

Lou Dobbs Grills HHS Sec Alex Azar on Coronavirus ‘Pandemic’: ‘I Don’t Want to Play Games With You’

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Fox Business’ **Lou Dobbs** relentlessly grilled Trump Health and Human Service Secretary **Alex Azar** over the administration’s response to the coronavirus outbreak, calling out its lack of transparency and refusal to call it a “pandemic.”

In a long, contentious segment opening his Monday night show, Dobbs drilled into the HHS secretary over the federal government’s mixed messages and muddled response to the viral outbreak that has now resulted in six American deaths.

“There did seem to be a different tone today in Washington as it’s becoming clearer what the nation will likely face,” Dobbs began, pulling no punches. ” Officials seem to be a little bit more candid than there they had been. Is there really a change here?”

“I don’t know that I’d call it a change, I’d say the message remains transparent but one of confidence. What we’re saying is what we’ve been saying...” Azar responded, but Dobbs then cut in.

“Why not then call it a pandemic? Because you know very well it is,” he said, bluntly.

“Well, in fact, I spoke today with Dr. **[Adhanom] Tedros**, the head of the World Health Organization, and I’ll give you some insight into their thinking...” Azar began again, but was again interrupted.

“I’m not interested in their thinking, to be candid with you,” Dobbs said. “You’re responsible for your department, the NIH and the CDC are responsible for the public’s health. I’m delighted to speak to you, sir, and delighted to have the opportunity, but I could care less what the World Health Organization has to say to what is happening to Americans and how this government is being led.”

Azar dismissed as an “irrelevant” semantics argument the debate over calling the outbreak a “pandemic” and said it didn’t add anything to how the Trump administration would respond, Dobbs pushed back.

“You tell me, what does it subtract if you don’t?” Dobbs shot back.

Azar, not answering pivoted to talking about the administration’s efforts to get more respirator masks available for health professionals.

“That is wonderful. And at the same time, do we have tests that are now available here in this country?” Dobbs pushed, talking over Azar’s affirmative answer, “to the degree that we need them? Because the ratio, as I see it, there’s a better ratio of testing for the

coronavirus in other countries than we maintain here. We're actually screening fewer people because we don't have appropriate testing."

Azar demurred, saying that the CDC does have a valid test, but Dobbs pointed out that there is clear evidence of failed test kits and unchecked local community spread of the virus inside the country.

"Lou, actually, the tests worked. The tests work, they are validated. What happened was there were some manufacturing issues, apparently, in one stage of the test, and some labs were not able to validate it. We solved that issue. We've gotten the..." Azar offered as an excuse.

Dobbs was not having it.

"I don't want to play games with you, and I'm sure you don't want with me," Dobbs fired back, talking over Azar. "But when you use words like validated and then say one segment of their use was invalidated by problems, you know, it just — this is not transparency that the American people want."

"Well, Lou, you don't want to hear it, but we've been transparent at every step of the way," Azar claimed, and then reiterated that the testing availability is catching up to the demand.

"Mr. Secretary, I apologize. I apologize, but, frankly, you've just said that you had plenty, and now you're acknowledging that you didn't," Dobbs noted, calling him out. "I don't want to get bogged down in this, I mean, I really don't, but I do want to understand how bad is

this going to get. Are we going to be talking about it — what is the planning and the thinking of the corona task force for the Americans who are watching this broadcast who are all adults and who want to know the facts? Hard-boiled, straightforward, no sugar-coating and no pedantics?”

Azar’s attempt to explain all the steps they’re taking still did not satisfy Dobbs.

“My concern is how much the American people are being told that they need to know, and that is, I think, everything,” he pushed.

“In fact, we just in 2017 updated what’s called the pandemic action plan. That’s a public document that goes through how one deals with a pandemic...” Azar noted.

“Wait a minute, did you say pandemic?” Dobbs struck back.

“That is what we prepare for, pandemic status of this...” Azar began, as Dobbs pressed again: “Do we have one?”

“In spite of how you’ve been describing it, Lou, for everyday Americans right now this shouldn’t impact their daily lives. They should go about their normal lives...”

“How did I describe it? I missed that part. How did I describe it?” Dobbs said, interrupting.

“You’re — I think you’re just trying to whip people up into a frenzy here, Lou.”

“About what?” Dobbs shot back.