

MITT ROMNEY
UTAH

COMMITTEES
FOREIGN RELATIONS
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS
HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
BUDGET

United States Senate

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May 20, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write with concern regarding the Administration's lack of urgency to distribute COVID vaccines to countries in desperate need. While Russia and China have taken action on this matter, the United States appears to still be in the process of deciding what it is going to do. It is necessary that the United States implement a strategy which ensures that the world's most vulnerable populations have access to the vaccine as soon as possible.

On May 12, 2021, during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, I asked the Honorable Gayle E. Smith, Coordinator for Global COVID Response and Health Security at the U.S. Department of State, what the United States' priorities and plans are for vaccine allocation around the world.

I was dismayed to learn that while China and Russia are pushing out vaccines to countries in desperate need, the U.S. is still in the stage of planning and prioritizing, and has yet to communicate in any detail to countries around the world when they can expect doses. The U.S. must urgently prioritize moving beyond the planning stage to the implementation stage of vaccine distribution.

The U.S. public and private sector efforts to develop COVID vaccines is one of the great scientific successes of the past decades. Given their success in safely inoculating millions of people, U.S. COVID vaccines will be extremely welcome around the world. Facilitating vaccine access to other countries will also increase the resiliency of our neighbors, allies, and partners, which is in our national security interests.

I was pleased to see the Administration commit an additional 20 million doses by the end of June. However, I am concerned that a total of only 80 million doses are far too few to effectively stymie the pandemic and prevent new variants from reaching our shores.¹

While the U.S. continues to "plan" and "prioritize" vaccine distribution, China is using its weight and its own, far less efficacious, vaccine to push countries needing vaccines to follow China's political goals. On May 19, 2021, "Carlos Alberto Madero, Honduras chief cabinet coordinator...told the Financial Times

¹ "Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration is Providing at least 80 million COVID-19 Vaccines for Global Use, Commits to Leading a Multilateral Effort toward Ending the Pandemic," The White House Briefing Room, 17 May 2021.

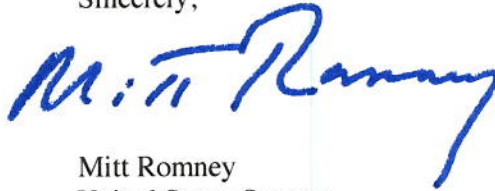
that the country wanted to avoid breaking longstanding ties with Taipei. But he warned that access to vaccines was ‘much more urgent than anything else.’”²

If Honduras chooses to change its official recognition from the “Republic of China” to the “People’s Republic of China” due to the effective vaccine diplomacy pushed by the PRC, the U.S. will have failed in its own strategic objectives regarding Taiwan, all because we were not successfully using our resources to aid the world in the fight against COVID.

I respectfully urge you to immediately enter discussions with countries around the world and implement a strategy for vaccine distribution to those countries. Upon doing so, I urge you to announce and publish timelines for vaccine distribution by country.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mitt Romney
United States Senator

² Stott, Matt, et.al., “Taiwan ally warns of Pivot to China in Quest for Covid Vaccines,” Financial Times, 19 May 2021.