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Don Lemon Tonight

President Biden's Deadline For Removing All U.S. Troops From Afghanistan Just Eight Days Away; FDA Gives Pfizer Vaccine Full Approval; Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) Is Interviewed About The Situation In Afghanistan; Congress To Compel Telecom Companies To Save Phone Records; Pfizer's Full Approval Can Move A Thin Slice Of Unvaccinated Population. Aired 10-11p ET

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[22:00:00]

CHRIS CUOMO, CNN HOST (on camera): Well, we get right. We'll see. Thank you for watching. "DON LEMON TONIGHT" with the big star, D. Lemon now.

DON LEMON, CNN HOST: Got a translator who came over here and help the U.S. military in Afghanistan, came over as a teenager promised to get his family here. He is working on that now. I have some good news, it's not quite the end of the line for them, meaning getting here but I have some good news to share. That translator is going to join us in just a bit.

But also, Chris, what you and I have been talking about, really, what you have been, I have to say probably more than any of us on the network saying you need to get this FDA approval. You need to get this FDA approval. If you get the FDA approval it will help people, you know, want to get the vaccine.

I, you know, I've been saying I don't think it's going to make a difference. Maybe we'll see where people are if they really believe this thing that they're saying about well, as soon as we get FDA approval, we'll get the

vaccine. So, now we have it. What's your excuse now?

CUOMO: Well, they shouldn't have one. Now, look, the only carveout is that they didn't approve it for kids yet, right?

LEMON: Yes.

CUOMO: And that's because they don't have enough time and data and they have to follow the rules, which should be reminded to people when they say hey, I heard that the FDA approval was shortcut. It wasn't shortcut. It wasn't short circuited.

LEMON: I told you that was going to happen, did It? We had a conversation today about --

(CROSSTALK)

CUOMO: But look, stupid is -- stupid is always obvious. What I'm saying is that, you know, the FDA commissioner under Trump was just on and says he doesn't believe that. So, there is your boy saying that he doesn't accept that so then don't listen to it if that's your inclination of kind of political prism.

But my point is this. This country is divided. It is the vaccinated and unvaccinated. The vaccinated are growing majority. They are Republican, Democrat, left, right, all the things that nobody really calls themselves in real life but the media and the political insiders use. That's who needs to be spoken to by leaders.

We don't have to sit around worrying about offending the unvaccinated. That's how we made ourselves sick. Not how we'll make ourselves better.

LEMON: People forgetting injecting drugs for animals and horse --

(CROSSTALK)

CUOMO: And people telling them to.

LEMON: My God.

CUOMO: What person -- you know, you talk about cancel culture and who to shame. Ivermectin, a dewormer,

really?

LEMON: They are shaming themselves. No one has to shame them. They are shaming themselves by doing that.

CUOMO: No, they to be shamed.

LEMON: Yes.

CUOMO: They need to be called out and shamed, brother. But I look forward to you making your witness.

LEMON: I'll see you in a bit. I love you.

CUOMO: I love you, D. Lemon.

LEMON: And I'm going to get to it.

This is DON LEMON TONIGHT.

So, we have lot going on. We have new developments on multiple big stories to tell about, a lot, especially for a Monday night. All right? And we're going to catch you up on all of it.

So here is the deal. Time is running out in Afghanistan. And the world really is watching this. The president, President Biden's deadline for removing all U.S. Troops from the country just eight days away, just eight days away.

So last week he said that he would stay until every American who wants to be out is out. All right? Now military advisors say he's got to make up his mind whether to stay or go by tomorrow in order to have enough time to withdraw the troops and equipment currently on the ground in Kabul. That's a lot.

Some are advising the president against staying longer in Afghanistan. Here is what they site. They site potential terror threats on the ground but in a sign of progress, there is progress, OK? The pace of evacuations ramping up.

White House officials say some 10,900 people have been evacuated over a 12-hour stretch and that's just today.

More people over the course of the last week or so. They were able to get out on board 15 U.S. C- 17s and 34 collision flights. That is the U.S. military is setting up alternate routes to the airport because of the threat that ISIS could target the crowds. Listen to this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We're working hard and as fast as we can to get people out. That's our mission. That's our goal. And our determination to get every American citizen home and to evacuate our Afghan allies is unwavering.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): And as the frantic race to evacuate thousands of people continues, Afghan allies who have applied for Special Immigrant Visas being told to stay away from the airport today especially, essentially pushed to the end of the line. That's what we're told. After American citizens, they go behind American citizens and legal permanent residents.

A source telling CNN the airport is becoming like the wild west with special forces both Afghan and American trying to help their Afghan former colleagues.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JAKE SULLIVAN, U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER: We will continue to get Afghans at risk out of the country even after U.S. military forces have left.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): So, we have that. That's enough for an entire day here. Two hours especially on this show but there is also big news on COVID tonight. The FDA giving full approval to the Pfizer vaccine for people who are 16 and older. Sixteen and older.

[22:05:06]

The first vaccine to move beyond emergency use status in this country. Dr. Anthony Fauci spoke to Anderson just a little bit ago and says if we get people vaccinated, we could be back to some version of normal by next

spring.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANTHONY FAUCI, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ALLERGY AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES:

We hope we'll be there at the time frame that I mentioned correctly being the spring of 2022, but there is no guarantee because it's up to us. If we keep lingering without getting those people vaccinated that should be vaccinated, this thing could linger on leading to the development of another variant, which could complicate things. So, it's within our power to get this under control.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): So, there is no excuse. No excuse. That excuse that you hear from some people who said that they didn't want to get the vaccine or get vaccinated until the shot got full approval. Well? Today is the day. The Pfizer vaccine is fully approved.

Now we'll find out how many people were actually waiting for the full FDA approval and we may see a lot more employers requiring their workers to get vaccinated. A requirement. We may see more restaurants, more theaters, other venues requiring it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BIDEN: If you're a business leader, a non-profit leader, state and local leader who has been waiting for full FDA approval to require vaccinations, I call on you now to do that, require it. Do what I did last month. Require your employees to get vaccinated or face strict requirements.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): Require it. Require it. Maybe it wouldn't have to be a requirement, right, if more people had done it in the first place and then the virus wouldn't mutate and you wouldn't have a variant. So, anyways. The White House indicating there could be more vaccine mandates coming for federal workers.

That as the president urged parents to make sure that their kids who are too young to be vaccinated, make sure they wear masks.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BEGIN: Make sure your child is masked when they leave home. That's how we can best keep our kids safe.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): And yes, that means at schools, even in states like Florida and Texas where governors are putting politics ahead of students' health and safety by trying to ban mask mandates. Masks. Vaccines. Those are the best weapons we have against a virus that is killing more than 1,000 Americans every single day.

Yet, there are people who don't trust the vaccines. But they're willing to try any wacky, fake cure they read about online or they see in right wing media. At least two people in Mississippi have been hospitalized after taking an anti-parasitic drug meant for livestock.

The FDA tweeting you're not a horse. You're not a cow. Seriously, you all, stop it. You're not a horse. You're not a cow. Seriously, you all, stop it.

So, let me get this straight. Think about this, OK? You won't get vaccinated. You won't wear a mask. You said you're worried about the FDA approval. You don't know what's in the vaccine but you'll take a drug meant for deworming livestock? Really? You'll trust your health and your life to rumors and misinformation? Just the latest in the hall of shame of COVID misinformation.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I said supposing you bright the light inside the body, which you can do either through the skin or in some other way, and I think you said you're going to test that, too. Sounds interesting.

UNKNOWN: We'll get the right folks who could.

TRUMP: Right. And then I see the disinfecting where it knocks it out in a minute. One minute. And is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning because you see it gets in the lungs.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): The former COVID misinformation in chief right there. But even he can't control the misinformation anymore because this weekend he told a crowd of supporters in Alabama to get vaccinated and guess what? He got booed for it. That shows you just how out of control this whole thing has gotten.

The former guy tells people he's been vaccinated, something we only learned months after the fact and people boo? After feeding the misinformation monster for years, he can't control it now.

[22:09:54]

And there is news tonight on the investigation of one of the darkest days in American history. I'm talking about January 6th. That's when blood thirsty rioters, Trump supporting rioters tried to over throw our free and fair election. Hunting lawmakers forced to run for their lives and beating police trying to defend the seat of our democracy.

Sources telling CNN the House select committee investigating January 6th plans to ask companies to preserve the phone records of multiple people including some members of Congress. We don't know which members' records the committee is interested in but the question of who spoke to the president that day sure does seem to be a source bought for some Republicans.

Jim Jordan telling CNN hey hasn't been contacted by the committee to preserve his records but he would compile saying quote, "I've got nothing to hide." But I want you to just remember this from last month. The congressman stammering, stuttering I'm going to -- I'm going to -- I'm going to trying to make not to make eye contact when he is asked what should be a pretty simple question here, did you speak with then president on January 6th? (BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNKNOWN: Did you speak with President Trump on January 6th?

REP. JIM JORDAN (R-OH): Yes, I mean, I speak -- I spoke with the president last week. I speak with the president all the time. I spoke with him on January 6th. I mean, I talk with President Trump all the time. And that's -- that's I don't think that's unusual.

I would expect members of Congress to talk with the president of the United States when they're trying to get done, the things they told their voters in their district to do. I'm actually kind of amazed sometimes people keep asking this question. of course, I talk to the president all the time. I talked to him, like I said, I talk with him last week.

UNKNOWN: On January 6th, did you speak with him before, during or after the capitol was attacked?

JORDAN: I'd have to go -- I spoke with him that day after, I think after. I don't know if I spoke with him in the morning or not. I just don't know. I'd have to go back -- I mean, I don't -- I don't know that -- when those conversations happened but what I know is I spoke with him all the time.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LEMON (on camera): Did you eat the blueberry muffin, son? I don't know. Then why are there blueberries all over your face? I don't know. Really. So, you spoke with him on January 6th. You think that maybe after, right? But you'd have to go back but you don't know when the conversations happened but all you know is that you speak with him all the time. Great.

Do you really expect us to believe you don't remember when you spoke to the president of the United States on the day the capitol was attacked by rioters chanting hang Mike Pence? Really? OK. You all believe that?

By the way, look, there is the gallows hanging. I've said it before. The lies and the misinformation killing us, killing our democracy. The lies and information about COVID and the big lie that fueled the attack on the United States Capitol.

So, just how wide ranging will the committee's investigation of the January 6th insurrection be? Whose phone records will the select committee want to see? Congressman Adam Schiff on the committee. He also attended a briefing just today on Afghanistan. He's going to discuss that. We're going to discuss that with him and a lot more to come.

[22:15:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

LEMON (on camera): I'm so glad to have my next guest here because he's going to give us the information that we need. CNN is learning that President Biden is still weighing whether to extend the August 31st deadline for removing all U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

This as top intelligence officials briefed lawmakers on the House intelligence committee about the crisis

unfolding in Afghanistan. And the as the House select committee is investigating January 6th, the plans to ask companies to preserve the phone records of multiple people including some members of Congress.

So, let's get to it with Democratic Congressman and chair of the House intel committee, Adam Schiff.
Congressman, thank you so much. I appreciate you joining us. Good evening.

A lot to get to on Afghanistan. But I want to start with this select committee investigating January 6th. You're on that committee. Congressman Benny Thompson, the committee's chair confirming to CNN that he wants telecom companies to preserve phone records of several people including members of Congress. We know that Kevin McCarthy, Jim Jordan spoke with Trump on January 6th. Whose records do you want to see?

REP. ADAM SCHIFF (D-CA): Well, I'm going to leave it as you might imagine to the chairman to make those disclosures public or in a formal announcement. but I can tell you this. We intend to be very thorough. We want to know exactly what took place before January 6th that led to that tragic day and the violence of that day.

Anyone who is involved, anyone who had foreknowledge who would be assembling on that mall or the violence that was to come, anyone that funded it. What the White House was doing, people in the administration, what they were aware of and when, why we weren't reinforced in the capitol, why it took so many hours to send the National Guard.

So, we want answers to all these questions and we're not afraid to ask them of anyone and that includes members of Congress, former members of the administration, current people that are serving within the administration, anyone who has relevant information.

LEMON: Yes. Listen, your answer may be similar but I have to ask it anyways, letters are also going out, going to be sent to social media companies. Are you able to say which ones and how expansive do you see this investigation be coming?

SCHIFF: I really can't. But, you know, I can say that this follows a very traditional investigative path where you want to get the documents first before you bring in witnesses so you know the right questions to ask. And we are working in a very bipartisan, indeed non- partisan way and we brought on some, I think very capable investigative staff.

[22:20:01]

So, we're getting well situated to get this important work done and it's going to be one of the most important investigations, I think Congress has ever undertaken. LEMON: I appreciate you talking about that. Let's talk to -- let's

turn now to Afghanistan, shall we? When you take into account what you heard at the intel briefing today along with the images coming out of Kabul, volatile security situation on the ground there. The American citizens and Afghan allies who are still there and still need to be evacuated, give me your real assessment of this situation, Congressman?

SCHIFF: Well, you know, it's pretty dire. There are thousands and thousands of people that need to be evacuated. Americans first and foremost and U.S. residents, but also people that we have a moral and ethical obligation too. Those who fought beside us, those who help us to gather intelligence to save American lives, and as well as civil society figures that we were working with to try to establish a government that would protect all of its citizens including the rights of women and girls.

And so, that's a big group of people. And I'm encouraged that, you know, we have really ramped efforts up in the last 24 to 48 hours with 11,000 people evacuated in a single day. That's pretty -- that's pretty extraordinary number but there are so many more yet to evacuate that we've got a lot of hard work ahead of us under dangerous circumstances.

LEMON: Listen, you're there. You know. You got the intel briefings. You know more than we do and that's certainly some things you can't reveal. But let's put up those images at the Kabul airport. You have -- you've been concerned about the threat at that airport. We have seen plenty of videos showing crowds of people desperate to get in. Do you think the U.S. needs to do more to beef up security or do you think that right now they're doing what's needed to be done? How do you feel about it?

SCHIFF: Well, I guess I would say there can never be enough security at that airport. It's such a chaotic situation and when you mass that number of people. People can get hurt just being in a crowd that size but it also makes a very attractive target for our enemies, for ISIS core zone, for example, like nothing better than to attack, set off a suicide bomb in that crowd or take out one of those aircraft with a man pad.

That would be obviously catastrophic and they would love to see that kind of catastrophe. So, it's a very difficult dangerous situation. And you know, look, we got the best trained military in the world but this is a first class, first order safety logistics nightmare and we're going to have to use all the skills we have.

LEMON: Yes, as you say those words as we say in our home, God forbid, let's hope that doesn't happen what you said but yes, it's a very real possibility. I understand that.

So, you also say -- you say that we should have a military presence in Afghanistan as long as it takes to get to U.S. citizens and allies and our Afghan allies. But the Taliban say any delay to this August 31st deadline, they say it a red line. Are you worried an extension could put even more lives in jeopardy here? SCHIFF: Well, I'm certainly concerned about any effort by the Taliban

to go after people after the end of the month. But I'm -- look, I'm very mindful of the fact that there are still many tens of thousands of people that we need to get out and getting people to that airport is very difficult. And the end of the month will be on us before we know it.

And I think that we need to maintain our military presence long enough to get everyone out, certainly our own people out but also those we have that moral obligation to help evacuate.

So, I mean, look, I support the withdrawal of our U.S. forces out of Afghanistan. I think the president made the right decision. We could be there another five, 10, or 15 years and still be in the same situation in terms of the Taliban takeover. But we shouldn't leave until we get all of our people out and those that we have an obligation to help get to safety.

LEMON: Yes. CNN is reporting that the U.S. is scrambling to fill an intelligence vacuum in the aftermath of Afghanistan's collapse. Are you worried that all of this instability could embolden extremist groups again, as you said, to carry out an attack you mentioned at the airport but carry out on attack at home or abroad, Congressman?

SCHIFF: Well, look, when you draw down your military footprint somewhere, you lose eyes on some of the dangers that exist, but I think we have to acknowledge that right now the danger in the country is greater outside of Afghanistan in terms of terrorist attack that may be organized against the homeland.

[22:24:57]

So, there are other parts of the world where Al Qaeda has a bigger presence where ISIS has a bigger presence. But over time, that could change in Afghanistan. We're going to have to try to keep a close watch to make sure that Al Qaeda doesn't reconstitute itself there and that we take action against ISIS K and make sure that it doesn't pose a growing threat to us.

That's more difficult to do when you don't have those troops still on the ground but of course, when we did have the troops on the ground, they were targets and we were risking American lives in that fashion, too. So not a bright line here but I think the draw down is the right decision, and we're just going to have to really strengthen our intelligence gathering capability from other places.

LEMON: Yes. Look, we appreciate having our leaders on to speak directly to the American people but specially with someone in a position like you and then the committees that you're on giving our viewers the knowledge that they need this evening.

Thank you so much. Please come back. We appreciate it.

SCHIFF: Thanks. We'll do.

LEMON: Thank you. With just about a week left until the president's deadline to get out

is the White House getting a better handle on the crisis in Afghanistan? We'll talk about that. That's next.

[22:30:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

LEMON (on camera): So, we're told that President Biden is still deciding whether to extend the August 31st deadline for removing all U.S. Troops from Afghanistan. Pentagon officials say that they need to know by tomorrow in order to have enough time to get all troops and equipment out of Kabul airport by the 31st, which is next Tuesday.

So, let's bring in CNN political commentator Charlie Dent and former Republican Congressman -- he is a former Republican congressman, and also Jim Messina, the former Obama campaign manager.

Gentlemen, good evening. So good to have you on.

Jim, let's start with you, because we got these two big stories, really, huge news here. The full FDA approval of Pfizer, something the White House hopes will get more shots in arms. We're also at a critical point with what is going on in Afghanistan and people getting out. So, give us a sense of what's on the line for President Biden

this week, will you?

JIM MESSINA, FORMER OBAMA CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Well, look, right now he's, you know, trying to talk about getting everyone vaccinated and making sure we get to those numbers. Obviously, the Pfizer thing is a very big deal, at the same time you are having very good economic news. This is going to be an August in which we were going to, you know, kind of sore as a message and he was going to spend a lot of time talking about the economy and the vaccination efforts.

And instead, we're talking about Afghanistan 24/7. And so, you know, when you work in the White House as you know I was the White House deputy chief of staff, you realize that every day something goes wrong, it only gets to the White House if no one else can fix it. And so, right now, they are attempting to surf over this sea of bad news and try to stay focused on the broader picture of getting needles in arms and making sure the economy continues to build back better.

LEMON: Charlie, listen. We have spoken about this. I know you felt that President Biden's decision in Afghanistan that it was reckless. I hope I'm not putting words in your mouth. But we're now learning that he is still deciding whether to extend the August 31st deadline for removing the U.S. troops. Some of his advisors are against staying longer because of security on the ground. Do you expect troops will have to stay past his deadline to get everyone out?

CHARLIE DENT, CNN POLITICAL COMMENTATOR: Absolutely. I mean, look, we can get out by August 31st but I suspect we'll be leaving a lot of people behind. I couldn't tell you how many American citizens would be left behind but we'll be certainly leaving a lot of our Afghan allies behind if we abide by this arbitrary date. I understand the seriousness of the circumstance on the ground. But

for the life of me, Don, I cannot understand why we have been in the Bagram Air Base in the middle of the night in July, would have been an ideal place I would think to evacuate, you know, thousands of our citizens and allies.

I mean, there are so many decisions. It's just so disturbing to watch this. This is a strategic humanitarian and diplomatic disaster that's unfolding. There will be long term consequences. You know, we can go home but it doesn't mean the war ends. I mean, I'm really fearful that we're going to have another base for these Jihadi terrorists to operate from.

LEMON: Yes. I want to tell people that your family hosted a young Afghan refugee 2011 to 2012 so that she

could finish her senior year in your community. Her name is Sammy. What would you say to Americans concerned about the U.S. taking in Afghan refugees now and to the fearmongers playing out on that concern?

DENT: I would -- I would tell people, we have -- we have an absolute sacred duty and obligation to help so many of these Afghans who helped us. They want the same things we do. They hate the Taliban more than we do. Poor Sammy, her father was executed in front of the family by the Taliban. And forced to flee their country.

They were actually reasonably successful people. They changed everything for them. But there are so many other thousands of people like that who have experienced such terrifying hardship and then when they come to this country, they become Americans and good Americans. And I would tell anyone who is fearful that you have nothing to fear.

These people are going to be just like the Vietnamese and the Koreans and the Cubans and others who came to our country, you know, after experiencing war and hardship. they have nothing to fear.

[22:35:02]

And it's -- I would -- look, we did our part. We didn't do anything heroic. I would just encourage anybody to think about helping a family or a young woman from Afghanistan. Help them. That's the best thing you can do right now. Help these folks get settled in this country. And same goes out to our allies and friends who are going to taking their fair share too, I hope.

LEMON: Jim, listen. You know, numbers go up and down. Stock market goes up and down. Ratings go up and down. Biden's approval rating dipped to 49 percent down from 53 percent in April, that's according to NBC News poll.

So, look, these polls are a snapshot in time. We always say that. But the president is dealing with a pandemic and ending a 20-year war, which is come with severe complications. Is there anything that he could do to boost domestic numbers, domestic achievements?

MESSINA: Well, yes. Go get more things done. You know, this weekend I was with Speaker Pelosi in this big Democratic retreat and it's fair to say that there was mild panic among the Democratic constituents base about the poll numbers and, you know, I know you're not trying to bait me, Don, but you know how I feel about these polls. It drives me batty.

I mean, here is the truth. The president is at his lowest moving average since his presidency. He's also at an average that is higher than any day of Donald Trump's presidency. We are sitting 15 months before the next election. Everyone ought to put the polls as far away from them as they can. Pour them a very nice glass of wine and start drinking it and calm down.

What members of Congress need to do, what Democrats in Congress need to do is do what they are trying to do, which is pass bills, make people's lives better and have something to run on in the next election? And so, I don't think any of these poll numbers mean anything at all and people just need to take a deep breath here and realize it's just about getting things done to make the American people's lives better. Sorry for the rant.

LEMON: A lot of people are like amen to the glass of wine thing or whatever. I don't know if I've ever heard any advice like that from someone like Jim Messina.

OK. So, listen, Charlie. President Biden is urging vaccine holdouts to get their COVID shots now that the FDA has granted full approval of this Pfizer vaccine. Will this get people who have refused to get this vaccine who believe that the misinformation, will you think it is going to encourage them to get it?

DENT: I think some people will get vaccinated as a result of the FDA approval, but I think what really is going to get people vaccinated are consequences, sticks at this point, if you will. When employers tell people you know what? If you want to step foot in this office, you better have a vaccination.

LEMON: Yes.

DENT: If you want to go to the football game, you better have a vaccination. I mean, this is what's going to get people vaccinated. You have to impose consequences on people for their reckless behavior. Some people don't get vaccinated because they're dogmatic, some because they are ignorant --

(CROSSTALK)

LEMON: Charlie, let me -- let me ask you this.

DENT: Yes.

LEMON: I said that and I've heard others say that and people say, come on. This is America. We don't do that here in America. What do you say to that?

DENT: I had to get my kids vaccinated to go to school last I checked. It's been awhile for me. And you know what, we've all gotten vaccination. We put our arms out. And I say to all of them, you know, in this country, you know, we are very privileged in many ways.

The fact that there are people in other countries who many people don't have a lot of education in those countries but they put their arm out in a second to get a shot because they have eyes and they ears and they know they need it to be safe.

And here we are we have in excess supply of vaccines and people won't take them. So, my answer is, get the shots. I mean, the same people are complaining about mask mandates are the same ones who don't want to get vaccinated. Not all of them but many, and I think that's the real sorry thing about this.

I mean, talk about being privileged that, you know, we had this access and so many of our fellow citizens won't get the shots when you look at India, look at sub-Saharan Africa, look at all these places in the world where they just don't have access. Tiny percentages of their populations are vaccinated and here we sit with excess supply.

LEMON: Charlie, Jim, thank you very much. I love having you both on. I'll see you soon. Thank you so much.

MESSINA: OK. Thank you.

LEMON: A lot more on Pfizer's COVID vaccine getting the full authorization. Schools, companies, local governments telling people that they're required to get the shot. More next.

[22:40:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

LEMON (on camera): Some big, big news today in the battle against COVID-19. The FDA granting full approval to Pfizer's vaccine for all people age 16 and older. Children 12 to 15 are able to get it under the emergency use authorization. But with schools reopening children under 12 not eligible to get the vaccine, but that's expected to change over the next few months.

Joining me now is Dr. Peter Hotez, professor and dean of tropical medicine at Baylor College of Medicine.

Doctor, thanks so much for being here this evening.

More than 80 million eligible Americans still haven't vaccinated. One excuse that we have been hearing from people was that hey, we want full FDA approval. Not emergency approval. Well, they got it now. Do you think this is going to move the needle for these folks?

PETER HOTEZ, INFECTIOUS EXPERT, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY: It's going to move the needle but not in ways that we're talking about. So, you know, the anti-vaccine groups, the disinformation campaign coming from the political right and dedicated non-governmental organizations, dedicated anti-vaccine groups identified by the Center for Countering Digital Hate have a list of about a dozen or so talking points all phony baloney. But they are very aggressive and they convince people.

And this is created a huge problem and now people tie their allegiance to not getting vaccinated to the Republican Party, to the GOP.

[22:45:01]

So, this is a game changer. The anti-vaccine movement has been adopted by political extremism on the right and now it's extending. So, these are people who are tying their identity to it. So, I think, you know, this is one of the major talking points. They say it's only released through EUA.

I don't think it's going to have that big an impact because they are going to fall back on the other talking points. The good news, though, is I think it will have a big impact on employer mandates, federal mandates and the U.S. military and that's what's going to move the needle. But how far that's going to take us, I don't know.

You know, 80 million is a big number, Don. And we've got 80 million people who are defying refusing vaccines and how far the mandates will go is unclear, as well. And the numbers are daunting because we have to pretty much have all of the adults and adolescents vaccinated to stop this virus.

LEMON: Yes.

HOTEZ: So, this is going to be the challenge now is closing that 80 million gap.

LEMON: Well, good segue, too. The question that I want to ask now is that Dr. Fauci was on with my colleague Anderson earlier tonight. He says that if most people, eligible people got vaccinated or get

vaccinated, that we could have this under control by 2022. OK? So, we have been at this since march of 2020, I mean, really, what is it going to take?

HOTEZ: Well, actually, I agree with Tony. I agree with Dr. Fauci, that actually we could have much sooner -- we could have -- we could be out of this by the end of the year if we got everybody vaccinated. But that's the problem, and we -- you know, the mandates will only get us so far, and I think the public service announcements will only get us so far.

There is one thing the Biden administration has not done that I think is going to be essential if we're really going to get to that benchmark of stopping transmission and that is, we've got to dismantle the disinformation empire. And that's what the Biden administration so far has been unwilling to do.

You know, they have gone after Facebook and the social media companies and they're important for the transmission of this and they certainly have a role but they've not wanted to take on what I call the three-headed monster, which is the political aggression from the far right, number one.

Number two, the disinformation dozen identified by the Center for Countering Digital Hate. Those are non-governmental groups. And the third, which surprises some is the Russian government that's been launching a very aggressive program of weaponized health disinformation. Weaponized health communication to divide our country.

And that we're going to need the Department of Homeland Security, the Justice Department, the Commerce Department and even the State Department and he's got to create this inner agency task force that I've been asking them to create to really take this on. And it's unpleasant. It's dirty work in the sense that it's -- that it's really not dirty in terms of illegal but unpleasant and that's the reality.

LEMON: Yes. Yes. Yes. I get it. The down and dirty. You got to get into the weeds and you got to get it done. I understood exactly what you were saying and I'm glad you clarified.

Listen, I can't believe I'm even asking this especially with people are saying get FDA approval, we don't know what's in the vaccine. Some people are taking a drug called Ivermectin, excuse me. It is a deworming drug mostly for horses. The FDA actually tweeted this out, this warning saying you are not a horse. You are not a cow. Seriously, you all, stop it.

So, what are the consequences of taking a drug like this? I'm sure it's has its uses but what are the consequences

for taking this for something like COVID?

HOTEZ: You know, Don, the other hat I wear is shaping policies in the framework for this group of poverty related diseases called the neglected tropical diseases, helping to organize a package of medicines that's now reached more than a billion people. One of them is Ivermectin.

So, in some ways I've helped, you know, treat more people with Ivermectin than just about anyone and it's a great drug for river blindness, for lymphatic paralysis, for strongyloidiasis, for scabies. It does nothing for COVID-19.

And again, this is version 2.0 of hydroxychloroquine and this is, again, coming out of the disinformation from the far right. It's again, it's a sign of defiance. It's saying be against vaccines but we'll give you something else to champion and that's Ivermectin. It's absolute nonsense.

It does absolutely nothing for COVID-19, as far as we can tell. I mean, there's been lots of studies. We don't have every I dotted and t crossed but it's looking like it's not working nor should it. It doesn't really make any sense compared to something like a vaccine.

LEMON: Exactly. You won't take the vaccine because of a -- OK. Whatever. Thank you, doctor. Always a pleasure. I appreciate it.

HOTEZ: Thank you.

LEMON: The results of the sham Arizona election audit are taking a short pause this week. Three out of the five members of the fraud it team, take this, the Cyber Ninjas are sick with COVID. Next.

[22:50:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

LEMON (on camera): Take this. The Arizona fraud it results are delayed because some of the Cyber Ninjas are sick with coronavirus. Yet, the full report of the so-called from the company that conducted Arizona's sham audit of last year's election will be late because three of the five members of the Cyber Ninjas company are COVID positive.

Well, we learned that from a statement by the Arizona state Senate president Karen Fann who says that two of the audit contractors are quote, "quite sick." It is unclear if they had been vaccinated.

[22:54:58]

So, remember the Cyber Ninjas, a Florida based company has zero experience in election auditing. The man who runs the company has promoted the big lie, nearly 400 vote tabulation machines turned over to the Cyber Ninjas will be -- will not be reused and will need to be replaced.

The Maricopa election county officials have already conducted two audits and found no evidence of widespread voter fraud and other issues in the counties results. Nothing. Nada. And whatever the Cyber Ninjas say they find. The Arizona secretary of state has already certified the 2020 results. Those results show that President Joe Biden won the state. As I said, President Joe Biden.

Next, one week until Biden's deadline to get out of Afghanistan, the race to evacuate people at full force. Stay with us.

[23:00:00]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)