

'October Surprise': Trump Incapacitated from Electioneering. POTUS and FLOTUS Tested Positive for Covid-19

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"October surprises" are a common occurrence in the electoral politics of the US when elections are only weeks away in November and canvassing of electorate by political contenders reaches a crescendo. But never in the entire political history of the US an "October surprise" has downright incapacitated a presidential contender running for re-election from electioneering for make-or-break two weeks.

President Trump announced the shocking news of having contracted COVID-19 infection on Friday at his official Twitter timeline:

"Tonight, @FLOTUS and I tested positive for COVID-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately. We will get through this TOGETHER!"

Half an hour later, First Lady Melania Trump confirmed the news and said they will be quarantining for two weeks at the White House:

"As too many Americans have done this year, @potus & I are quarantining at home after testing positive for COVID-19. We are feeling good & I have postponed all upcoming engagements. Please be sure you are staying safe & we will all get through this together."

Couple of hours before the momentous announcement, Trump had named the suspect who had likely transmitted the virus to the president and the first lady:

"Hope Hicks, who has been working so hard without even taking a small break, has just tested positive for Covid 19. Terrible! The First Lady and I are waiting for our test results. In the meantime, we will begin our quarantine process!"

30-year-old femme fatale, Hope Hicks, is a political advisor serving as a senior counselor to President Trump since March. Hicks previously served as White House communications director from August 2017 until March 29, 2018. From January to September 2017, she was White House director of strategic communications.

But her official designations don't do justice to her immense clout in the White House and the Trump family. Maggie Haberman wrote an informative [biographical account](#) [1] of Hope Hicks in a February 2018 article for the New York Times:

"Ms. Hicks, 29, a former model who joined Mr. Trump's 2016 presidential campaign without any experience in politics, became known as one of the few aides who

understood Mr. Trump's personality and style and could challenge the president to change his views.

"Her title belied the extent of her power within the West Wing — after John F. Kelly was appointed White House chief of staff, she had more access to the Oval Office than almost any other staff member. Her own office, which she inherited after the departure of another Trump confidant, Keith Schiller, was just next door.

"Most significantly, Mr. Trump felt a more personal comfort with Ms. Hicks than he has established with almost any of his other, newer advisers since coming to Washington. And for a politician who relies so heavily on what is familiar to him, her absence could be jarring ..."

What Haberman was insinuating to was the fact that Hope Hicks relationship with President Trump had not entirely been professional. She had occupied a special place in Trump's heart with her attractive looks, professional charisma and an intimate understanding of Trump's psychological attitudes and mindset.

This fact also elucidates visibly tense moments Trump and Melania have had in their matrimonial life when Hope Hicks served as White House communications director until March 2018 when she had to quit the Trump administration because she spilled the beans on Trump's 2016 election campaign when she was summoned by the House Intelligence Committee in February 2018.

Haberman adds in the report:

"Ms. Hicks resignation came a day after she testified for eight hours before the House Intelligence Committee, telling the panel that in her job, she had occasionally been required to tell white lies but had never lied about anything connected to the investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 election ...

"Ms. Hicks's first association with the Trump family was working with Mr. Trump's eldest daughter, Ivanka, on her personal apparel and licensing brand about six years ago. When Mr. Trump was planning his campaign in spring 2015, he told Ms. Hicks he was pulling her from Ms. Trump's team to put her on his small political staff despite her lack of experience.

"In recent weeks, her personal life drew unwanted attention when it was reported that she had dated Rob Porter, the White House staff secretary who resigned under pressure over allegations that he had abused his two former wives."

It's pertinent to mention that Hope Hicks broke up with Rob Porter in December 2018. For two years between her resignation from the Trump administration in March 2018 to March 2020, she worked for Fox Corporation as its chief communications officer and executive vice president, drawing a million-dollar salary.

She was reappointed senior counselor to President Trump in March, but it's quite likely that she turned rogue and her loyalty to the Trump family was compromised during the intervening two years, and she colluded with Trump's adversaries in the deep state and the rival political organization to thwart Trump's re-election bid.

In fact, the family of Hope Hicks has a political background. Her mother, Caye Ann (Cavender) Hicks, was an administrative aide to Ed Jones, a Democratic congressman from Tennessee.

Here, allow me to clarify that COVID-19 is a pandemic that could randomly infect anybody, but more than 90% fatalities in the US have occurred in people who are more than 55 years old. Younger people typically have robust natural immunity against the contagion, whereas Trump is 74 years old and is at high risk both because of his age and because he is considered overweight.

Maggie Haberman further notes in the New York Times article: “Ms. Hicks also had the ability to stop Mr. Trump from focusing on an issue he was angry about, and sometimes shield other members of the staff from Mr. Trump’s anger.

“While Ms. Hicks and Mr. John Kelly developed a functional, respectful relationship, he considered her access to the president to be a challenge to the command-and-control system he tried to enforce, according to several White House aides.

“Even those in the West Wing who did not like her approach feared her power, and worried about crossing her. Before leaving the White House in March 2018, she told colleagues that she had accomplished what she felt she could with a job that made her one of the most powerful people in Washington.”

Finally, though the mainstream media is cheering it as poetic justice that befell Trump for flouting safety precautions against the outbreak, it’s not simply about health risks posed to Trump and Melania due to contracting the infection. Hopefully, they would recover within weeks. But the diagnosis has disrupted the entire electoral campaign of the Republican Party at a critical juncture weeks before the presidential elections.

Rumors are already swirling if Trump would be able to perform his functions as the president or whether he would delegate official duties to Vice President Mike Pence. Even if re-elected, if his health condition deteriorates and he is incapacitated from running the office of the president, then who would be appointed president?

All such perplexing and dispiriting speculations would obviously have a demoralizing effect on the electorate and the Republican voter turnout is expected to be low, and undecided voters might even vote for definitive choice, Joe Biden, instead of doubtful option, Donald Trump, in the upcoming presidential elections slated for November 3.

Citations:

[1] Hope Hicks to Leave Post as White House Communications Director:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/28/us/politics/hope-hicks-resign-communications-director.html>

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