



Capitol Hill Steering Committee on Pandemic Preparedness & Health Security



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Center for
Health Security

Transcript from November 17, 2022: What's new in the 2022 National Biodefense Strategy?

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Welcome to today's webinar

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What's new in the 2022 national Bio Defense strategy.

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Dr. Tom angles me. Our moderator will now begin

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Great thanks so much Andrea, and welcome to everyone. Thank you for joining us today for the Capitol Hill Steering Committee on pandemic preparedness and health. Security.

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I'm Tom Mingles, be director of the Johns, Hopkins Center for health security.

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The Capitol Hill steering committee is a bipartisan effort, supported by 12 Congressional leaders who serve as honorary co-chairs as well as former administration officials who are committed to making the country in the world more prepared for the greatest health security threats steering committee is managed by

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our center at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, and is supported by the open philanthropy project last month the White House released a much awaited new National Biote Effect Strategy Implementation plan and now National Security Memorandum to better protect the us.

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From biological threats, whether natural, accidental, or deliberate in the appointment of the code.

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19 pandemic, which still obviously is still Hi! A serious challenge for the country in the world.

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The Monkey pox epidemic and recent challenges to the norms against the use of of chemical, biological nuclear weapons.

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This new strategy comes at a critical time for the Us.

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As outlined in the strategy, bio defense encompasses a wide range of activities across many federal departments, agencies and programs critical capabilities in the strategy.

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Include bios surveillance, biological arms, control, nonproliferation by safety, by security, medical countermeasure development, and many other critical elements of by security across the country, coordinating and directing these responsibilities to make the us better prepared for the next threat is a vital

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effort today to talk through all of this and learn more about the strategy.

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The reason it's important for the country. The plan to implement it, and the important national goals.

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It's pursuing. We are very lucky to have with us. Dr.

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Raj Punjabi Raj currently serves as a special assistant to the President and the senior director for Global Health Security and Bio defense at the White House National Security Council prior to his current position Raj.

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Was appointed by President Biden as the third Us.

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Global malaria, coordinator to have the President's malaria initiative as the President's malaria coordinator.

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He managed an annual budget of 770 million dollars, and over 200 us Aid and Cdc.

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Staff to protect hundreds of millions of people at risk of malaria across nearly 30 countries and prior to serving in the Biden Harris administration, Raj served as CEO of last Mile health award-winning nonprofit organization he co-founded it in 2,000 and

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7 to save lives in the world's most remote communities.

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We are so glad you're able to join us today, Raj, to talk about the strategy, and we are going to start with about 10 min of opening remarks from Raj and then Raj.

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And I are gonna have a chance to have a conversation about this strategy and get into some more of the details.

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So, Raj, let me turn it over to you

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Tom, thank you, and let me just confirm that you can hear me

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Yes, we can hear you, and we can see you

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Good! Well, those are the first 2 elements of any zoom.

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Most important. Yes.

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Call so. Thank you for thanks for having me today and I'm honored to be here on behalf of President Biden and our National security adviser, Jake Sullivan, my team works closely with them at at the National Security Council.

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To coordinate efforts across the Government to prepare and respond to pandemic and other biological threats.

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I don't need to tell this group that infectious diseases that cross borders disrupt societies and economies are a threat to our national and global security and we've all seen that firsthand with the devastation that Kovat 19 has inflicted on our families and our

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loved ones, on our country and on our on our world.

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What I wanted do today is to cover 2 things. I wanna cover the scale and the scope of the biological threat.

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And I want to then share how the administration is preparing for and responding to the biological thread, including being responsive to several actions that were requested by Congress over the last several years.

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Let me start with the scale and the scope of the biological threat.

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Covid has devastated communities across America and around the world. We know that.

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But beyond Covid, the global community and the Us are concurrently fighting outbreaks at monkey, Pox of Ebola, of highly pathogenic Avian influenza bird flu and other infectious diseases that has stretches thin our resources and continues to

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demonstrate the importance of investing in preparedness and enclosing the gaps in our preparedness.

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But in addition to naturally occurring threats, we also have the risk of accidental biological incidents.

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There is an explosion of biotechnology.

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President released a few weeks ago, and executive order on biotechnology and biomedufacturing in there.

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He notes, and we note that this administration, that bioengineering alone will contribute.

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It's expected about one third of global Gdp.

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That's about 30 trillion dollars in value. What that means is, there will be a tremendous opportunity and innovation.

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There also can be an increase in the risk, as biotechnology becomes more and more available for there to be laboratory accidents, for instance, or other types of safety issues.

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So that is another part of the scale in the scope of the threat.

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The other area, of course, is the risk of let's increasing of deliberate threats.

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The deliberate use of biological agents we all know and remember the horrific anthrax attacks of 2,001.

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We also know that there the norms around biological weapons non proliferation, including the biological weapons.

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Convention is itself under attack most recently by the Russian Government, which, as failed at its attempts to allege falsely that they're the United States and Ukraine are a non-compliance with that biological weapons.

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Convention, most recently failing at the UN Security Council to get a boat for an investigation mechanism.

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There to to further investigate that that false allegation.

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So th this th the naturally occurring threat, the laboratory, the accidental threat, and the deliberate biological threat is growing not only amongst, humans, but also monks animals and plants as well end the pandemic threat as we know it we believe there needs to be a modern bio defense.

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Enterprise that it's faster than it is today.

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In responding that is more equitable than it is today.

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In the preparing, and that is what we need to keep our families safer to keep our nation safer, and to keep our world safer, and that is ultimately what this plan is about it's about protecting our families our communities our country and our world let me now walk you through Tom and and

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Colleagues, an overview of the National Bio Defense Strategy and implementation plan that the President released alongside signing a National security memorandum and a 7 15.

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On October the eighteenth, the national Bi Defence Strategy and Implementation plan for countering biological threats, enhancing pandemic preparedness and achieving global health security really lays out a clear and ambitious vision and that vision is a world free from

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Pandemic and catastrophic biological insight.

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Similar to the prior strategy. It has 5 overarching goals to detect.

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Prevent, therefore, respond to, and to recover from pandemics and other bylaws.

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Incidents. What's new here? And this is something Congress has called for in the National Defense Authorization Act in 2,017 is an implementation plan to go along with that strategy?

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This implementation plan. If you have access to the document, you can find it on White House, Gov: you'll see it in the end.

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Include the set of bold concrete targets for transforming the nation's bio defense actions that are needed as well to achieve those targets and most importantly and again, this was called for by Congress in the nda a 17 it assigned responsibilities to over

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20 Federal, agencies, every one of the actions has a lead Federal agency.

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As well as support Federal agency. So the accountability for execution for implementation for delivery is clear.

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Now let me walk you through just a few examples under each of the 5 goals, and Tom.

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In our conversation. We can get into the details if you'd like.

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Under the first goal. Earlier intense years to ensure awareness and early warning of pandemic and biological threats.

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Strategy specifically aims to increase investment in wastewater surveillance in genomic sequencing in the advent of modeling and data forecasting through our center for outbreak center for forecasting outbreaks, and analytics

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Thefa, all with the goal of more quickly detecting threats.

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Earlier, and ensuring that we're then able to respond to them.

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The second goal is to prevent, and here the intent is to prevent epidemics and biological incidents before they happen, whether they're naturally occurring, accidental or deliberate couple of go a couple of actions there to highlight number one doing something laboratory biosafety the plan

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Prioritizes, working with domestic and international partners to prevent laboratory accidents by strengthening bio safety, lab capacity, and reinforce the norms of responsible conduct for biological research, a second area is on the deliberate side we want to prevent deliberate threats

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So there are actions focused on deterring and detecting the use of biological weapons, plan prioritizes working with foreign partners to prevent the use and respond to decisively if biological weapons are deployed it also calls for strengthening international norms against biological weapons, I

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Mentioned earlier, including through the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention that helps Foster greater transparency and compliance for nonproliferation amongst all nation-states of course we have to also to prevent we have to work to ensure we're supporting other

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Countries not have all the resources to stop, prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats at their source.

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So the plan includes support for at least 50 countries, strengthen their health security by expanding our global health security agenda efforts to at least 50 countries directly and then partnering with other nations to help another 50 countries for a total of 100 having further support than they have today, and we're

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Seeing that again in the context of the Ebola outbreak that's ongoing in Uganda.

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Third goal is to better prepare here. The intent is to prepare for outbreaks and biological incidents before they happen and also, to ensure that we're mitigating the effects once they happen last year the administration.

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Released the American pandemic preparedness, plan, that's a strategy that lays out some ambitious, scientific, technological brethrens.

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The timelines that are can be made possible, such as will require extensive resources, and over the next 5 to 10 years this national Bio defense strategy and implementation plan embraces

those goals that were set out in the American pandemic preparedness plan and leverages our policy processes through

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The National Security Council, to ensure. We actually execute them, and just as a reminder those key preparedness goals, number one enable testing within 12 h of a new biological incidence search testing to tens of thousands passage and agnostic diagnostic testing within a week and develop

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Pathogen specific testing within a month's time within 30 days.

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Another is to develop new vaccines within 100 days the manufacturer, sufficient vaccine for the population of the Us.

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Within 130 days and to ensure working with international partners, we develop sufficient vaccine supply for high-risk global population within 200 days and any all of us who've lived through Covid, and have been vaccinated whether it's here or help get vaccines

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Around the world in the United States, and some donate over 650 million vaccines directly know how critical it is to get vaccine faster and more equitably distributed distributed more quickly the other area of course in paradise is to accelerate the theraputic development

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For therapies, for novel pathogens. So here the plan puts out and reinforces the goal of ensuring drugs are repurposed within 90 days of a new pathogen and develop novel therapeutics within a 180 days again you can see the theme, of speed being

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Critical throughout this, of course, preparedness. And again, this is perhaps the media's part of the plan.

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Tom and colleague isn't just about scientific breakthrough.

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It's not just about news stuff. It's about investing in staff and people as well.

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The Covid pandemic has laid bare the what we've known for a long time is that there's been decades of under investment in the people that deliver public health that deliver veterinary health and liver plant health at every level especially at the state local levels and

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that's why this plan calls for the recruitment training and sustainment of a robust permanent cadre of essential critical health and infrastructure workers.

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And we're speaking about epidemiologists, veterinarians, but also community health workers and public health nurses in all 50 states.

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The fourth goal, Tom, and I'll wind up here by talking also about the National, and then talk about the National Security memorandum 15 is to rapidly respond when efforts occur.

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Epidemics, and biological incidents often require a coordinated whole of government responsibility to be quick if we're to be equitable.

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And this plan directs the interagency to maintain the capabilities, to surge a whole of government response within 7 days, as well as ensuring activation of an integrated federal research agenda and clinical trials and infrastructure within 14 days lastly we want to ensure we're

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recovering, intent here is to ensure that we restore the community.

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The economy environment after a biological incident, and there are actions in the plan towards that goal as well.

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Now I'll end by with a couple of points on the Nsm.

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15, because I think they are quite deliberately trying to respond to Congressional requirements.

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And and requests that have been made over over the last several years.

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As I said, in addition to the National Bio defense, strategy and implementation plan.

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The President released and signed a Nsm. 15 national Security memo 15, and that essentially orders the departments and agencies to do a number of things again that Congress has been asking for number one the Nsm.

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15, direct agencies to prioritize bio defense in their budget.

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It prioritized, it. Directs Omb, the office of management and budget to annually assess whether the resources efficient to implement the strategy and it, creates a governance structure and quarterly tracking process for the national security council through our directorate here and in support of Jake

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Sullivan, the National Security Advisor, and the President to monitor progress towards actually implementing the plan, and it places the national security advisor in charge of coordinating the Federal Bio defense efforts this is all in response to uhndaa, actions including one in

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In 2,000 fy 21, which asked for clear responsibilities in an implementation plan.

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It also responds to Gao 21, 5, 1, 3.

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We recommended that the executive branch have exercises that are done, and those appointment of you reports are completed and submitted from those preparedness exercises, and so in Nsm.

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15 the President has tasked an annual principles, level bio preparedness, exercise, and submission of those after action of reports to the Nsc.

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And a whole of Government reassessment of the Bio defense priorities every 3 years the Ndaa in years past, has also direct asked for the Intelligence community to provide an annual bio threat assessment this nsm 15 actually provides that tasking from the President to

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The IC. Itself. So we have had. I think, this result from many years of Congress's proactive stance come on, bio defense as we look, ahead.

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I think we're going to need that partnership to be even more robust.

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We, especially when it comes to funding and data authorities, and I'll put those 2 as areas where I think there's opportunity for Congress to engage with with the White House and the Administration even more deeply number one on budget we're already using Baseline budgets to implement key

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Actions in this strategy, but to truly hit some of the transformational targets, like some of the vaccine testing and treatment targets I mentioned earlier.

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We're going to need additional financing. The Administration put forward an 88.2 billion dollar request, in mandatory funding over 5 years that's part of the President's fy 23 budget request.

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In March that is aligned with key elements of this strategy, and you know, happy to talk more about that.

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That's sounds like a big ticket item 17 billion dollars a year.

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But if you put it in perspective, are essentially presenting an opportunity with a clear plan, clear results being able to be tracked for billions of dollars to be invested.

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Now to save trillions of dollars in the future and and encounter amount of human lives both American and around the world.

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The other area where I think we could have deeper collaboration.

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Tom, with Congress is around in enhancing the authorities needed to implement the plan.

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One critical one is around data authorities. We Hhs, as you know, currently lacks the authority to require public health data reporting from State and local entities and so when it comes to Covid or Monkey Pox or just taking the case of ebola, getting data on on arriving passengers

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from Uganda, who may need to be monitored for 21 days of symptoms we still don't have the authority to be able to require that, and that's going to be critical because without data.

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We we fly blind in in responding to biological threats, including outbreaks.

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So I'll end where I started, Tom, and turn back to you.

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Look, this is ultimately about better protecting our families, better protecting our country.

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Better protecting our world. I think people will look back on his history in this moment after the worst pandemic in over a century, and ask whether leaders acted we are entering an age?

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Of pandemics, but we also have the technological capability.

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We have the capacity. We have the will, and we have the leadership to be able to transform the pandemic threat and potentially end the end it as we know it.

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I'll stop there, Tom, and and turn to you

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Well, then, you so much, Raj, for giving us that tour of strategy.

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So many important issues to consider and this will be a great chance to talk through them in the time that we have a little further in this discussion I'm gonna invite audience questions I'm just gonna start with a couple of questions here and then We'll open it up to the to the larger audience before we get to

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the strategy. It would just be great to hear a little bit about more a moment or 2 about your background.

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And how did you get into this field, Raja helps us.

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Understand your perspective. How'd you get to this field? Tell us about the work you were doing prior to this

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I I part of my connection with Tom comes from where I grew up.

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I came to America over 30 years ago, after my family fled.

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Liberia Civil War the war had nearly crushed my dreams, but thanks to the educational opportunities in our great nation, here I was able to become a doctor and an epidemiologist.

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And before joining government I had the privilege of of for years, not only working as a professor at Harvard, and working on policy with the World Health organization on pandemic preparedness and response including their independent panel that evaluated the global response to covid but perhaps most

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Importantly, I had the privilege of caring for patients for years for families and their communities that were affected by infectious diseases, and that work took me Tom on home

visits with community health workers responding to outbreaks of ebola in the forest of West Africa but

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Also as recently as last year on mobile bands with heroic nurses delivering COVID-19 vaccines on the street corners of neighborhoods near Boston.

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So I think what I've learned, Tom, from all of that especially working on the front lines is that we're not defined by the pendulum or biological threat.

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We're defined by how we respond to and how well we respond depends on how well we need prepare

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Right well, and any any more insights that you might offer just from your experience with the Ebola response in West Africa, you were in the front lines.

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Yeah.

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It sounds like you did really community-based work, high-level work, anything else you take from a bit of informed strategy

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Yeah, you know, I think I think specifically a a few things.

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One speed, and you hear that is key. Time is lives in an emergency, and that you can see.

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I think it's not something we just learned in Ebola.

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The faster we would have had a response there, in 2,014 less lives would have been lost.

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It's also true here with Covid having a Covid vaccine available in in the shortest time that has been ever been proven possible during this pandemic has saved numerous lives, but but also getting equity is vital the need to ensure that we're

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Getting vaccines, test, treatment, good public health information about masks and how to prevent and protect yourself has been vital, and you know, just last year the Commonwealth report showed that the us vaccination program alone saved 2.3 million American lives you know ensuring that that is reaching

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All people is vital. The last I would say, is your last point about being hyper local meeting, people where they are community-based response.

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You know, trust is a really important factor. When crises happen and we have to enlist.

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We have to engage. We have to employ in the case of Uganda right now, for instance, the United States is responding.

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We're proud that we're helping the Ugandan government pay community health workers who are going toward a door to do the contact tracing.

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That is critical, engaging people who are the most affected as agents in the response, not just objects, in other words, people that are there to receive test treatments, vaccines.

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They have to be part of the response. I think to me those are the 3 things: speed, equity, and community-based responses are vital

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Great. Well, so let's now get back to the strategy, and you've given us a lot to think about in your opening remarks.

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I guess kind of you did begin to talk about this, but maybe it's just worth kind of underscoring or punching again.

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Some people have said, Why do we need a new strategy?

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We had a strategy. And what problem does this strategy solve for us?

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Given all the work that's already going on. Can you?

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Just kind of a quick response to that

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Yeah, you know. I I think it's it comes back to the perhaps cliché point that that strategies that sit on shells collect dust, and this strategy is responsive to a critical need so I mean what I mean to say by saying that is that you know we're not the strategies.

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Are just documents unless they're actually executed. And here what we're trying to do, building on the path strategies again.

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The goals are quite consistent with the 2,018 strategy.

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It is to actually put some teeth behind the bold targets.

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The actions that are needed, that the timelines as well, that are required.

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I mentioned several earlier, so one is plan. The second is having governance how we're organized to execute that plan.

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So each of the agencies for the first time have put on paper which of these actions they are the lead for, and which are support agencies.

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The third, I would say, is the organization of the execution itself, and the coordination of the body defense enterprise.

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And I mentioned earlier the Nsm. 15, which really moves coordination of biodivers recognizing that it's almost always an interagency effort to the White House under the National security Advisor and through the National security Council That's not to dismiss in any way the roles of departments and agencies

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Which will continue through their own equities and authorities to deliver on this mission.

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I mentioned how each is committed to play critical roles.

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So White House is uniquely suited in position to ensure each of those departments and agencies are playing to their strengths and helping ensure that we're getting the most value out of out of the collaboration between agencies and departments so that's what's different I would say.

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In a nutshell

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Got it. So it talked a little bit about Budget a a moment ago.

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Will will this strategy be? What to what extent is the strategy possible to implement without new budget?

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There's already activity going on in the agencies.

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What can you do? What can't you do? Just maybe say more about the funding that you need

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Sure. Well, a couple of things one. The administration is already implementing the actions and the strategy under baseline budgets somewhere in the order of billions of dollars annually. You can look at each of the deployments they're over 20 they're involved in how they've been

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Spending money, and how they are, Will requested to spend money in the fy 23.

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I'll give you a couple examples, you know, on the global side the Us.

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Under the President and Vice President's leadership, pushed very hard and helped establish a pandemic fund, which was, you know, formally launched this past weekend at the G. 20.

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It's at the World Bank we have contributed 450 million dollars to that.

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It's to help other countries stop infectious as these threats as their sources, our 450 million dollars has been leveraged almost threex.

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At this point another 1 billion dollars, because of the Us's leadership has been put in by other countries for about a 1 billion and a half dollars and feet funding.

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Another example is the center for forecasting and outbreak analytics.

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We use some of the funding from the American rescue plan to help stand, that up, and that helped us during the Amicon waves to ensure we had rapid modeling about how that and analytics on how that would spread so that our decision makers could make the most optimal decisions at the

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Time. Those are just a couple of examples, but but that's the baseline.

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If if we want to end the pandemic threat, as we know it, we wanna transform the biological threat, whether it's naturally occurring, accidental or deliberate, we need transformative, funding in this moment that and and and to meet this moment the President has put a historic

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Additional request, 4, 88 billion dollars over the course of 5 years that is largely 82 billion dollars of that for Hhs.

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About 40 billion dollars of that being requested over 5 years for Asper for the administration for strategic preparedness and response.

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About 28 billion dollars For Cdc. About 12 billion dollars for Nih and a few 1 billion dollars for the FDA.

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All to help hit those goals of a vaccine in a 100 days, testing within.

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Agnostic, testing, pathogen, agnostic testing within hours, specific test passage and specific testing within a month, to have treatments for all 26 viral families, those families of viruses from which we could have pandemic potential pathogens and every day, we shave every week, we

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Shave every month we shave to get closer to those targets will require this kind of investment and, as I said earlier, while the request is for billions, of dollars, the value is economically trillions of dollars being saved and in valuably incalculably millions of lives, both here and around

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The world being protected in a future pandemic, so the roi on this.

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It's pretty thoughtful if you care about this because it's the right thing to do.

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It's worth doing. If you care about this because it's a smart thing to do, and it's logical.

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It's worth doing. You care about national security and the safety of the country and the world.

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It's worth doing

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Great so so number of questions coming in about different elements of the strategy.

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And so maybe we can drill into some of them. And one question from Riley Griffin at Bloomberg is, How does the strategy affect planning and activities around the biological weapons convention there's an upcoming review conference how is the us seeing that how is the

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Strategy informed that set of activities

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Thanks, Riley for that question. Well, well, first of all, we've we've put very front and center the goal to to deter and to prevent the use of biological weapons proliferation so one of the very clear things we're working on is to uphold the norms of that

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convention we have fought so February for months now false allegations, disinformation, and misinformation put out by the Russian Government that alleged the United States is supporting by biological weapons labs in Ukraine that has just been

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non factual, it was proven, and at the article 5 consultations in Geneva several weeks ago, where nearly dozens of countries really backed the assertion, and the data that was put forward by the Ukrainians and the United States the Russians for the first

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time invoked Article 6 to call for investigatory mechanism as the UN.

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Security Council. That effort failed, because if you listen to any of the explanation explanation of vote statements by the countries that abstained and or refused to vote in favor in in in in other words, voted no against or basically said the threshold, for evidence has not been met and the allegations

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are false, all of them, including the United States, also committed to strengthening the Biological Weapons convention.

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So we have been. I think, pretty public about our commitment to strengthen the implementation support units at the Biological Weapons Convention.

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We've also been pretty clear about our desire of having independent expert working groups to look at other ways, that the Weapons convention can be further strengthened and so that will be some of the key. Things that we'll be taking into account. As we go into this review content.

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Great, very helpful a number of questions that relate to the interaction between government and the private.

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Sector around medical countermeasure, development, and I think in general, the theme of the questions is, How Does the Us.

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Government, intend to work with the private sector to try and accelerate the development of medical countermeasures?

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Are there things that we're looking forward to doing that?

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That the strategy calls out or the implementation plan anticipates

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I think one is shifting from thinking of countermeasured against individual viruses, and instead thinking about family of viruses, there are 26 families of viruses that are known in fact humans many of which we're far less prepared, for than even as prepared as or now for coronaviruses

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The, to to adequately prepare time for the full range of threats.

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As I mentioned earlier, the plan lays out series of moonshot efforts building on the American pandemic Preparedness plan vision from last year, and all of that.

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It really will require engagement with the private sector, and we want to make better use of the financial tools.

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The policy, tools and the partnership tools with the private sector to help reach those goals of hitting vaccines in 100 days diagnostics within 12 h of an outbreak especially passage and agnostic ones, I should say and ensuring that we have therapies that can

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Be repurposed from existing drugs with the ninetys of developing novel therapies within 180 days.

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So all that will require collaboration. The other thing is is by putting forward.

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Essentially what is a 5 year plan and a 5 year budget request.

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Were signaling our understanding that some of these research and development or manufacturing capabilities, that the private sector will need to have is done at risk, and having some assurance that the public sector planning to spend in certain priorities may help ceos better calibrate that risk and us as a public

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Sector better leverage their private resources to be able to deliver on these goals.

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And again, that's why that funding additional funding that has been put forward as well as a 5 year plan is is something I think, that that is intentional, ensuring that we're able to leverage our private public partnerships to a more greater, extent

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Great, so let me turn to another part of the strategy which is the work that is envisioned around early to detection and surveillance.

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You've talked about some of the new initiatives of the Administration around the center for forecasting analytics.

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What are some of the things that are envisioned around the fields of detection and surveillance that the strategy and the plan can drive forward

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Yeah. So you know, getting the first line of defense, of course, is is early warning, and and that's why it's the first goal in the plan, you know.

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Couple of things. I I think critical. The early warning is an interoperable disease.

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Surveillance system. And so the strategy sets out to prioritize and build out that kind of surveillance system.

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You know it's it's it's working to integrate.

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Wastewater surveillance syndromic surveillance, you know, make surveillance as well as the ability to do.

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You know, data reporting. That's more automated between hospitals, clinics.

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State local, and Federal departments. We can use the data that we're getting in a more effective and efficient way.

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One of the draft. Examples of this Tom is is the work the administration has already done to launch the new center for forecasting and outbreak analytics.

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The Cfa. I mentioned earlier the goal of that center is to enable rapid, effective decision making to improve outbreak response, using data, modeling and analytics and and again, that group is really critical when amicon was first detected went immediately to work To ensure.

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That we understood how quickly Umicon might be able to spread many hospitalizations.

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We may have, and therefore help inform the public health measures and the delivery of countermeasures, as well as public health, guidance, help avert as many of those hospitalizations and debts from that wave as possible so that those are the kinds of things that are we're

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Focused on. We're also conscious at the environmental surveillance level.

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I mentioned wastewater surveillance. We'll need to integrate our surveillance in a multi-sectoral way.

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Wastewater has become critical in detecting trains of polio in detecting Covid we think it will continue to be a new technology that needs to be built out as well and one of the commitments that's made in the plan Tom in case folks have ideas and perspectives they want to share with

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Us is, there's a commitment to develop an early warning joint capabilities.

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Plan, in other words, a joint plan across the interagency that actually clarifies in detail how we reach a more transformed early warning system.

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And and there, too, there's work that will be done, and engagements will want to do with the public, and with those outside of government to help us figure out.

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Get a strong capabilities plan as possible on early morning

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Well, that's great to know that's coming, and we will look out for that.

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Another line of questions relates to the work that might go on around personal protective equipment masks.

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What is what is the strategy and vision there around improving access to Ppe developing next Gen. Ppe

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Yeah, you know, if you look at 3.3 in the plan.

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There are a few key things there, the the the action in the target is really for us to have a resilient and scalable.

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Supply chain of personal protective equipment. Critically, the the a couple of things, one on Ppe capacity.

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The plan calls for us to maintain a continuously improving Federal stockpile of ppe systems that is consistent also with the implementation of executive order 14 year 1 7 from February, 21 essentially a couple things we're looking for there 1 1

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of be able to provide a domestic minimum of 90 days.

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Surge capability for Ppe. Second, we want to make sure we can accommodate commercial distribution channels as well as be able to replenish federal State and local ppe stockpiles and and we also, want to ensure there's a steady State market supply and that will

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you also have some manufacturing surge capacity to keep up with with the peak that will be needed at Ppe consumption, and then also of course, we need to make sure that we're contributing and updating those analyses as we go the the other area, you mentioned is

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around. Let me say one other point about the supply chain on Ppe.

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We want to make sure we're also diversifying our supply chain for Ppe through to be able to better safeguard them.

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And it's a lesson from Covid and other at the but we want to ensure we're leveraging incentives, regulation, and other tools to reduce dependence on a single region source or product when and here course, the leads are usda and hhs and so I would I would point

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you to those portions of the plan. There's several innovations that are you know.

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We're looking at, including the increased adoption of reusable reusable respirators to increase cost effectiveness, ensuring that we have a number of making sure we be fit for various different types of potentially and individuals including pediatric range so i'll refer

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You to the document for more details on it. But those are just a couple of examples

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Great number number of questions from the audience around White House, and I just in general Federal plans for public communication around biological threats around the work that's going on, and as part of that they're kind of the overall approach to misinformation and disinformation you kind of

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started, to talk about that a bit earlier about what's been happening in Ukraine.

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Yeah.

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Yeah, I you know I think first of all the the general approach that we want to keep taking is to explain to people what we know.

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Explain what we don't know, share what we're doing.

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The gaps and what we don't know, and then give people specific things they can do to protect themselves.

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General approach, something that we're gonna continue. There is a there's an action here to evidence-based public health communications in the plan that's called out.

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Because you recognize it's become more and more complex to do those things in the setting of social media in the settings of Miss information and disinformation in in in the country and in around the world frankly so one of the things I think what we'll, be looking to do more of is in addition

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To leveraging, with more fidelity, social, media, and public media is to meet people where they are, whether you're in a forced community in Liberia, and you're worried or you're here in a rural part of the United States, or an urban center there is a group of

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Trusted messengers that are in a community. They may be church leaders.

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They may be the teachers. They may be community organizers.

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They may be community health workers that are already. They may be barbers.

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In in the case of Covid we know that we've set a equity summit.

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Yesterday here at the White House, and wonderful program in Maryland that was scaled during the Covid response.

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You may remember that basically trained and certified barbers to help communicate.

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Why vaccinations for Covid were critical, and then actually help deliver shots in barber shops and that was scaled with the National Association.

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With NATO and and and the Covid Response team here across several parts of the country central message is enlist to engage to employ those who may be the most

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Martialized that may have the least access that may even be skeptical about public health interventions as part of the response and I've seen that kind of community-based response making people part of the public health team really be effective in many places it's not a panacea.

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But it's something that we can certainly do more of them that will make a difference

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But any other things that you can share about what the Administration is doing on public information, misinformation great.

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Let me turn to to the the efforts underway.

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Now strategy talks about them, and they're all, and I think, in train around changes to dual use science governance around the the policy that the administration's working on related to potential pandemic pathogens other dual use concerns any any thoughts about that on strategy and implementation plan around that

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Absolutely. The strategy is pretty clear. Here directs the nse and the the National Security Council, and the Office of signs and technology. Policy.

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Here the executive office of the President, our our sister game here to coordinate an interagency review of us.

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Policy of us guidance and practices to improve labs, biosafety, and bio security, and and also strengthen responsible conduct for biological research, and give you a couple of points here to help flesh that out a bit as part of this effort we're reevaluating current policies

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Which are focused on dual use research of concerns to identify and address any gaps in what policies cover, and how they're implemented to more effectively reduce the risks of life sciences research while ensuring of course that scientific advancement.

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And the benefit that comes from life, sciences. Research are maintained to inform that review our colleagues at office of science and technology policy is and our colleagues at the Department of health and human services have charged the us national science, Advisory Board for Bio Security the Federal Advisory

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Committee to provide recommendations for how the Us. Government could strengthen policy governing dual use life sciences. Research.

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We're waiting that boards final recommendations, and we're also concurrently reviewing and revising our existing guidance on DNA synthesis, Tom a DNA synthesis screening I should say to address existing gas at have developed a synthetic biology

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That has advanced over the last several years. I was myself in the lab, working on some of these types of research more than 2 decades ago, and there's just so much that has changed as many of us know so it's important to promote best practices we believe among DNA synthesis

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Providers from the types of sequences that are to be screened, as well as how to address any concerns with the end.

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Users of those DNA sequences. And so currently the guidance is voluntary, and I think we'd welcome discussions with our Congressional colleagues on how to strengthen and incentivize these DNA synthesis DNA synthesis screening practices to ensure they're implemented

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across industry, I think I'll just say one last point on on research oversight.

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There's a number of efforts to strengthen research oversight, Tom, as you know in the Us.

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That are underway. The Us. Government is also working to promote the advancement of bio safety and bio security practices and innovation as underlined really outlined within the national bi defense strategy with the goal of trying to get a sense of how we can have evidence based methods to modernize

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Those biosafety practices and ensure we're keeping pace with the advanced biotechnology that's expanding within the biomanufacturing sector and in fact the President in his bio economy executive order highlighted that as a set of actions that need to be taken

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Thanks, for thanks for reviewing all of what's going on on that a couple of questions about I think the common theme is around public health infrastructure.

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And how do we build that out in the years ahead, based on what we've learned around Covid, Monkey, Pox!

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What kind of things are going to be happening to try and strengthen local public health, state, public health, infrastructure.

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Yeah. Well, under 3.1 in the plan, the just domestic health capacity.

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They're they're 2 things to perhaps mention. One is at the operational level.

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There's we want to make a commitment to both large population centers as well as rural, and from tier jurisdictions to help ensure that their operational readiness and preparedness for responding to an epidemic a pandemic and another a biological incident

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Is as strong as possible, so enhancing that support Cdc is playing the lead on that effort, and that action is critical.

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That's the the stuff. The operational pieces ensuring.

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You have the right support for data systems and additional support in terms of funding as well as the policy, support, and technical support that's needed.

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The other area is the people to do the job. We know how under supported our State local health Department colleagues are for years and years I worked in the Alaska.

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State Native Health service over about 20 years ago, and saw there that even prior to our recent epidemics, there was a need for more public health nurses.

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The need for more veterinarians. The need for more state and local epidemiologists, the need for, as they have in the state of Alaska community health workers that are better trained equipped and supported so there is a commitment here to work with all 50 states to strengthen

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The critical essential health workforce. Some of those will be seeing what works and trying to scale that some of it will be working with our state and local partners to develop new approaches.

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And of course again here too, Congress has a key role to play.

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Financing is going to be vital to ensure.

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We have jobs that are created in the health sector and sustained.

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So many jobs have been produced in the local health sector State local through Covid.

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Again. Thanks to the partnership between the Administration Congress on the American rescue plan ensuring that that is kept going, is going to be vital, and that's why we've insured that is Central to our nation's preparedness not only critical in times.

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Of response.

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So let me ask you. We're getting towards the end here, just a question about you.

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The office that you direct a number of bills I've been providing that would create some form of New White House office related to pandemics or one health, and obviously there is a lot already happening in the Nsc.

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Related to response efforts led by your team, and as well as there are things going on in Ostp.

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Can you tell us about how your office is organized? Its mission and work just real?

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Sure.

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Briefly, just so. People are familiar with that

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Yeah, well, I and I don't want to get in any specific way in on any specific proposals in in this venue from the hill.

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Yeah.

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But let me let me exactly. Just explain a little bit about what our office does.

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First of all the office was stood up during the Obama administration under my predecessor, Dr.

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Beth Cameron, who, many of you will know it was consolidated during the Trump administration, and then revitalized on the first day of the current administration, under President Biden's administration, through Executive order 22 8 7 which again with the help of Dr.

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Cameron essentially became the White House's office for pandemic preparedness.

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It's called the Global Health Security and Bio Defense Directorate in the National Security Council, but its function is pandemic preparedness and coordinating the Federal Bio Defense enterprise and support of our National security advisor as well as our homeland security at and and the President and so

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Instrumental to the you know our our office, for instance, helped coordinate the 20 Federal agencies, led the coordination of the 20 Federal agencies to develop the plan.

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The strategy and to support the President undeveloping this Nsm.

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15 that is there to help organize, govern, and implement it so.

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So you know the reason. I think the office has been effective.

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Is because we're able to rely on the mechanisms and tools that are uniquely positioned within the National Security Council that includes the ability to have work closely with intelligence community on assessing deliberate or threats or what the threat may have come from the attribution whether

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It's naturally occurring, accidental or deliberate.

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It helps us work with our foreign internationally focused agencies and departments.

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As we are right now in the case of the Ebola outbreak in Uganda, the support that Ugandan Government, but it also helps us work in an integrated fashion with our domestic facing agencies like health and human services which is also doing tremendous

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work, to ensure. We are standing up. Domestic preparedness to prevent and prepare for any cases of Ebola.

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Here. Right? These are transnational challenges as our national security advisor and president have put forward as its documented in the National Security Strategy.

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It is a national security concern, and that's why it's it's at the National Security Council, because we're able to convene over 75 years of experience at the Nsc of Convening senior agency officials from across the Federal government to tackle overarching

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Priorities, set goals resolve, interagency, conflict, and make sure again, each is playing to their full value.

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Proposition. That's exactly the kind of thing you need when you're playing defense and offense against pandemics and other biological threats.

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So I think that is a very good note to end on that kind of summary of of the work going on in your office, and the Nsa.

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And we're gonna have to leave it there because we're at the end of our time, and I just wanna say Thank you so much to you, Raj.

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And your team really appreciate you joining us for this hour, and we all wish you and the team the very best as you work through the strategy and bring it in action and I also want to thank all of you who joined us for this hour anything you want to see anything else rush sorry to cut you off

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No, I just wanna say, thank you. Just you know this is a whole of government plan, but it's also a whole of society effort and so I hope we'll continue to hear from many of you not only colleagues on the Hill, but others that are outside of government who feel like they have a role to

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play and trying to help end the pandemic threat as we know it.

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So we in the bylaw threat so look forward to hearing from you, and and working with you to help turn this strategy into action

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Well, I have no doubt you will continue to hear from many.

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There were many questions we could not get to, so a lot of energy around the work that you're doing, and a lot of ideas, an important good questions.

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And so I want to thank all of you who participated, who are in the audience who are sending in questions thank you for joining us and for listening to this dialogue, and the capital L.

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Steering committee will return in February, for our next session, and we hope to see all of you.

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Then we hope you all