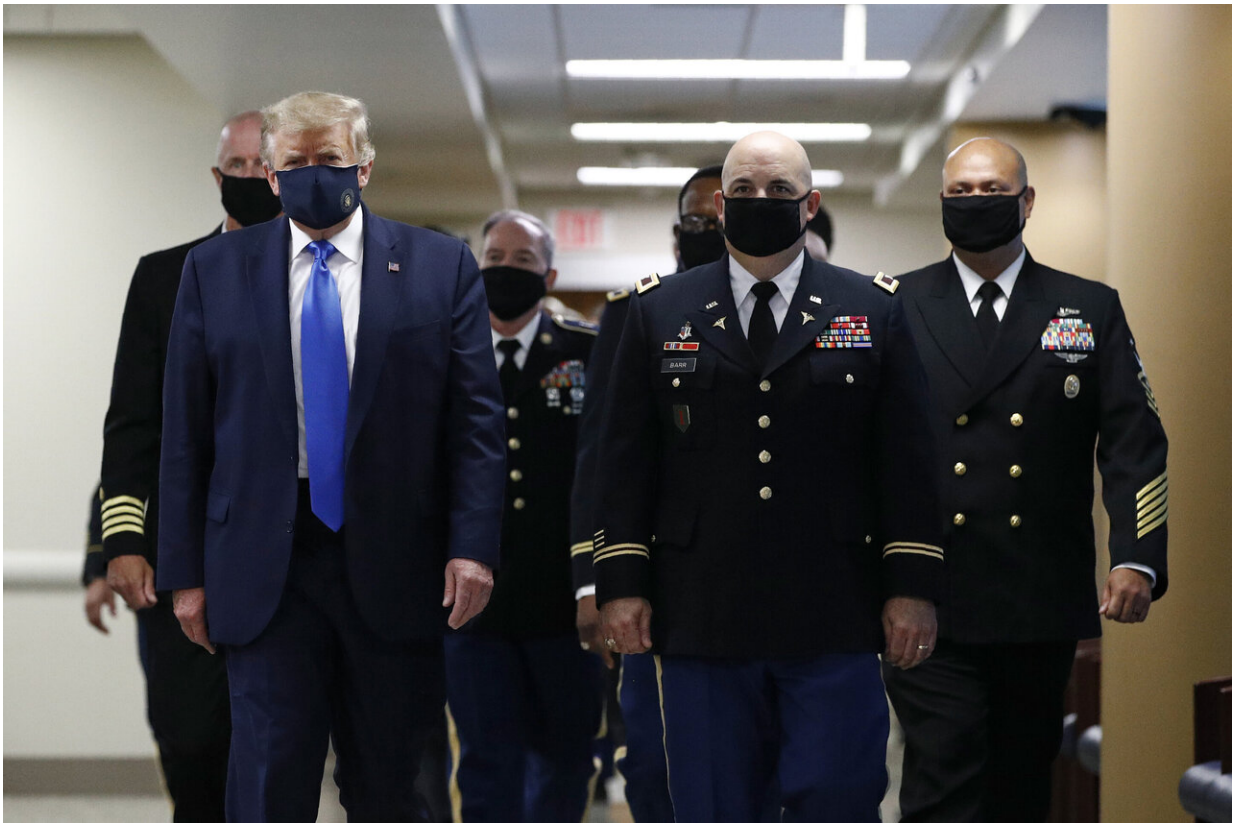


World virus cases near 15M; Trump says things will get worse

July 22 2020, by Matt Sedensky



In this July 11, 2020, file photo President Donald Trump, foreground left, wears a face mask as he walks with others down a hallway during a visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. On Tuesday, July 21, Trump professed a newfound respect for the protective face masks he has seldom worn. "Whether you like the mask or not, they have an impact," he said. "I'm getting used to the mask," he added, pulling one out after months of suggesting that mask-wearing was a political statement against him. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File)

The global tally of people infected with the coronavirus neared 15 million Wednesday, while in the worst-hit pandemic hot spot of the United States, President Donald Trump warned the pandemic would "get worse before it gets better."

With COVID-19 set to pass another shocking milestone, Trump delivered his first virus briefing after a three-month hiatus, offering a shifted message Tuesday, including professing a newfound respect for the protective face masks he has seldom worn.

It came as polls have shown Trump lagging behind Democratic rival Joe Biden ahead of November's election, and as the count of virus fatalities in the U.S. passes 140,000.

Even so, the president worked in jabs at the news media and Democrats, and repeatedly referred to COVID-19 as the "China virus."

The early evening show at the White House came as the next stage of the federal government's response to the pandemic was being crafted on Capitol Hill.

The price tag for the next COVID-19 aid package could quickly swell above \$1 trillion as White House officials negotiate with Congress over money to reopen schools, prop up small businesses, boost virus testing and keep cash flowing to Americans.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell promised a new round of direct payments to earners below a certain income level, similar to the \$1,200 checks sent in the spring. President Donald Trump insists on a payroll tax holiday for workers. And Democrats want billions to outfit schools and shore up local governments.



In this July 11, 2020, file photo President Donald Trump wears a face mask as he walks down a hallway during a visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. On Tuesday, July 21, Trump professed a newfound respect for the protective face masks he has seldom worn. "Whether you like the mask or not, they have an impact," he said. "I'm getting used to the mask," he added, pulling one out after months of suggesting that mask-wearing was a political statement against him. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File)



President Donald Trump speaks during a news conference at the White House, Tuesday, July 21, 2020, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)



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Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and acting chief of staff Mark Meadows spent Tuesday on Capitol Hill, meeting separately with McConnell, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others trying to broker a compromise between the GOP's emerging \$1 trillion proposal with the House's more sweeping \$3 trillion bill.

The proposed virus aid package would be the fifth, following the \$2.2 trillion bill passed in March, the largest U.S. intervention of its kind. The jobless rate has remained in double digits, higher than in the last decade's Great Recession, and a federal eviction moratorium on millions of rental units approved in the last bill is about to expire.

As the world case count neared the 15 million mark, with more than 617,000 killed, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, the U.S. has continued to see large outbreaks. New York, once by far the leader in infections, has now been surpassed by the country's largest state, California, for the number of cases, although that is partly due to robust testing in a state with more than twice the population of New York. California had more than 409,000 infections, according to the Johns Hopkins count.

"We're doing all we can to make sure that we control the rate of spread, despite crossing 400,000 cases in California," state Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly said Tuesday. "In the end I really expect and hope California is going to be the state that adapted the most, learned the most and prepared the best."

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