White House condemns WHO findings after scientists debunk ‘Wuhan Lab’ conspiracy theory

Andre Damon
15 February 2021

The Biden White house has expressed “deep concerns” over the findings of an international team from the World Health Organization after WHO scientists debunked false claims by the US government that COVID-19 originated in a Chinese laboratory.

On January 15, the US State Department published a “fact sheet” on “Activity at the Wuhan Institute of Virology” that demanded that the World Health Organization investigate the false and discredited conspiracy theory that COVID-19 was released from a laboratory in Wuhan, China. The State Department wrote that a “laboratory accident could resemble a natural outbreak.”

The document put into writing the lie by former secretary of state Mike Pompeo that “there is enormous evidence that that’s where this began,” when asked if COVID-19 “originated in that Wuhan lab.”

The lie peddled by Pompeo, together with Trump co-conspirators Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, was initially popularized by the far-right expatriate Chinese *Epoch Times* associated with the Falun Gong movement.

But after the conspiracy theory’s open embrace by the Trump administration, it was then laundered through the establishment media, becoming part of the US government’s official political line.

On February 5, the Democratic-aligned *Washington Post* published an editorial embracing the position of the Trump State Department that “a laboratory accident or leak” represents a “plausible” explanation for the pandemic.

But these bipartisan efforts to falsely claim COVID-19 was released from a Chinese lab – with the subtext that it is a biological weapon and a military attack on the United States – were dealt a shattering blow by investigators from the World Health Organization.

On February 9, WHO researchers returning from an investigation into the origins of COVID-19 demolished the “Wuhan lab” conspiracy theory, saying that the World Health Organization would conduct no further research into it.

Professor Liang Wannian from Tsinghua University, speaking at the WHO panel, made clear that the theory that the “virus was engineered by humans” has “already been refuted by the whole scientific community around the world.”

As to the claim that the virus escaped from a laboratory by accident, Liang added, “in all the laboratories in Wuhan, there is no existing virus of SARS-CoV-2. If there is no existence of this virus, there will be no way that this virus would be linked.”

Peter Ben Embarek, a WHO food safety expert, added that “nowhere previously was this particular virus researched or identified or known.”

These statements prompted a condemnation from the Biden administration, which declared, “We have deep concerns about the way in which the early findings of the COVID-19 investigation were communicated and questions about the process used to reach them.”

Pointing to the Biden administration’s reversal of Trump’s defunding of the World Health Organization, the White House demanded political subservience in exchange for funding. The statement threatened, “re-engaging the WHO also means holding it to the highest standards,” demanding that its findings be “free from intervention or alteration by the Chinese government.”

China was the center of the first large-scale outbreak

© World Socialist Web Site

of COVID-19, a completely new disease that had never been observed anywhere else in the world. Despite this, only 4,636 people have died of COVID-19 in China, or about as many people as died in the United States on a single day – July 12, 2020.

Despite reports of initially seeking to downplay the extent of the disease, the Chinese government rapidly alerted the international scientific community. It publicly shared the genetic sequence of the disease on January 12, and allowed a WHO team to travel freely and observe the outbreak, resulting in the February 16-24 report that guided scientists and doctors around the world in their fight against the disease.

The report made clear that China was able to tame the pandemic by mobilizing a vast array of social resources to treat the infected, track all contacts, and prevent community transmission through targeted lockdowns.

The governments of the United States and Europe rejected these measures because they were viewed as being too economically costly, allowing the pandemic to spread largely unchecked and never building up any systematic network of disease tracking and contact tracing, leading to the deaths of half a million people in the United States alone.

Despite the WHO scientists' rejection of the "Wuhan lab" conspiracy theory and their praise for their Chinese collaborators, the US media has twisted their words to claim that China was engaged in a cover-up.

On February 12, the *New York Times* ran an article declaring, "On WHO Trip, China Refused to Hand Over Important Data."

The article stated, "Chinese scientists refused to share raw data that might bring the world closer to understanding the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, independent investigators for the WHO said on Friday."

British zoologist Peter Daszak, who was in the WHO delegation, excoriated the report on Twitter. "This was NOT my experience on @WHO mission. As lead of animal/environment working group I found trust & openness w/ my China counterparts. We DID get access to critical new data throughout. We DID increase our understanding of likely spillover pathways."

Thea K. Fischer, another member of the team, added, "This was NOT my experience either on the Epi-side. We DID build up a good relationship in the Chinese/Int Epi-team! Allowing for heated arguments reflects a deep level of engagement in the room. Our quotes are intendedly twisted casting shadows over important scientific work."

Daszak added, "It's disappointing to spend time w/ journalists explaining key findings of our exhausting month-long work in China, to see our colleagues selectively misquoted to fit a narrative that was prescribed before the work began. Shame on you @nytimes!"

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site