

Defense lawyers accuse Democrats of hatred for Trump

By ERIC TUCKER, LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press



Senate Television
Bruce Castor, an attorney for former President Donald Trump, speaks during the impeachment trial at the U.S. Capitol on Friday.

WASHINGTON — Lawyers for former President Donald Trump defended him against impeachment Friday by accusing Democrats of waging a campaign of “hatred” against the former president and manipulating his words in the lead-up to the deadly siege of the U.S. Capitol.

Their presentation included a blizzard of their own selectively edited fiery comments from Democrats.

The Trump legal team characterized the impeachment case as a politically motivated “witch hunt” — an outgrowth, they said, of years of efforts to drive him from office — and they sought to reduce the case to Trump’s use of a single word, “fight,” in a speech preceding the Jan. 6 riot. They played dozens of clips showing Democrats, some of them senators now serving as jurors, using the same word to energize supporters in speeches railing against Trump.

“You didn’t do anything wrong” in using the word, Trump attorney David Schoen told the senators. “But, please, stop the hypocrisy.”

The Trump defense team left out that what Trump was doing in telling his supporters to “fight like hell” was to undermine a national election after every state had verified its results, after the Electoral College had affirmed them and after nearly every election lawsuit filed by Trump and his allies had been rejected in court. Instead, they contended, he was telling the crowd to support primary challenges against his adversaries and to press for sweeping election reform — something he was entitled to do.

The case is speeding

toward a conclusion and near-certain acquittal, perhaps as soon as Saturday, with Trump’s lawyers making an abbreviated presentation that used less than three of their allotted 16 hours. The defense arguments and the quick pivot to the Democrats’ own words deflected from the central question of the trial — whether Trump incited the assault on the Capitol — and instead aimed to place impeachment managers and Trump adversaries on the defensive.

After a two-day effort by Democrats to sync up Trump’s words to the violence that followed, including through raw and emotive video footage, defense lawyers suggested that Democrats have typically engaged in the same overheated rhetoric as Trump.

But in trying to draw that equivalency, the defenders minimized Trump’s monthslong efforts to undermine the election results and his urging of followers to do the same. Democrats say that long campaign, rooted in a “big lie,” laid the groundwork for the mob that assembled outside the Capitol and stormed inside. Five people died.

Without Trump, who in a speech at a rally preceding

the violence told supporters to “fight like hell,” the violence would never have happened, Democrats say.

“And so they came, draped in Trump’s flag, and used our flag, the American flag, to batter and to bludgeon,” U.S. Rep. Madeleine Dean, one of the impeachment managers and a Pennsylvania Democrat, said Thursday as she choked back emotion.

On Friday, as defense lawyers repeated their own videos over and over, some Democrats chuckled and whispered among themselves as almost all of their faces flashed on the screen. Some passed notes. U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, threw up his hands, apparently amused, when his face appeared. U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat, rolled her eyes. Most Republicans watched intently.

During a break, some joked about the videos and others said they were a distraction or a “false equivalence” with Trump’s behavior.

“Well we heard the word ‘fight’ a lot,” said U.S. Sen. Angus King, a Maine independent who caucuses with the Democrats.

US to secure 600M vaccine doses by July, Biden says

By ZEKE MILLER and JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

BETHESDA, Md. — President Joe Biden said Thursday that the U.S. will have enough supply of the COVID-19 vaccine by the end of the summer to inoculate 300 million Americans.

Biden made the announcement at the sprawling National Institutes of Health complex just outside Washington, D.C., as he visited some of the nation’s leading scientists on the frontlines of the fight against the disease. He toured the Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory that created the COVID-19 vaccine now manufactured by Moderna and being rolled out in the U.S. and other countries.

The U.S. is on pace to exceed Biden’s goal of administering 100 million vaccine doses in his first 100 days in office, with more than 26 million shots delivered in his first three weeks.

“That’s just the floor,” Biden said. “Our end goal is beating COVID-19.”

Biden announced on Thursday that the U.S. had secured contractual commitments from Moderna and Pfizer to deliver the 600 million doses of vaccine by the end of July — more than a month earlier than initially anticipated.

“We’re now on track to have enough supply for 300 million Americans by the end of July,” he announced.

The pace of injections could increase further if a third coronavirus vaccine from drugmaker Johnson & Johnson receives approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

Speaking with Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious-disease specialist, Biden emphasized that his administration is doing everything possible to increase the vaccine supply and the country’s



Evan Vucci/AP Photo

President Joe Biden speaks during a visit at the National Institutes of Health on Thursday.

capacity to deliver injections into arms.

“It’s been a hell of a learning process,” Biden said.

Fauci predicts by April it will be “open season” for vaccinations in the U.S., as supply boosts will allow most people to get shots for the virus.

Speaking to NBC’s “Today Show” on Thursday, Fauci said the rate of vaccinations will greatly accelerate in the coming months. He credits forthcoming deliveries of the two approved vaccines, the potential approval of a third and moves taken by the Biden administration to increase the nation’s capacity to deliver doses.

Biden, wearing a mask, used his remarks to criticize former President Donald Trump, saying he inherited “no plan to vaccinate most of the country.”

“It is no secret that the vaccination program was in much worse shape than my team and I anticipated,” he said.

To date, the Biden administration has deployed active-duty troops to help stand up mass vaccination sites in sev-

eral states, as it looks to lay the groundwork for increasing the rate of vaccinations once more supply is available.

The Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory is led by Dr. Barney Graham, whose team made critical discoveries years ago that laid the groundwork for rapid development of that and other COVID-19 vaccines. Before the pandemic erupted, one of Graham’s research fellows, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, had been using those earlier findings to develop a vaccine for MERS, a cousin of COVID-19.

On the tour, Biden was shown the lab bench where researchers sequenced the virus and developed the precursor of the Moderna vaccine.

Armed with their prior research, Corbett and Graham had a head start when Chinese scientists shared the genetic map of the new coronavirus last January. They already knew how to make spike proteins, which coat the surface of the new coronavirus and its MERS relative, that were stable enough to be used as a key vaccine ingredient.

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CASA Volunteers are the certainty in uncertain times.

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