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German minister censures U.S. handling of pandemic, questions America First model

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By: RHC  
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Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has censured as 'too slow' the way the United States is handling the novel coronavirus pandemic, questioning the so-called America First model employed by the White House.

Maas gave an interview to the German Der Spiegel magazine, a preview of which was sent to the media on Friday. The foreign minister commented that China had taken "very authoritarian measures, while in the U.S., the virus was played down for a long time."

The top German diplomat expressed hope that Washington would rethink its foreign policy, particularly its "America First" model, in light of the coronavirus crisis. "Let's see to what extent the actions of the American government will lead to discussions in the U.S. about whether the 'America First' model really works."

Maas argued that Washington's aggressive trade policies could have undermined the United States' ability to obtain protective equipment.

On April 3rd, Berlin State's Interior Minister Andreas Geisel accused Washington of using "Wild West" tactics to divert and obtain a delivery of face masks originally destined for the German capital. Geisel denounced the diversion of the masks as an "act of modern piracy."

German media had reported that thousands of masks purchased from manufacturer 3M had been diverted to the United States as they were being transferred between planes in Thailand en route from China.

German officials have confirmed that about 200,000 FFP2 masks-- an equivalent of the U.S. N95 mask standard -- were seized at a Bangkok airport and did not reach their destined location. The officials said that the masks had already been paid for by Germany.

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