

Trump calls himself a ‘wartime president’ over coronavirus as he invokes Defense Production Act

President Trump on Wednesday announced that he is invoking the Defense Production Act as part of the administration’s efforts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic — and also described himself as being a “wartime president.”

“It can do a lot of good things if we need it,” he said at a White House press conference. “We’ll have it all completed, signing it in just a little while.”

TRUMP INVOKES DEFENSE PRODUCTION ACT: WHAT IS IT?

The act ensures the private sector can ramp-up manufacturing and distribution of emergency medical supplies and equipment. The move gives the White House the authority to increase production of masks, ventilators, and respirators, as well as expand hospital capacity to combat the coronavirus.

Asked if he saw the nation as being on a wartime footing he said he did and described himself as “in a sense a wartime president.”

He made the remarks at a press conference along members of the coronavirus pandemic task force. The U.S. has largely shuttered many aspects of daily life in order to stem the rapid onset of the virus, echoing efforts across the globe. As of Wednesday morning, there were 6,519 cases and 114 deaths in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that coronavirus deaths in the U.S. mirror what has been reported in other countries, with approximately 4 out of 5 deaths occurring in people 65 and older — and no deaths in children.

TRUMP SAYS HUD WILL SUSPEND ‘ALL FORECLOSURES AND EVICTIONS’ AMID COVID-19 OUTBREAK

The crisis has caused chaos in the markets and the economy as a whole. Schools have closed and restaurants and bars have been reduced to takeout and delivery in many parts of the country. San Francisco declared a shelter-in-place order this week, while many states have put restrictions on large gatherings.

The administration has been working with Congress on a nearly \$1 trillion stimulus package to reinvigorate the U.S. economy and to provide relief to businesses and workers who have been hit hardest by the crisis.

On Wednesday, Trump also announced that the Housing Department is suspending all foreclosures and evictions until the end of April. Earlier in the day he had announced that the U.S. and Canada had agreed to temporarily close their shared border to non-essential traffic.

Vice President Mike Pence, who is leading the taskforce, announced that Health and Human Services are suspending a regulation that prevents medical professionals from practicing medicine across state lines. He also called on the nation to postpone all elective medical procedures.

TRUMP ANNOUNCES US, CANADA CLOSING BORDER TO 'NON-ESSENTIAL TRAFFIC' AMID CORONAVIRUS FEARS

Trump has held a number of press conferences as the crisis has escalated, in an effort to keep the public informed and to preview measures the administration is taking.

He had previewed Wednesday's conference by saying he would "discuss very important news from the FDA concerning the Chinese Virus!" However, he indicated that that announcement would be coming later in the day or Thursday..

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On Saturday he announced that he was extending the European travel ban to include the U.K. and Ireland.

On Tuesday, he spoke at a press conference where Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said that the administration wants to send checks to Americans "in the next two weeks" in an effort to help people cope with the economic fallout due to the pandemic.

Fox News' Gillian Turner and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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