

CONFUSION AND CONCERN AS PRESIDENT AILS



Dr. Sean P. Conley briefing reporters on President Trump's health at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Saturday.

Medical Spin in Past Undermines Trust

By ANNIE KARNI
WASHINGTON — When Dr. Sean P. Conley stepped in front of the cameras at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Saturday, he delivered a briefing that seemed intended less to inform the American public than to satisfy the public relations demands of a famous and famously demanding patient — President Trump.

NEWS ANALYSIS

“He’s doing great,” he said. But moments later, the president’s chief of staff, Mark Meadows, speaking off camera and on the assumption he would not be identified, offered a contradictory assessment, noting “the president’s vitals over the last 24 hours were very concerning, and the next 48 hours will be critical in terms of his care.” “We’re still not on a clear path to a full recovery,” he added. The radically different message was stunning, and at first attributed, at Mr. Meadows’s insistence, to “a source familiar with the president’s health” speaking on background, but later identified as the chief of staff.

The discordant statements were a revealing insight into the dynamics behind the Trump White House’s frequent release of misleading information, particularly about the president’s health. Dr. Conley is a Navy doctor and Mr. Trump is not only his patient but his commander in chief. The president is known to be especially interested in presenting his health in the best possible light, and his health has never been an issue the way it is now. It is almost certain he was watching Dr. Conley’s news conference on TV in his hospital room.

For Mr. Meadows, the clarification
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Seeking to Reassure in 4-Minute Video

By PETER BAKER and MAGGIE HABERMAN

WASHINGTON — The White House offered a barrage of conflicting messages and contradictory accounts about President Trump’s health on Saturday as he remained hospitalized with the coronavirus for a second night and the outbreak spread to a wider swath of his political allies.

Just minutes after the president’s doctors painted a rosy picture of his condition on television, Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff, gave reporters outside Walter Reed National Military Medical Center a far more sober assessment off camera, calling Mr. Trump’s vital signs worrisome and warning that the next two days would be pivotal to the outcome of the illness.

“The president’s vitals over the last 24 hours were very concern-



President Trump’s remarks on Saturday sent mixed messages.

ing, and the next 48 hours will be critical in terms of his care,” Mr. Meadows told the reporters, asking not to be identified by name. “We’re still not on a clear path to a full recovery.”

In keeping with the ground rules he had set, Mr. Meadows’s remarks were attributed, in a pool
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In West Wing, Fear of Boss, Not Infection

By ANNIE KARNI and MAGGIE HABERMAN

WASHINGTON — As America locked down this spring during the worst pandemic in a century, inside the Trump White House there was the usual defiance.

The tight quarters of the West Wing were packed and busy. Almost no one wore masks. The rare officials who did, like Matthew Pottinger, the deputy national security adviser, were ridiculed by colleagues as alarmist.

President Trump at times told staff wearing masks in meetings to “get that thing off,” an administration official said. Everyone knew that Mr. Trump viewed masks as a sign of weakness, officials said, and that his message was clear. “You were looked down upon when you would walk by with a mask,” said Olivia Troye, a top aide on the coronavirus task force who resigned in August and has endorsed former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

In public, some of the president’s favorite targets were mask-wearing White House correspondents. “Would you take it off, I can hardly hear you,” Mr. Trump told Jeff Mason of Reuters in May, then mocked Mr. Mason for wanting “to be politically correct” when he refused.

This past week, a White House long in denial confronted reality after Mr. Trump and the first lady both tested positive for the virus, along with Hope Hicks, a top White House aide, and Bill Stepien, the Trump campaign manager, among others. The outcome appeared shocking but also inevitable in a West Wing that assumed that rapid virus tests for everyone who entered each morning were substitutes for other safety measures, like social distancing and wearing masks.

But the outcome was also a by-product, former aides said, of the recklessness and top-down culture of fear that Mr. Trump created at the White House and throughout his administration. If
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Nation Stays Divided, Even Over Trump’s Illness

By JENNIFER MEDINA and TRIP GABRIEL

PHOENIX — Soon after he woke up on Friday morning, Cruz Zepeda, a 54-year-old Trump supporter, received a text from a life-long friend eager to share a sentiment he found on Twitter: “Looks like RBG successfully argued her first hearing with the Lord.”

Still in a bit of shock, Mr. Zepeda felt his anger rise. The friends once shared similar political beliefs, but disagreed more often than not over the past 15 years. “This is not funny,” he shot back. “This is real time, real life and really happening.”

The pandemic could have been

Some Extend Sympathy, Others Cite Karma

a great unifier — a widespread and life-altering tragedy that inspired a notion of shared national purpose, as at other moments of crisis in the country’s past. And perhaps in another moment, in another place, a president falling ill would have seen citizens keeping vigil regardless of political affiliation. But the coronavirus, which has sickened more than seven million Americans, including the president, the first lady

and a growing number of people in his inner circle, has deepened divisions rather than united the country.

Now, a month before Election Day and with the president in the hospital, interviews with voters in some of the most contested battleground states make clear that the divisions that the president himself has stoked in the country are being reflected back at him, with his supporters defiantly insisting he will hold rallies again before Nov. 3 and Democrats, if not wishing him a turn for the worse, certainly not shedding any tears.

A day before the president disclosed his illness, Mr. Zepeda, a
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For Many Jobless, ‘Short-Term’ No Longer Fits

This article is by Jeanna Smialek, Ben Casselman and Gillian Friedman.

The United States economy is facing a tidal wave of long-term unemployment as millions of people who lost jobs early in the pandemic remain out of work six months later and job losses increasingly turn permanent.

The Labor Department said on Friday that 2.4 million people had been out of work for 27 weeks or more, the threshold it uses to define long-term joblessness. An even bigger surge is on the way: Nearly five million people are approaching long-term joblessness over the next two months. The same report showed that even as temporary layoffs were on the decline, permanent job losses were rising sharply.

Those two problems — rising long-term unemployment and permanent job losses — are separate but intertwined and, together, could foreshadow a period of prolonged economic damage and financial pain for American families.

Companies that are limping along below capacity this far into the crisis may be increasingly unlikely to ever recall their employees. History also suggests the longer that people are out of work, the harder it is for them to get



MacKenzie Nicholson of Nottingham, N.H., lost her job with the American Cancer Society in June as the pandemic hurt funding.

back into a job.

To be sure, the labor market has bounced back more quickly than most forecasters expected in the spring. The unemployment rate dropped to 7.9 percent in September from 14.7 percent in April. But progress has slowed, and there are signs of more lasting damage. Through September, the economy had regained only about half of the 22 million jobs it lost between February and April.

High-interaction businesses like restaurants, theaters, casinos, conferences and cruises are

struggling to fully reopen as the coronavirus continues to spread, leaving many workers out of jobs.

Disney announced this past week that it would lay off 28,000 U.S. employees as its theme parks struggle. Layoff notices filed with state authorities show that hospitality and service companies across the country, from P.F. Chang’s restaurant branches to Gap stores, are making thousands of long-term staff reductions. Airport bookstores in Pennsylvania
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Hazing Death of Black Student Bares Racism’s Rise in Belgium

By MATT APUZZO and STEVEN ERLANGER

GHENT, Belgium — Sanda Dia saw a fraternity as a doorway into a different life. The son of an immigrant factory worker, he was an ambitious 20-year-old Black student at one of Belgium’s most prestigious universities. The fraternity, Reuzegom, was home to the scions of Antwerp’s white elites.

Access to that rarefied world, he decided, was worth enduring the fraternity’s notoriously vicious hazing ritual.

He did not survive it. After being forced alongside two other pledges to drink alcohol excessively, chug fish oil until he vomited, swallow live goldfish and stand outside in an ice-filled trench, Mr. Dia died in December 2018 of multiple organ failure. His death was seen as a tragic accident, an example of hazing gone wrong.

In recent weeks, however, an even uglier story has emerged. Fraternity members had used a racial slur as they ordered Mr. Dia to clean up after a party. A photo surfaced purporting to show a fraternity member wearing Ku Klux Klan robes. A fraternity speech referenced “our good German
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Sanda Dia in a family photo. He joined an almost entirely white fraternity in Antwerp.

friend, Hitler.” A video showed them singing a racist song.

And deleted WhatsApp messages, recovered by the police, show fraternity members — the sons of judges, business leaders and politicians — scrambling to cover their tracks.

“This was not an accident,” said Mr. Dia’s brother, Seydou De Vel.

The details, uncovered recently in a string of local news stories, have forced the nation’s Dutch-speaking region, Flanders, to confront
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Reunification’s Dark Side

Thirty years after Germany came back together, the former East has emerged as the stronghold of once-marginalized far-right extremists.
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SPORTS 28-31

Virus Delays a Big Game

The Patriots placed quarterback Cam Newton on the Covid-19 injury list as the challenges to the N.F.L. season grew more daunting.
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A Feared Flamethrower

Bob Gibson, who won two Cy Young Awards with St. Louis, was one of baseball’s most dominating and intimidating pitchers. He was 84.
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SPECIAL SECTION

Captain Chain Saw’s Delusion

The myth of the Amazon as “a land without men for men without land” has ravaged a region and its people. But Brazil’s president sees wasted space.

SUNDAY REVIEW

Maureen Dowd



Jewelry Maker & Community Builder

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