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HHS Secretary Azar: Why Operation Warp Speed is a Made-in-America story

*With the historic public-private partnerships between the government, military, and private sector,
American industry is delivering again*

Fox Business

By Secretary Alex Azar

October 22, 2020

When we launched Operation Warp Speed (OWS), the unprecedented effort to produce and deliver safe and effective [COVID-19](#) vaccines to Americans in record time, skeptics questioned the viability of such an undertaking.

The goals we set were optimistic and unprecedented. But it is now highly credible that OWS will have produced up to 100 million doses of safe and effective [COVID-19](#) vaccine doses, made in America, by the end of 2020—twelve months from the publishing of the viral sequence.

Advances in [science](#) are the foundation for this progress. But the broader set of requirements for ultimate success—unwavering leadership, ingenuity, determination, the commitment of enormous resources, exceptional logistical infrastructure, and public-private collaboration—can be assembled only in America.

For instance, one key way we're accelerating the [vaccine timeline](#) without skipping any of the critical safety and efficacy steps is by investing in industrial-scale manufacturing of vaccine candidates while clinical trials continue to gather data.

This is almost never done in drug development because it would make so little business sense to invest in making a product that there's a chance you can never use. But in a unique public-private partnership, this step has the chance to save huge numbers of lives.

Not only has manufacturing work begun; it's begun on an industrial scale for all six OWS-supported vaccines. More than 23 manufacturing facilities across the U.S. have already

been augmented and scaled up with support from OWS.

Scaling up the manufacturing of vaccines and other complex medical materials such as needles, syringes, and vials is a complex endeavor—especially during a global pandemic. That’s why we have the Department of Defense applying the same supply chain and logistics expertise that keeps the U.S. military the best-equipped force in the world to ensure that OWS manufacturers have what they need.

One of the U.S. military’s strategic advantages has always been its logistics capability—having the right equipment, from bombs and bullets to food and fuel, in the right place at the right time, all across the world. That requires a great deal of coordination of suppliers, and when necessary, application of government authorities to prioritize orders or redirect supplies.

The Department of Defense is applying that same coordination to OWS, helping to ensure on-time delivery and availability of critical materials. So, for instance, if a shipment from overseas might normally take six weeks on a ship but is needed much faster, we ensure it’s put on a plane instead.

From the Arsenal of Democracy producing a Liberty ship almost every day at the height of World War II to the construction of Apollo 11’s lunar module, American manufacturing has proven its ability to deliver results in unprecedented times, on almost unbelievable schedules. With the historic public-private partnerships between the government, military, and private sector, American industry is delivering again.

These unique partnerships do not stop with manufacturing. OWS is also using unprecedented cooperation with private industry to prepare for distributing a vaccine as soon as the career scientists at the FDA deem it safe and effective by their high standards.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is using an existing partnership with McKesson on vaccine distribution to ensure vaccines get where they need to go, supported by other giant American companies like UPS and FedEx.

OWS and CDC are working closely with public health jurisdictions—states, a few large cities, and other jurisdictions—on distribution planning. The closely coordinated logistical planning, led by CDC and augmented by some of the world’s best logisticians at DoD, is yet another unprecedented effort.

Last week, we announced an agreement with Walgreens and CVS for them to make all-inclusive on-site vaccination services available to nursing homes and assisted living facilities across America because older Americans in congregate settings are some of the most vulnerable to the virus and the highest priority for vaccine distribution.

HHS and private companies are also setting up the IT systems we need to keep track of vaccine orders and track which vaccine dose someone has received, to ensure he or she receives the correct second dose.

We have already seen tremendous unprecedented progress toward a vaccine. Four of our six vaccine candidates are in the final stage of human trials, and we may even see data emerge from one or more of these in October.

In the meantime, a unique made-in-America story is being written, as the full power of the federal government, military, private industry, and academia are coming together to deliver a safe and effective vaccine from the laboratory to the frontlines in your community.

This is a uniquely American story. The book isn't finished, but the first several chapters should remind Americans of how much we all have to be proud of.