

THE EPOCH TIMES

VIEWPOINTS

How They Convinced Trump to Lock Down



The White House in Washington, D.C. at the night in a file photo. (kropic1/Shutterstock)



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March 28, 2023

Updated: March 28, 2023



Print

Commentary

An enduring mystery for three years is how Donald Trump came to be the president who shut down American society for what turned out to be a manageable respiratory virus, setting off an unspeakable crisis with waves of destructive fallout that continue to this day.

Let's review the timeline and offer some well-founded speculations about what happened.

On March 9, 2020, Trump was still of the opinion that the virus could be handled by normal means.

So last year 37,000 Americans died from the common Flu. It averages between 27,000 and 70,000 per year. Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on. At this moment there are 546 confirmed cases of CoronaVirus, with 22 deaths. Think about that!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) March 9, 2020

Two days later, he changed his tune. He was ready to use the full power of the federal government in a war on the virus.

I am fully prepared to use the full power of the Federal Government to deal with our current challenge of the CoronaVirus!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) March 11, 2020

What changed? Deborah Birx reports in her book that Trump had a friend die in a New York hospital and this is what shifted his opinion. Jared Kushner reports that he simply listened to reason. Mike Pence says he was persuaded that his staff would respect him more. No question (and based on all existing reports) that he found himself surrounded by “trusted advisors” amounting to about 5 or so people (including Mike Pence and Pfizer board member Scott Gottlieb)

It was only a week later when Trump issued the edict to close all “indoor and outdoor venues where people congregate,” initiating the biggest regime change in U.S. history that flew in the face of all rights and liberties Americans had previously taken for granted. It was the ultimate in political triangulation: as John F. Kennedy cut taxes, Nixon opened China, and Clinton reformed welfare, Trump shut down the economy he promised to revive. This action confounded critics on all sides.

A month later, Trump said his decision to have “turned off” the economy saved millions of lives, later even claiming to have saved billions. He has yet to admit error.

Somebody please explain to @MichelleObama that Donald J. Trump would not be here, in the beautiful White House, if it weren't for the job done by your husband, Barack Obama. Biden was merely an afterthought, a good reason for that very late & unenthusiastic endorsement.....

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 18, 2020

Even as late as June 23rd of that year, Trump was demanding credit for having followed all of Fauci's recommendations. Why do they love him and hate me, he wanted to know.

We did a great job on CoronaVirus, including the very early ban on China, Ventilator production, and Testing, which is by far the most, and best, in the World. We saved millions of U.S. lives.! Yet the Fake News refuses to acknowledge this in a positive way. But they do give....

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) June 23, 2020

Something about this story has never really added up. How could one person have been so persuaded by a handful of others such as Fauci, Birx, Pence, and Kushner and his friends? He surely had other sources of information—some other scenario or intelligence—that fed into his disastrous decision.

In one version of events, his advisors simply pointed to the supposed success of Xi Jinping in enacting lockdowns in Wuhan, which the World Health Organization claimed had stopped infections and brought the virus under control. Perhaps his advisors flattered Trump with the observation that he is at least as great as the president of China so he should be bold and enact the same policies here.

One problem with this scenario is timing. The Oval Office meetings that preceded his March 16, 2020, edict took place the weekend of the 14th and 15th, Friday and Saturday. It was already clear by the 11th that Trump was ready for lockdowns. This was the same day as Fauci's deliberately misleading testimony to the House Oversight Committee in which he rattled the room with predictions of Hollywood-style carnage.

On the 12th, Trump shut all travel from Europe, the UK, and Australia, causing huge human pile-ups at international airports. On the 13th, the Department of Health and Human Services issued a classified document that transferred control of pandemic policy from the CDC to the National Security Council and eventually the Department of Homeland Security. By the time that Trump met with Fauci and Birx in that legendary weekend, the country was already under quasi-martial law.

Isolating the date in the trajectory here, it is apparent that whatever happened to change Trump occurred on March 10, 2020, the day after his Tweet saying there should be no shutdowns and two days before Fauci's testimony.

That something very likely revolves around the most substantial discovery we've made in three years of investigations. It was Debbie Lerman who first cracked the code: COVID policy was forged not by the public-health bureaucracies but by the national-security sector of the administrative state. She has further explained that this occurred because of two critical features of the response: 1) the belief that this virus came from a lab leak, and 2) the vaccine was the biosecurity countermeasure pushed by the same people as the fix.

Knowing this, we gain greater insight into 1) why Trump changed his mind, 2) why he has never explained this momentous decision and otherwise completely avoids the topic, and 3) why it has been so unbearably difficult to find out any information about these mysterious few days other than the pabulum served up in books designed to earn royalties for authors like Birx, Pence, and Kushner.

Based on a number of second-hand reports, all available clues we have assembled, and the context of the times, the following scenario seems most likely. On March 10, and in response to Trump's dismissive tweet the day before, some trusted sources within and around the National Security Council (Matthew Pottinger and Michael Callahan, for example), and probably involving some from military command and others, came to Trump to let him know a highly classified secret.

Imagine a scene from *Get Smart* with the Cone of Silence, for example. These are the events in the life of statecraft that infuse powerful people with a sense of their personal awesomeness. The fate of all of society rests on their shoulders and the decisions they make at this point. Of course they are sworn to intense secrecy following the great reveal.

The revelation was that the virus was not a textbook virus but something far more threatening and terrible. It came from a research lab in Wuhan. It might in fact be a bioweapon. This is why Xi had to do extreme things to protect his people. The United States should do the same, they said, and there is a fix available too and it is being carefully guarded by the military.

It seems that the virus had already been mapped in order to make a vaccine to protect the population. Thanks to 20 years of research on mRNA platforms, they told him, this vaccine can be rolled out in months, not years. That means that Trump can lock down and distribute vaccines to save everyone from the China virus, all in time for the election. Doing this would not only assure his reelection but guarantee that he would go down in history as one of the greatest U.S. presidents of all time.

This meeting might only have lasted an hour or two—and might have included a parade of people with the highest-level security clearances—but it was enough to convince Trump. After all, he had battled China for two previous years, imposing tariffs and making all sorts of threats. It was easy to believe at that point that China might have initiated biological warfare as retaliation. That's why he made the decision to use all the power of the presidency to push a lockdown under emergency rule.

To be sure, the Constitution does not allow him to override the discretion of the states but with the weight of the office complete with enough funding and persuasion, he could make it happen. And thus did he make the fateful decision that not only wrecked his presidency but the country too, imposing harms that will last a generation.

It only took a few weeks for Trump to become suspicious about what happened. For weeks and months, he toggled between believing that he was tricked and believing that he did the right thing. He had already approved another 30 days of lockdowns and even inveighed against Georgia and later Florida for opening. He went so far as to claim that no state could open without his approval.

For the purpose of creating conflict and confusion, some in the Fake News Media are saying that it is the Governors decision to open up the states, not that of the President of the United States & the Federal Government. Let it be fully understood that this is incorrect....

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 13, 2020

He did not fully change his mind until August, when Scott Atlas revealed the whole con to him.

There is another fascinating feature to this entirely plausible scenario. Even as Trump's advisors were telling him that this could be a bioweapon leaked from the lab in China, we had Anthony Fauci and his cronies going to great lengths to deny it was a lab leak (even if they believed that it was). This created an interesting situation. The NIH and those surrounding Fauci were publicly insisting that the virus was of zoonotic origin, even as Trump's circle was telling the president that it should be regarded as a bioweapon.

Fauci belonged to both camps, which suggests that Trump very likely knew of Fauci's deception all along: the "noble lie" to protect the public from knowing the truth. Trump had to be fine with that.

Gradually following the lockdown edicts and the takeover by the Department of Homeland Security, in cooperation with a very hostile CDC, Trump lost power and influence over his own government, which is why his later Tweets urging a reopening fell on deaf ears. To top it off, the vaccine failed to arrive in time for the election. This is because Fauci himself delayed the rollout until after the election, claiming that the trials were not racially diverse enough. Thus Trump's gambit completely failed, despite all the promises of those around him that it was a guaranteed way to win reelection.

To be sure, this scenario cannot be proven because the entire event—certainly the most dramatic political move in at least a generation and one with unspeakable costs for the country—remains cloaked in secrecy. Not even Senator Rand Paul can get the information he needs because it remains classified. If anyone thinks the Biden approval of releasing documents will show what we need, that person is naïve. Still, the above scenario fits all available facts and it is confirmed by second-hand reports from inside the White House.

It's enough for a great movie or a play of Shakespearean levels of tragedy. And to this day, none of the main players are speaking openly about it.

From the Brownstone Institute

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