



# Everyone and everything Trump has blamed for his coronavirus response

By **Amber Phillips**

March 31, 2020 at 4:00 a.m. PDT

“I don’t take responsibility at all.”

That’s what President Trump said this month when asked whether he takes responsibility for the slow rollout of testing that public health officials say handicapped the country’s ability to protect Americans from the coronavirus.

But Trump’s desire to not take responsibility could also be extrapolated to the coronavirus crisis in general. Trump has thrown blame in nearly a dozen different directions for the virus’s spread and different aspects of the response to it.

As he acknowledges that 100,000 to 200,000 Americans could die of the virus, here are the people and places he’s blamed for it, with some added context:

## China

**For:** Not doing enough to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

**But:** Back in January, Trump praised China for doing two things that, in hindsight, we know it has not done: 1) keep the spread of the virus under control and 2) be forthright about how many people in the country are infected.

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**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

China has been working very hard to contain the Coronavirus. The United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well. In particular, on behalf of the American People, I want to thank President Xi!

128K 2:18 PM - Jan 24, 2020

[40.5K people are talking about this](#)

Two months later, as the virus infected thousands of people in the United States and China was bragging that it had the virus under control, Trump put the blame on Beijing: “It would have been much better if we had known about this a number of months earlier,” he said in a March 19 news conference, adding: “It could have been stopped right where it came from, China,” and, “The world is paying a very big price for what they did.”

Trump is right that China tried to hide the extent of the problem. But even if he didn’t know the full rate of infection in China, he repeatedly, and wrongly, says that he wasn’t warned that China’s slow response was going to make the virus worse for the rest of the world. “No one saw this coming,” he says regularly.

But U.S. intelligence officials had been warning in reports to Trump administration officials in January and February about the danger the virus presented to Americans, warnings that largely went unheeded. “The system was blinking red,” a U.S. official said.

## Past presidents

**For:** Not building up the national stockpile of medical equipment

“Many administrations preceded me,” he said in March, in response to a question about why his administration did not spend weeks trying to build up a supply of medical equipment despite knowing ahead of time that the coronavirus posed a serious threat. “For the most part they did very little with regard to what you’re talking about.”

We’ll get into how the national stockpile was indeed ignored under past administrations, but also how Trump could have done more to prevent such a shortage for hospitals that are now in desperate need.

## The Obama administration

**For:** Proposing regulations that Trump claims eventually slowed the rollout of coronavirus testing



**Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump · Mar 13, 2020

For decades the @CDCgov looked at, and studied, its testing system, but did nothing about it. It would always be inadequate and slow for a large scale pandemic, but a pandemic would never happen, they hoped. President Obama made changes that only complicated things further.....



**Donald J. Trump**  
@realDonaldTrump

.... Their response to H1N1 Swine Flu was a full scale disaster, with thousands dying, and nothing meaningful done to fix the testing problem, until now. The changes have been made and testing will soon happen on a very large scale basis. All Red Tape has been cut, ready to go!

73K 3:22 AM - Mar 13, 2020

40.5K people are talking about this

**But:** U.S. testing was so far behind where it needed to be because of a faulty test the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention made under the Trump administration, and because of the regulations that weren't lifted fast enough to get the private sector involved sooner, according to an investigation by the New York Times. A prominent member of Trump's coronavirus task force, Anthony S. Fauci, has said the latter was a "failure" and did not point back to the Obama administration. The Washington Post's Fact Checker reports that the CDC under Obama did propose increased oversight of medical testing, though it was not related to the coronavirus, which wasn't in existence yet, and it was just that: a proposal that was never implemented.

The New York Times investigation into testing specifically singles out three agency leaders for being too slow to pivot from a faulty test and in one case putting in regulations that actually made things worse: the heads of the Food and Drug Administration and the CDC, and the Health and Human Services secretary, all nominated by Trump.

## The media

**For:** Negative stories about his response



**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

Because the "Ratings" of my News Conferences etc. are so high, "Bachelor finale, Monday Night Football type numbers" according to the [@nytimes](#), the Lamestream Media is going CRAZY. "Trump is reaching too many people, we must stop him." said one lunatic. See you at 5:00 P.M.!

140K 10:06 AM - Mar 29, 2020

[83.9K people are talking about this](#)

As he has throughout his entire time as a politician, Trump has conflated negative coverage of him and his administration with a perceived agenda by journalists to make him look bad. He recently accused journalists of making up facts and sources in their coronavirus stories.



**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

So much of the Lamestream Media is writing and broadcasting stories with facts that are made up and knowingly wrong. They are doing it by quoting unnamed sources that simply do not exist. These are very dangerous & corrupt people, who will do anything to win. NAME YOUR SOURCES!

200K 5:13 AM - Mar 28, 2020

[91.2K people are talking about this](#)

**But:** There is no evidence of that happening, and plenty of evidence, reported by The Washington Post and others, of the federal government's missteps in dealing with the virus. Such as:

U.S. intelligence reports from January and February warned of a likely pandemic

Governors and mayors in growing uproar over Trump government's lagging coronavirus response

Seven days as a 'wartime president:' Trump's up-and-won command of a pandemic

As Trump invokes presidential powers to fight the coronavirus, he sows confusion along the way

## Governors

**For:** Ventilator shortages

**But:** The national stockpile of medical equipment is not prepared for a pandemic that seizes the entire nation, and it was not replenished with medical equipment after the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, report my Washington Post colleagues. But what equipment it does have tucked away, the Trump administration has been slow to deliver to governors pleading for it — and Trump has even accused those governors of making up what they need, or not doing their own due diligence to get it.

“He’s supposed to be buying his own ventilators,” Trump said in a Fox News town hall last week of New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D), who said the administration had given him 400 ventilators when he estimates that his hard-hit state will need 30,000.

“Governors are supposed to be doing a lot of this work,” Trump has said of trying to get U.S. manufactures to make ventilators, something only the president has the authority to do under the Defense Production Act.

And on Friday, he told Fox News’s Sean Hannity the following, insinuating that some governors were requesting more to make the president look bad:

“I have a feeling that a lot of the numbers that are being said in some areas are just bigger than they’re going to be. I don’t believe you need 40,000 or 30,000 ventilators. You go into major hospitals sometimes, and they’ll have two ventilators. And now, all of a sudden, they’re saying, ‘Can we order 30,000 ventilators?’ ”

## General Motors

**For:** Ventilator shortages

“Always a mess with Mary B.” Trump tweeted Friday, referring to General Motors CEO Mary Barra. The automaker had teamed up with a ventilator-manufacturing company and switched voluntarily to making the lifesaving devices, sometimes doing in a matter of days what normally takes months, the New York Times reports. Trump said Friday in a tweet that the company wants “top dollar” and would come up short of what it initially said.



**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

As usual with “this” General Motors, things just never seem to work out. They said they were going to give us 40,000 much needed Ventilators, “very quickly”. Now they are saying it will only be 6000, in late April, and they want top dollar. Always a mess with Mary B. Invoke “P”.

102K 8:16 AM - Mar 27, 2020

[47.7K people are talking about this](#)

At the time, Trump was under bipartisan criticism for not using the Defense Production Act, a decades-old wartime law, to force U.S. companies and other manufacturers to make medical equipment for hospitals. The Washington Post reported that some of his advisers warned that it would seem socialist. Later that afternoon, Trump said he had finally put it to use, to force GM to make ventilators quickly.

**But:** If Trump had enacted the DPA in February, before hospitals in hard-hit areas were overwhelmed, the ventilators would have been ready by mid- to late April, points out the New York Times. Now, some overwhelmed hospitals are considering do-not-resuscitate orders and how to have patients share ventilators while they wait for more.

## Hospitals

## **For:** Ventilator and mask shortages

In a news conference Sunday, Trump accused hospitals of squandering tens of thousands of masks, without providing much detail about what he is alleging they did with them.

“It’s a New York hospital, very — it’s packed all the time,” he said on Sunday in a Rose Garden news conference. “How do you go from 10 to 20 [thousand masks per week] to 300,000? Ten [thousand] to 20,000 masks, to 300,000 — even though this is different? Something is going on, and you ought to look into it as reporters. Are they going out the back door?”

## **And the actions he’s taken credit for have asterisks**

Trump frequently says he acted quickly because he closed borders to China early on, but Politico reports that a White House official acknowledged that it was a push by Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) that helped spur administration action.

And Trump has celebrated a \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package he signed last week that will give middle- and low-income Americans a \$1,200 check. But his administration originally requested just \$1.8 billion.





