



CDC Shakeups

RFK Brings the Battle to Congress

By Chaya Hausmann

Since taking office as secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) in February, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has implemented several major changes to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC is the federal agency responsible for providing health guidance to Americans, including vaccine recommendations. The agency has an advisory panel called the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) that has long guided the CDC on vaccine recommendations. The panel is typically composed of public health experts, many with decades of experience in medicine and vaccine research.

Kennedy's first major change was in June, when he removed all members of the advisory panel and replaced them with a new group that included several vaccine critics.

He said it was necessary to remove **conflicts of interest**¹ and ensure that vaccine guidance is reviewed fairly and independently. He argued that too many lawmakers receive money from **pharmaceutical**² companies, which could bias their recommendations toward their products.

Tensions escalated on August 27 when Kennedy fired CDC director Susan Monarez, just one month after she was sworn in. Monarez was dismissed because she would not let senior staff go and declined to approve updated vaccine recommendations proposed by the new panel. Even after she was informed of her firing, she refused to step down. Many at the agency hoped that President Trump would intervene to preserve her position. Instead, the White House backed Kennedy's decision, finalizing her dismissal. As a result, several top staff members at the CDC resigned in protest, creating a significant shakeup in the agency's leadership.

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1. **conflicts of interest:** personal biases that cloud judgment

2. **pharmaceutical:** medicinal

CDC Shakeups *Continued*

Kennedy also revised the CDC's COVID-19 vaccine guidance. Previously, the CDC recommended the vaccine for all age groups, including children. Under the new guidance, the vaccine is no longer recommended for healthy children, who are considered the least vulnerable to COVID-19.

On September 4, Kennedy appeared at a Senate hearing to explain his recent decisions. The hearing lasted three hours and included questions from lawmakers about his vaccine policies, the firing of the CDC director, and other changes at the agency. While some lawmakers expressed grave concerns about the direction that Kennedy was taking the agency, he maintained that the changes were necessary. The hearing ended without any action, and opinions remained divided.

Kennedy argues that vaccine recommendations should be based on scientific research rather than political decisions. He says the previous advisory panel members had conflicts of interest that could have influenced their decisions. Kennedy maintains that healthy children face a very low risk from COVID-19, making vaccination unnecessary for this group.

He also argues that vaccines were rushed during the pandemic due to political pressure instead of following proper scientific testing procedures. He believes removing politics from health decisions will restore public trust in the CDC.

Medical professionals and public health experts oppose these changes. Critics say Kennedy has a long history of questioning vaccines and warn that his actions could reverse decades of work to stop the spread of preventable diseases. They argue he is overturning decisions supported by the medical community and worry that his opinions could weaken public trust in vaccines. Many health organizations have also voiced concerns that the CDC risks being seen as an anti-science agency if Kennedy fires staff who oppose his policies.

Kennedy's changes at the CDC are already sparking debates about vaccines in other places as well. For example, Florida is considering loosening school vaccine requirements, showing how federal decisions can influence state policy.

The outcome of these debates could affect public confidence in CDC guidance and how Americans follow health recommendations in the future.

Review Questions



CDC Shakeups

1. What major changes did Robert F. Kennedy Jr. make at the CDC?

2. What reasons did Kennedy give for making changes at the CDC?

3. How did medical professionals react to Kennedy's changes at the CDC?



D.C. AG Wants Troops Gone

Trump's War on Crime Is Taken to Court

By Chaya Hausmann

The attorney general (AG) for Washington, D.C., is challenging President Trump's decision to **federalize**³ the district's policing. The controversy began on August 11, when President Trump announced a war against crime in the nation's capital to "make Washington, D.C., safe, clean, and beautiful again." To do this, Trump deployed more than 2,200 National Guard troops into the city to enforce order and round up criminals.

The National Guard is a branch of the military that is usually controlled by state governors but can be called into service by the president. In this case, Trump brought in troops from Washington, D.C., and seven other states, a very unusual course of action for a president.

Since the deployment, the troops have been patrolling the streets in full uniform and operating armored vehicles. They have also been participating in police activities such as neighborhood patrols, searches, and arrests. To date, more than 1,600 arrests have been reported. This is controversial because of a long-standing law that prohibits the military from doing routine police work.

Public reaction has been divided. Some people support Trump's plan, saying the presence of uniformed troops makes them feel safer.

D.C. police reports show violent crime is at its lowest level in 30 years, supporting their claims that the troops have contributed to a reduction in criminal activity.

However, opponents warn that armed soldiers patrolling the city streets could make residents distrust the police and create more tension due to their intimidating presence. They say the military is supposed to fight wars and respond to emergencies, not to commandeer local police forces. They also argue that the troops are not only focusing on violent crime but have also targeted other lawlessness, such as homeless camps.

On September 5, district AG Brian Schwalb filed a lawsuit against the Trump **administration**⁴. He stated that the deployment of troops into the city is an unwanted military occupation and violates the Home Rule Act, which gives the federal district the right to self-govern, similar to how a state does. Schwalb is demanding that the National Guard stop its activities and that the city's police regain full authority over Washington.

By law, this kind of federal deployment can only last for 30 days unless Congress approves an extension. However, last week, army secretary Dan Driscoll signed an order extending the deployment through November 30.

3. **federalize**: bring under federal control

4. **administration**: management of the government

This is Schwalb's second lawsuit against the Trump administration. In June, he filed a similar case over the deployment in Los Angeles during immigration protests. Although that case did not directly affect Washington, D.C., it was seen as a warning that deploying the National Guard for policing could face legal challenges. More recently, the administration successfully appealed the California ruling in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump has suggested that similar deployments might be considered in other cities, including Chicago and Baltimore. This drew criticism from officials, who argue that he is overstepping the boundaries of presidential authority.

The outcome of the lawsuit could set an important precedent about how much power a president has over the use of the military in American cities.

Review Questions



D.C. AG Wants Troops Gone

1. Why did President Trump announce the “war against crime” in Washington, D.C.?

2. What was unusual about this National Guard deployment?

3. Why did attorney general Brian Schwalb file a lawsuit against the Trump administration?



News Tidbits

By Chani Karp



Cable Car Tragedy

A tragedy struck Lisbon, Portugal, early Wednesday evening when one of the city's funiculars lost control. Funiculars are cable railroads that help passengers climb steep hills. The funicular derailed from the track, sped down the hill, and crashed into a building, killing 16 passengers and injuring 22 others nearby.

The funicular, one of three in Lisbon, is a popular tourist attraction. It is nearly 150 years old and is in constant use by the millions of tourists who visit the beautiful city. Initial reports blamed a snapped cable for the crash, which harmed both passengers and nearby pedestrians. Officials are investigating whether improved maintenance and stricter safety checks could have prevented the tragedy.



Giuliani to Receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom

On September 1, President Trump announced his intention to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Rudy Giuliani. This medal is the highest honor a president can award to a civilian. It recognizes people whom the president feels have made exceptional contributions to the nation.

Giuliani served as the mayor of New York City during the September 11, 2001, attack and played a central role in the city's recovery. His strong leadership during that crisis was seen as a beacon of light in the darkness, and many called him "America's mayor."

However, for some people, Giuliani's reputation was later tarnished when he became heavily involved in Trump's attempts to overturn his 2020 election loss. Giuliani supported the president's **allegations**⁵ of widespread election fraud, including questioning the validity of electronic voting systems, despite lacking sufficient evidence to back these claims in court. This led to his political decline and loss of respect by many. Giuliani was brought to court multiple times over his actions in 2020 and **disbarred**⁶ in both D.C. and New York.

Trump's announcement followed a serious car accident in which Giuliani was injured. The president praised Giuliani as "the greatest mayor of New York City and an equally great **patriot**⁷."

5. **allegation**: claim

6. **disbarred**: expelled from the Bar, a lawyer's association; blocked from acting as a lawyer

7. **patriot**: person who loyally supports their country



Academic Corner

By Chani Karp



History of Vaccines

Vaccines are medicines that protect people from highly contagious diseases. The science behind them is based on the way the human body combats germs. Once people recover from an illness, they are unlikely to catch it again because their blood now has **antibodies**⁸ that recognize and destroy the germ. A vaccine contains a weakened or dead strain of the disease, which cannot cause illness but stimulates the immune system to produce antibodies. This way, if the person is exposed to the same disease again, the body is ready to fight back. Vaccines can also create herd immunity, which protects even unvaccinated people by stopping the overall spread of a disease.

The first vaccine was a smallpox vaccine developed by Edward Jenner in 1796. Jenner discovered that people who caught cowpox, a much milder disease, became immune to smallpox. He injected his patients with a small amount of cowpox and succeeded in protecting them from smallpox, one of the deadliest diseases at the time.

Less than a century later, vaccines were developed for rabies, typhoid, and cholera. Scientists were on a mission to develop **immunizations**⁹ against the deadliest global diseases.



In 1945, a vaccine was finally developed for influenza (“flu”). It was the first vaccine against a virus, previously thought to be impossible.

Another major milestone was reached in 1955, when Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine was declared safe for public use. Polio was a worldwide threat, unleashing outbreaks every few years that killed many people and left many more paralyzed. Within two years of the vaccine’s release, polio cases in the U.S. dropped by 90 percent. Numbers continued to decline worldwide as more and more countries implemented widespread **inoculation**¹⁰. Polio was declared eradicated in the U.S. by 1979 and in Europe by 2002.

Similar success followed the measles vaccine, which was released in the U.S. in 1963. Since 1974, protection from measles accounts for about 60 percent of all lives saved by vaccines, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). But the most dramatic achievement was the smallpox vaccine. By 1980, smallpox was declared eradicated worldwide by the WHO. One of the deadliest diseases to have ever afflicted mankind had finally become extinct.

In the last 50 years alone, vaccines have saved an estimated 154 million lives from deadly and harmful contagious diseases worldwide. That is why many countries have laws that make certain immunizations mandatory.

8. **antibodies**: proteins in the blood that fight infections

9. **immunization**: vaccine

10. **inoculation**: vaccination

This Week in History

By Chani Karp

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001:

World Trade Center Attack

On this tragic day, the al-Qaeda terror organization, led by Osama bin Laden, carried out a series of coordinated attacks on major U.S. landmarks, most notably the Twin Towers. It was the deadliest attack on American soil in history.

At 8:14 a.m., five Islamic terrorists hijacked American Airlines Flight 11 and redirected it to New York City. They deliberately crashed the plane into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m. The impact caused a massive explosion that rocked the tower and tore a gaping hole through the building, trapping everyone above the 91st floor.

A second plane, hijacked by another group of five terrorists, slammed into the South Tower at 9:03 a.m. Both towers eventually collapsed, damaging nearby structures as well. By then, it was clear to everyone that the attacks were intentional, and all flights in the U.S. were immediately grounded.

A third plane already in the air was hijacked and crashed into the Pentagon, causing extensive damage to the Defense Department's headquarters. A fourth plane crashed into an empty field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after the passengers courageously fought against the terrorists to prevent another attack. Investigators believe the plane was likely headed for the White House or the Capitol.

In total, 2,977 people were killed in the attacks, most of them in the World Trade Center. As a shocked nation mourned the death and destruction, President Bush declared a "War on Terror." This began a drawn-out war in the Middle East against centers of terror in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries.

It took months to clear the debris from Ground Zero, the site of the Twin Towers. Eventually, a new tower was constructed, and the site now includes the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, which honors the victims of that day.



September 7: In 1994, the U.S. military officially ended its presence in Berlin. Following Germany's surrender in 1945, the country was split and occupied by the four Allied powers: the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France.

September 8: In 1900, the "Great Storm" hit Galveston, Texas, earning it the title of America's deadliest natural disaster ever. With winds of over 120 mph, the hurricane wreaked widespread devastation, killing over 8,000 people and destroying over 2,500 buildings.

September 9: In 1776, the **Continental Congress**¹¹ gave the new nation the name "United States of America."

September 10: In 1846, Elias Howe of Cambridge, Massachusetts, received a patent for his new lockstitch sewing machine. It made sewing faster, stronger, and more affordable.

September 12: In 1962, President John F. Kennedy delivered his famous speech, "We Choose to Go to the Moon," vowing that the U.S. would land a man on the moon by the end of the decade. This ambitious goal was successfully achieved in 1969, six years after his death.

September 13: In 1788, Congress chose New York City as the first capital of the United States. Although Congress had been meeting there since 1785, the city was now formally recognized as the nation's seat of government.

11. Continental Congress: temporary government after the U.S. was formed

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