

THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN'S THE SITUATION ROOM**

**Wolf Blitzer:** The breaking news – the coronavirus pandemic here in the United States could be on the verge of its darkest period yet as the death toll closes in on 400,000 over this past year. Let's continue our discussion on all the news. The New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio, is joining us right now. Mayor de Blasio, thank you so much for joining us. You say you're on pace to actually run out of vaccines in New York City this week, but according to data from the city, you've received 800,000 doses, only 433,000 doses have been administered so far. So, what about the remaining 366,000 doses? Will they be distributed? Will they be given to folks this week?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Wolf, as of yesterday, we were vaccinating New Yorkers at the rate of three New Yorkers per second. It's going to be an ever-growing effort and the fact is we plan, this week, to do hundreds of thousands of doses. Some of those numbers you're referring to are set aside for a separate nursing home program. We don't control that. That's the federal government and the State. But the ones we control, we are going to be doing that incessantly and the problem is we're going to run out of vaccine before the week is out. We need a massive resupply. I want to do a million doses in the month of January and then keep growing from there. But I don't have the vaccine to keep up with the demand or our ability to give the doses. It's really upsetting. I hope – and my prayer, Wolf, is that President-elect Biden, who's obviously committed to a very aggressive approach, will use the Defense Production Act, will use all the powers of the presidency to ensure that there is maximum supply available and it gets where it can be used the most. It shouldn't be sitting in the refrigerators. It should be used where it can be most effectively administered. We can do that right here.

**Blitzer:** We're the United States of America. We should be able to do this in a much more efficient manner because so many lives are at stake right now, Mayor, as you and I well know. You've also announced – and correct me if I'm wrong – plans to set up mass vaccination sites including at Yankee Stadium, at the Mets' Citi Field. Why weren't those sites ready and waiting for the vaccine to arrive? Why hasn't that started already?

**Mayor:** Wolf, in the first weeks it was absolutely imperative that we made sure that the vaccine could be used safely, effectively – a very different kind of vaccine than we've been used to in the past. Remember the ultra-cold storage. There's really specific features here that our health care leadership wanted to make sure everyone went through their preparations carefully, it was a safe, positive experience. By the way, thank God, we gave out a huge amount of vaccine with no problems, no incidents, no misfires so we could gain public trust. Once we had that assurance, we were able to take off. And now – I want to restate what I said, it's one New Yorker every three seconds. I flipped that around. One New Yorker every three seconds vaccinated as of yesterday. We're talking about a pace now going into this week between 200,000 and 300,000 people per week and that rate growing all the time. The problem now is just a plain lack of vaccine, Wolf. You have to think about it. We can't even get out of the week. I mean think how astounding that is. Again, you're right, in the United States of America how is that possible when we're a year into this crisis?

**Blitzer:** Yeah, you need the doses and you got to get that. I understand the Governor of New York is suggesting – Governor Cuomo – that you will get those, and you want to deal directly with the manufacturers, you know Pfizer and Moderna, instead of going through the national government, the federal government. Is that right?

**Mayor:** Look, that's what he's proposing, and I agree with him because right now the fact that the doses aren't coming destroys our ability to reach people. And when you think about it, we need to create public trust that there's going to be consistency in this effort. Some parts of the country have the ability to vaccinate people very quickly. I'm sure others are going to take more time. It's just a matter of infrastructure. It's no one's fault. We happen to have a huge infrastructure here. So, I would argue, get the doses where they can be most quickly put in the arms of the people who need them. That's the best way to fight this crisis for everyone and then maximize production in a way that obviously didn't happen in the previous administration but could happen in the Biden administration. Joe Biden has been abundantly clear that he wants to do 100 million doses in his first 100 days, that's the kind of goal we need, and use all the powers of the federal government to do it. But in the meantime, get the doses where they can be used most quickly. If we had that ability, get them to us, and we'll get them right in the arms of our people.

**Blitzer:** And you'll open up Yankee Stadium and start doing it over there. People would just be able to show up and get a shot. We're learning that President Trump, by the way, is now expected to remove coronavirus travel restrictions starting next week. It's unclear what countries will be included but loosening those restrictions, especially, you know, you got JFK, you got big airports in New York – will you be in favor of easing all those restrictions on foreigners coming into the United States?

**Mayor:** Not at all. Not at all, Wolf. I'd go the other way. Right now, this U. K. variant is the number one challenge we face. Our health care leadership here in New York City they say we

are racing against time to vaccinate the maximum people before that U. K. variant spreads like wildfire. The best way to keep the U. K. variant is out is shut down travel from the U. K. So, I would actually go the other way. I hope President-elect Biden would put a travel ban on Britain until we get to a much greater point of vaccination in this country. We just can't take the chance.

**Blitzer:** One final question before I let you go, Mayor, you know that Washington, D. C. is almost like a fortress right now. Security is intense. National Guard troops deployed all over the place. What about New York City, are you ready for any potential threats there?

**Mayor:** Yeah, we're watching really carefully. We're not seeing any tangible evidence, any specific threats, but we have our NYPD on a high state of readiness in case. And I think, Wolf, what you're seeing all around the country is our security leaders learn the painful lesson from the Capitol, from the horrible insurrection, and now they're out in force and suddenly those very negative white supremacist forces are receding into the background. The good news is being ready, showing that strength, showing that force, I think it's going to give us a good day on Wednesday.

**Blitzer:** Let's hope. We're watching it so closely. We could use that. Mayor de Blasio of New York, thank you so much for joining us.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Wolf. Take care.

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