

"We're Not a Shipping Clerk..."

--Donald Trump, 3/19/2020

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/19/trump-governors-coronavirus-medical-supplies-137658>

Crimson Contagion - Trump Admin Studied Possible Pandemic in 2019

Asked at his news briefing on Thursday about the government's preparedness, Mr. Trump responded: "Nobody knew there would be a pandemic or epidemic of this proportion. Nobody has ever seen anything like this before."

The work done over the past five years, however, demonstrates that the government had considerable knowledge about the risks of a pandemic and accurately predicted the very types of problems Mr. Trump is now scrambling belatedly to address.

The outbreak of the respiratory virus began in China and was quickly spread around the world by air travelers, who ran high fevers. In the United States, it was first detected in Chicago, and 47 days later, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. By then it was too late: 110 million Americans were expected to become ill, leading to 7.7 million hospitalized and 586,000 dead.

That scenario, code-named "Crimson Contagion" and imagining an influenza pandemic, was simulated by the Trump administration's Department of Health and Human Services in a series of exercises that ran from last January to August.

The simulation's sobering results — [contained in a draft report dated October 2019](#) that has not previously been reported — drove home just how underfunded, underprepared and uncoordinated the federal government would be for a life-or-death battle with a virus for which no treatment existed.

The draft report, marked "not to be disclosed," laid out in stark detail repeated cases of "confusion" in the exercise. Federal agencies jockeyed over who was in charge. State officials and hospitals struggled to figure out what kind of equipment was stockpiled or available. Cities and states went their own ways on school closings.

Many of the potentially deadly consequences of a failure to address the shortcomings are now playing out in all-too-real fashion across the country. And it was hardly the first warning for the nation's leaders. Three times over the past four years the U.S. government, across two administrations, had grappled in depth with what a pandemic would look like, identifying likely shortcomings and in some cases recommending specific action.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-outbreak.html>