

NewsNation's *The Donlon Report*

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LELAND VITTERT: Few figures in America are as polarizing as Dr. Anthony Fauci. To one group, a medical hero who stood up to President Trump. To another, a bureaucratic flip-flopper who covered up for the Chinese and thanks to the Freedom of Information Act request from *The Washington Post*, we now have 3,000 of his e-mails from the past year. In a wide ranging interview earlier, we talked about what he knew and when he knew it. Joining us now, Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical advisor to President Biden among many other titles. Nice to see you, sir. We appreciate it. It's always a little disconcerting for the world to read your e-mails — 3,000 of them — over the past 24 hours or so. As you look back, I won't ask you are there any regrets because that — that's too easy of a question. Are there any you wish you would have sent or things you wish you would have said over the past year that you didn't?

DR. ANTHONY FAUCI: No, not necessarily. The only trouble is they are really ripe to be taken out of context where someone can snip out a sentence in an e-mail without showing the other e-mails and say, based on an e-mail from Dr. Fauci, he said such and such where you don't really have the full context in which he said it.

VITTERT: So — maybe — a couple of these that are going around the internet. Maybe you could provide that context for us. This, from you about masks: “The typical mask you buy at the drugstore is not really effective in keeping out the virus, which is small enough to pass through the material.” Conceivably, even cloth masks are — allow even more things through. Were you incorrect then? I'm trying to understand the evolution of that.

FAUCI: Well, I had let me explain and it's really — it's really important because it is a complicated issue. At the time that we were saying it wasn't necessary to be wearing a mask, there were three things that were going on. One of them was there was a consideration that it was a shortage personal protective equipment —

VITTERT: Mmhmm.

FAUCI: — particularly among people who actually need the masks, those who are taking care of patients in the hospital. So we didn't want to have people running to the stores and getting N 95 or even any other mask. There wasn't any indication, so I should probably have been more explicit — your right — and said there are a number of aspects to it, including the poor fitting. So if you want me to say if I had to do that email over again, I would have written a lot more sentences in there.

VITTERT: There's recent reports now that there's both a book deal and a movie deal involving you. A biography, biopic on Disney and then a book deal. Are you getting any compensation for those?

FAUCI: Zero. Not a single penny.

VITTERT: Interesting. Okay.

[INAUDIBLE FAUCI]

VITTERT: Then again was — you answered the question. There's there's not a penny. You're not getting a penny.

FAUCI: Not a single penny.

VITTERT: Fair. Fair enough. And then I want to get you to expand on this and obviously when you're before congress, congressman and senators loved — love to talk often times and run out the clock and don't give you a chance to answer. This was your exchange with Senator Kennedy a couple of days ago. Take a listen.

SENATOR JOHN KENNEDY (R-LA): You gave the money and you said don't do gain-of-function research?

FAUCI: Correct.

KENNEDY: And they said we won't?

FAUCI: Correct.

KENNEDY: And you have no way of knowing whether they did or not except you trust them. Is that right?

FAUCI: Well, we generally always trust the grantee to do what they say. And you look at the result —

KENNEDY: Have you ever had a grantee lie to you?

FAUCI: — I cannot guarantee that a grantee has lied to us because you never know.

VITTERT: Other than taking the Chinese word for it, do we have any idea on what's going on inside the Wuhan lab or what went on inside the Wuhan lab?

FAUCI: Well, again, let's put things in context. The scientists in the Wuhan lab, for years and years, among other credible trusted scientists in China, we're not talking about the Communist Chinese Party. We're not talking about the Chinese military. We're talking about scientists that we've had relationships for years. What it was is that it was a grand that went to EchoHealth, which is —

VITTERT: No, I understand that all that, but — but — what I —

FAUCI: — but you — you —

VITTERT: — you just said something. Hold on. Hold on. You just said something very important here when you said it's not the Chinese military. It's not the Chinese party. This is an interesting quote from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dunford: "It's a distinction without a difference between the Chinese Communist Party, the government, and the Chinese military." Is that something that we just never occurred — that never occurred to anybody who was giving money to Chinese researchers who said they were civilian and we've got the chairman here saying there's no distinction?

FAUCI: But did the chairman say there's no distinction between the — the scientists and the military? I don't think the chairman said that. If you could read that again.

VITTERT: "Dunford said Thursday that the Chinese typically require companies doing business in China" — that not even talking about scientists.

FAUCI: Right, yeah.

VITTERT: Where it's talking about businesses, which is lower than even Chinese government scientists, to have members of the ruling Communist Party in that company, a requirement that will allow the Chinese military access to the company's intellectual property. It's a distinction without a difference between the Chinese Communist Party, the government and the Chinese military." And I guess from hearing from you is we should just trust the Chinese when they say—

FAUCI: No.

VITTERT: — oh, the military has nothing to do with this. We should believe them.

FAUCI: No. What I'm — what I'm saying is that we have very many years of experience of productive interaction with Chinese scientists. For example, Dr. George Gal who's the director of the Chinese CDC, has been a colleague for many years. He's a member of the United States national academy of sciences. Number one, number two, the science is there and others that we dealt with — with the original SARS, with the influenza virtually every year. The scientists are experienced with them.

VITTERT: Look, but Doctor, I'm not — I'm not disputing that you had great work with them. But what I'm trying to get at is that all of the comments that were made about what happened inside that lab are based essentially on taking the Chinese word for. No matter how good your experiences were over years or decades, it seems pretty clear that the Chinese lied about a number of things related to the coronavirus.

FAUCI: Right. Right.

VITTERT: We can all agree about that and I'm wondering now, how can the American people be

assured, as we — as we look at this that — for example, the money that went to the Wuhan lab didn't end up —

FAUCI: Okay.

VITTERT: — being used by the Chinese military. It seems as though you can't say that for certain.

FAUCI: Well, can we again, with due respect, put things into perspective. The — the Wuhan lab is a very large lab to the tune of hundreds of millions if not billions dollars.

VITTERT: Right.

FAUCI: Take that. The grant that we're talking about was \$600,000 over five years for an average of about 125,000 to \$140,000 a year. So now you're making an extrapolation that we sent in —

VITTERT: No, sir. I'm not — I'm not making any extrapolation.

FAUCI: — no, but you're —

VITTERT: No, sir. No, sir. I'm not making any extrapolation. I'm simply saying the fact of the matter is that so much of what was — we were told as Americans about what we knew —

FAUCI: Right.

VITTERT: — from Chinese was based simply on taking their word, right?

FAUCI: Right.

VITTERT: Right? That's fair? Okay. And — and based on that, we really have no idea who the scientists were in the labs.

FAUCI: Well, well —

VITTERT: Some of the names that you tossed out who I'm sure that we've done wonderful research could very easily have — shall we say —

FAUCI: — but —

VITTERT: — cross — dual purposes. Dual roles and obligations both to the Chinese military and of the civilian CDC —

FAUCI: Right.

VITTERT: — as General Dunford thought.

FAUCI: Now you're absolutely correct that I can't guarantee everything that's going on in the Wuhan lab. We can't do that. But it is our obligation as scientists and public health individuals to study the animal-human interface because we had very difficult experience that we lucked out that we didn't get hurt too badly with the original SARS in 2002 and 2003, which was clearly a jumping of species from a bat to civic cat to human. So it was incumbent upon us to study the animals-human interface and to understand what the potential these viruses have of infecting humans which then might damage the United States, so please let me finish. So you don't want to go to Hoboken, New Jersey or to Fairfax Virginia to be studying the bat-human interface that might lead to an outbreak. So you go China, so —

VITTERT: I — I — I — understand it and I appreciate — I appreciate laying it out in that way. I wanted to get a thought from you about the president's comments today, pulling out all the stops, in his words, to get 70 percent of Americans their first dose by July 4th. At that point, assuming things work in the way they — they are working in the vaccine, is this over by the end of summer?

FAUCI: You know, I don't think it's over in the sense of it's done, finished. But it is very, very much of the giant step towards the normality that we all want so very much because if you get 70 percent of the adult population with at least one dose by the Fourth of July, you will have enough people that will even be fully or partially protected that even though the virus is not going to disappear, it will diminish greatly as a public health threat which means we can get closer to normality. I don't believe we ever will eradicate SARA-CoV-2. I hope we will be able to eliminate it or greatly control it in this country.

VITTERT: Well, and — and we do control lot of things and that — that's the good work you and your folks at the NIH do. Dr. Fauci, we appreciate your time as always. Good to see you, sir. Come back any time.

FAUCI: Thank you very much. Thank you for having me. All the best.