



New Book Revelations Uncover Trump's Efforts to Downplay COVID-19 and Protect the Saudi Crown Prince

This week, new revelations have emerged that uncover President Trump's efforts to downplay COVID-19 in its early stages despite warnings from medical professionals. In a new book by investigative journalist Bob Woodward, President Trump admits to wanting to downplay the virus despite knowing how serious it was. As early as February 7th, President Trump admitted to Woodward that the virus was a major threat but said he would seek to downplay it so as not to cause fear throughout the country. The book also states that President Trump bragged about protecting Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman from congressional scrutiny after the brutal assassination of journalist and Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi. Furthermore, Woodward documents that the president denigrated the American military, adding credence to the report published by The Atlantic recently that makes the same claims. Trump took to Twitter to denounce the book as entirely false and a political hit-job. However, doubts over the legitimacy of the substance in Woodward's book have subsided as it was revealed that the president personally agreed to over a dozen on-the-record interviews with Woodward for the book.

On March 19th, President Trump told Woodward about the virus "I wanted to play it down, I still like playing it down." At this point, the president was acutely aware of the virus' severity and the ease of which it was transmitted between people, but he believed that by playing down its severity people wouldn't panic. In late March, the president was still comparing the virus to the seasonal flu despite receiving warnings from top health experts and Chinese President Xi Jinping. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien told the president the virus would be the greatest threat to his presidency. Studies have shown that had President Trump followed the recommendations laid out by his top experts in the early stages of the virus, thousands of lives could have been saved. Indeed, the president held several campaign rallies around this time that failed to follow safety protocols, and it was revealed that dozens of people contracted the virus as a result of attending. When asked about Woodward's claims this week, President Trump admitted that he downplayed the virus, saying he did it in order to reduce panic. Furthermore, when reporters queried White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany about the president's statements, she stated that he had done "what leaders do" in trying to prevent panic.

In the book, Woodward also reveals that Trump bragged about protecting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the aftermath of the brutal killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The president told Woodward that he didn't believe bin Salman ordered the assassination, despite U.S. and foreign intelligence services concluding that he did order the attack. Following Khashoggi's murder, Trump bypassed Congress to sell nearly \$8 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and vetoed resolutions blocking the sale and putting an end to American support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen – which the global community has deemed is responsible for one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

Additionally, earlier this week, the president caused an uproar when an article was published by The Atlantic that quoted him criticizing American military members, particularly those killed or wounded in action. Bob Woodward's book adds to the claims first reported by The Atlantic, with new details over the extent of President Trump's flippancy toward the military. In a 2017 meeting with trade advisor Peter Navarro, the president slammed his top generals, calling them weak during a vulgar tirade in which he raged against the military's commitment to various alliances. It was also revealed that General Jim Mattis and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats both had serious reservations over the president's fitness to serve, and considered speaking out against the president to warn the public. Mattis and Coats had reservations about the president's rapport with foreign leaders, particularly the cozy relationships he enjoyed with Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un.

Looking forward, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden called the revelations "a life and death betrayal" by the president. With just over 50 days until the election, the Woodward book has the potential to severely damage President Trump's re-election campaign for a plethora of reasons. From the climbing COVID-19 death toll, to the repeated and flippant disrespect for American military leaders, President Trump faces an uphill battle to win back the trust of Americans across the country.