Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao was among

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Another 50 million to 80 million doses will be distributed in January, and the same number in February, Slaoui said. The vaccine requires two shots per person.

"We are working with Pfizer to continue helping them and supporting them achieve the objective of providing us with another 100 million doses in the second quarter of 2021, " Slaoui said.

The first to be vaccinated would be front line healthcare workers, as well as residents of long-term care facilities, he added.

For the United States to get "herd immunity, " which would halt transmission of the deadly virus, the country would need to have immunized about 75% or 80% of the population, he said, adding that he hoped to reach that point between May and June.

"It is however critical that most of the American people decide and accept to take the vaccine, " Slaoui said. "We are very concerned by the hesitancy that we see. "

He said he hoped people will keep an open mind, "listen to the data and openly agree that this is a very effective and safe vaccine and therefore take it. "

In a large clinical trial, the Pfizer vaccine was 95% effective in preventing illness with few serious side effects.

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