

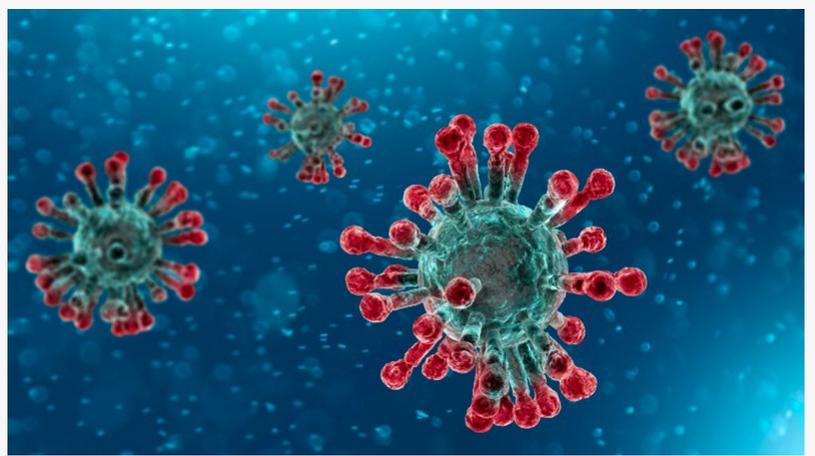
# Coronavirus: Trump's Ultimate Test?

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On September 11, 2001, I was the Deputy Commander of U.S. Army Pacific attending a conference at the Double Tree Hotel in Crystal City – just 2,700 feet from where American Airlines 77 impacted the Pentagon.

I've written extensively about my experiences at the Pentagon over the next few days, as well as in the months and years that followed as we faced an existential crisis in our country.



Coronavirus

Clearly, the current Coronavirus “pandemic” – so designated by the World Health Organization just today -- is different. But one thing is just as clear as it was on 9/11: the need for national leadership.

We have two paths emerging: one political and the other pragmatic. They don't always agree.

When the President (or even the Vice President) speaks about the crisis, I find myself watching those surrounding them: the medical experts. I'm looking for subtle body language signals of agreement... or unease. I then listen VERY carefully to what they say and compare it to what the political chattering class is saying.

Leadership requires competency, consistency, clarity, and honesty. Trust is at a premium these days. My faith in the medical experts remains intact, but sadly I'm less confident in what I hear from the White House.

Conferences and large gatherings across the country are being cancelled, schools are going to online classes, sporting events are playing to empty stands, and whole communities are being quarantined. Two events I was scheduled to speak at were dropped just this week.

Both Democratic candidates for President cancelled campaign rallies on the eve of Super Tuesday II, and Sunday's Democratic Debate will have no one sitting in the audience.

Yet, when the President was exposed to Coronavirus at the CPAC Conference last week, along with three others (now in self-quarantine), he hasn't even bothered to get tested and when asked about upcoming campaign rallies, the Vice President said it would be assessed on a “day-to-day” basis.

No doubt, the President feels his re-election at risk – with the Dow dropping like a rock, the economy on the verge of a recession, and the Coronavirus spreading.

Let's hope that both his words and his actions in the coming weeks and months convey to the American people – the ones he's charged with protecting -- the seriousness with which the medical community has clearly embraced. And, let's hope the medical experts are not bullied into political lanes away from the science, facts, and the need to level with the American public.

It's widely known that the President is a germaphobe, so you can bet he will have an aide nearby to provide hand cleaner at rallies and other public events. But I ask him to consider what risks he places on the American public – to each other -- when the faithful gather in the thousands in closed spaces to hear him speak.

And, Mr. President, please get a Coronavirus test – if for no other reason than to lead by example.

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