

Trump stages White House return to boost back-to-work policy and election coup plans

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President Donald Trump left Walter Reed Medical Center and returned to the White House Monday night in an event staged for the evening television news and aimed at promoting an image of strength and power to offset the devastating impact of his falling ill with COVID-19.

The clear intention was to reaffirm his criminal policy of “herd immunity,” i.e., opposing measures to contain the pandemic, which has already led to the deaths of more than 210,000 Americans.

Trump staged a Nazi-like photo-op on the White House balcony whose obvious intention is to inspire his fascist base. As a substantial defeat at the polls appears increasingly likely, Trump's strategy to retain power is focused on the use of non-electoral, illegal, unconstitutional and violent methods.

Trump has denounced mail-in ballots and called on far-right supporters to intimidate in-person voters as well. He is counting on the cowardice and complicity of his Democratic Party opponents, who fear a movement from below against both the Trump administration and the capitalist system as a whole.

The political purpose of Trump's departure from the hospital, while he remains highly infectious, was indicated by a tweet that encapsulates both the class arrogance and the homicidal frenzy of the American corporate elite. In it, Trump said he felt “really good,” and declared, “Don't be afraid of Covid. Don't let it dominate your life... I feel better than I did 20 years ago!”

Shortly after his return to the White House, Trump tweeted a video in which he declared his “victory” over COVID-19 and repeated: “Don't let it dominate your lives. Don't be afraid... We're going back. We're going back to work.”

Trump is making clear, in his brutish style, that American capitalism will not allow the health concerns of working people to “dominate” over the profit concerns of the corporations and banks, and the billionaires who control them. After all, he is arguing, if I, the president, can go “back to work,” so can autoworkers, meatpackers, warehouse workers and school teachers. Never mind that none of these millions of workers has access to anything like the medical resources and technology available to the billionaire president.

The recklessness and contempt for human life evinced in Trump's return to the White House is underscored by the fact that more than a dozen of his closest aides and congressional

supporters have thus far tested positive for the virus as a result of his deliberate flouting of mask-wearing and other social distancing measures, not to mention the rising tide of infections and deaths hitting ordinary people across the country and internationally.

That Trump himself remains ill and contagious was obvious as he tore off his mask and gasped for air after climbing stairs to make his appearance on the balcony entrance to the White House living quarters.

One doctor tweeted in response to Trump, “Don't be afraid of COVID? Not every American has access to the top therapeutics and doctors with the most advanced equipment available to the President of the United States. You feel better than you did 20 years ago? That's because of your dexamethasone high that resembles mania.”

What the doctor describes as “mania” has more than a chemical source. Trump is intoxicated with class privilege. According to one doctor, only 10 people in the entire country have received the same combination of experimental drugs, therapeutics and other medicines that were administered by Trump's physicians.

Trump was given an experimental cocktail of monoclonal antibodies developed by Regeneron, as well as Remdesivir, produced by Gilead, with limited distribution, and the steroid dexamethasone, which is generally restricted to the most severe cases of COVID-19. According to one press account, the mortality rate for those whose cases are so serious that they require both oxygen and dexamethasone is more than 20 percent.

There is an element of sheer bloodthirstiness in Trump's decision to return to the White House at a point in the course of the disease where he is still highly infectious. He seems entirely indifferent to the risk of infecting those in his own staff and family who have not yet contracted the coronavirus, including his youngest son, a teenager.

Among his closest aides, Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany tested positive on Monday morning, as did two others in the press office. McEnany has repeatedly briefed reporters without wearing a mask, including during the last few days when she was likely to have been highly infectious.

Those testing positive over the weekend included a raft of

Republican Party bigwigs: campaign manager Bill Stepien, Ronna McDaniel, chair of the Republican National Committee, and US senators Ron Johnson, Mike Lee and Thom Tillis.

A few hours before Trump left Walter Reed, the president's doctors held a press briefing where they evaded most questions about his medical condition, especially the key question of when his last negative test was recorded.

While White House officials have claimed that Trump first showed positive for COVID-19 on the afternoon of Thursday, October 1, it is quite likely that he learned of his infection several days earlier, and went to the debate with Democratic candidate Joe Biden Tuesday knowing he had the coronavirus.

At the debate, Trump's family members took off their masks and refused to abide by the ground rules set by the Cleveland Clinic, which co-hosted the debate and required all participants except Trump, Biden and moderator Chris Wallace to be masked.

Trump's doubling down on his homicidal coronavirus policy and his appeals to far-right militia forces place in sharp relief the spinelessness and bankruptcy of his nominal opponents in the Democratic Party. From Biden, to Obama, Pelosi and Sanders, they all responded to Trump's illness with pathetic calls for "unity" and a speedy recovery, dropping any reference to his incitement of fascist violence, his rush to add another far-right justice to the Supreme Court and his stated intention to steal the election.

At speaking engagements in south Florida Monday, Biden made no mention of Trump's repeated threats against the November 3 election. Nancy Pelosi did not raise the subject either in an interview Monday on MSNBC.

Pelosi even echoed Trump in her indifference towards the health concerns of congressional aides. She flatly rejected an appeal by Representative Jahana Hayes of Connecticut, who recently survived a COVID-19 infection, who called for all members of Congress and their aides and employees to be tested regularly for the coronavirus.

Mehring Books, the publishing arm of the Socialist Equality Party (US), is proud to announce the publication in epub format of Volume 1 of *COVID, Capitalism, and Class War: A Social and Political Chronology of the Pandemic*, a compilation of the *World Socialist Web Site's* coverage of this global crisis.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has previously stressed, nothing that comes from the White House about Trump's medical condition can be taken at face value. White House physician Sean Conley, a Navy commander, has refused to answer questions about whether Trump's lungs have been damaged by the infection—which would be shown by X-rays and CT scans—although the decision to administer dexamethasone indicates such damage is likely.

Similarly, the decision to put Trump on a five-day course of Remdesivir infusions, which will be completed at the White House Tuesday, is permitted medically only for "emergency use" under guidelines set by the Food and Drug

Administration.

"Dexamethasone is recommended only in patients who are extremely ill," the *Washington Post* reported. "A recent study found it tends to reduce deaths from the virus, but nearly a quarter of infected patients getting it with supplemental oxygen—as Trump has—still died. Steroids in high doses and over long periods of time also can lead to serious changes in mental status that include delirium, hallucinations and confusion."

How are nations targeted by US nuclear weapons that could be unleashed at the orders of a delusional "commander-in-chief" expected to respond to that possibility?

The day after the debate, Trump's closest personal aide, Hope Hicks, became ill during a campaign trip to Minnesota. She flew back to Washington in the same plane with Trump and other aides, and quickly tested positive.

Nonetheless, Trump continued campaigning with a fundraising event at his golf resort in New Jersey, attended by more than 200 people, who were mostly unmasked, and who took part in a buffet under conditions that were in complete violation of the state's health orders.

After Trump's diagnosis, contact tracing began in four states—Minnesota, Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania—visited by the president over the previous days, with potentially thousands of people exposed to deadly infection by the president.

Even more criminally reckless was Trump's decision to go out Sunday night in a presidential SUV and wave to supporters rallying outside the Walter Reed medical facility. He was accompanied by Secret Service, US marshals, and medical aides, all packed into the car with the windows rolled up.

"Every single person in the vehicle during that completely unnecessary Presidential 'drive-by' just now has to be quarantined for 14 days," Dr. James P. Phillips, an attending physician at Walter Reed, wrote on Twitter. "They might get sick. They may die. For political theater. Commanded by Trump to put their lives at risk for theater. This is insanity."

What might be considered an effort by Trump to single-handedly infect as many people as possible culminated in the decision to leave the hospital Monday evening and return to the White House, in what was clearly a politically motivated action in defiance of any consideration of public health and safety.



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