

Science vs propaganda: World Health Organization report exposes “Wuhan laboratory” lie

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On Tuesday, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued its interim report on the origins of COVID-19.

This landmark report, coming over one year after the emergence of a deadly new virus that has upended life all over the world, is a major contribution to the collective knowledge of humanity and the struggle of science and medicine against disease, suffering and death.

The report draws upon the collective efforts of thousands of scientists, in hundreds of countries on every inhabited continent. It was the product of an international investigative team bringing together the world’s leading researchers from China, the United States, Russia, Japan, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Vietnam, and Qatar.

During and after their investigative trip to China, the researchers reviewed thousands of samples from Wuhan hospitals, mortality data for millions of people going back years, tens of thousands of patient records, tens of thousands of animal and wildlife samples, and the sequences of numerous related viruses primarily found in bats.

The report is a devastating blow to the effort of the American ruling class to promote the lie that the virus originated in a Chinese laboratory in Wuhan. It dismisses out of hand the claim that COVID-19 was developed as a biological weapon, concluding that this “has been ruled out by other scientists following analyses of the genome.”

The WHO considered the possibility of a laboratory leak. But it dismissed this possibility as “extremely unlikely,” declaring, “There is no record of viruses closely related to SARS-CoV-2 in any laboratory before December 2019, or genomes that in combination

could provide a SARS-CoV-2 genome.”

Instead, the report found that COVID-19 most likely originated in a population of bats – or potentially some other animal – before traveling through a series of animal intermediaries to infect humans. While the report recognized that the first major outbreak took place in Wuhan, China, and most cases were clustered around the Hua’nan wet market, it did not conclude that either Wuhan or the market – or even China for that matter – were the origin of the disease.

The report examines the closest relatives of the SARS-Cov-2 virus that causes COVID-19, most of which are bat viruses but some of which were identified in pangolins, as well as the closest human virus, SARS-Cov, which caused the SARS pandemic of the early 2000s. While these viruses closely resemble the virus that causes COVID-19, the differences between them suggest that another animal may have served as an intermediary.

Committee member Dr. Peter Daszak said the report is a “testament” to how “countries can come together to focus on the origins of emerging diseases. And viruses don’t think about national boundaries.” Daszak has made repeated statements denouncing the efforts to blame the outbreak of the virus on a Chinese laboratory.

The report and the subsequent press conference stressed that the investigation is ongoing. The WHO has requested a massive data set, consisting of the private health records of 76,000 people with flu-like illnesses before December, which China has not yet provided, but which the scientists said they hope to examine in the next stage of the investigation.

“In China, like in many other countries, there are

restrictions on privacy laws that forbid the sharing of data, including private details,” said team leader Ben Embarek. “That will be exactly the same in most countries in the world, if we were going there to do any studies and we’ve done many studies in the past, and we always face the same challenges.”

While the conclusions of the scientific investigation are clear, the effort to blame the outbreak of the virus on China is a strategic imperative for the ruling class internationally.

The WHO, the public health agency of the United Nations, is itself under immense pressure from the major capitalist powers to keep the lie going. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sought to soften the conclusions of the report, releasing a statement Tuesday declaring, “While the laboratory leak is the least likely hypothesis, this requires further investigation.” Tedros added that “all hypotheses remain on the table.”

The report itself, however, entirely destroys the scientific credibility of the Biden administration, which has promoted the false conspiracy theory that the disease could have been released from a laboratory in China, originally promoted by Trump.

The Biden administration immediately condemned the study, with spokesperson Jen Psaki falsely claiming that it “doesn’t lead us to any closer of an understanding or greater knowledge than we had six to nine months ago about the origin.” A further statement by the US and its closest allies, including India, Japan, and the UK, claimed the report “lacked access to complete, original data and samples.”

Two inter-related considerations lie behind the “Wuhan lab” lie. First, the ruling elites of the major capitalist powers want to shift blame for the pandemic from their own catastrophic policies, responsible for death on a massive scale, to China.

Last weekend, CNN ran a report on the US response to the pandemic that made clear that virtually the entire US response to the pandemic was dictated by the defense not of human lives, but rather the economic interests of the financial elite. As a result, more people have died from COVID-19 in the United States than in any other country. Desperate to shift the blame and create an external enemy, the US media and Biden administration are repeating Trump’s maxim: “It’s China’s fault!”

Second, the “Wuhan lab” lie is connected to the geopolitical imperatives of American imperialism. The Biden administration is carrying out a massive military escalation against China, seeking to ring the country with offensive missiles and doubling US military spending in the Pacific. Three decades of unending war by the American ruling class in the Middle East and Central Asia are developing into a “great power” conflict, targeting its major competitors, including China.

All imperialist wars have been preceded by such systematic demonization through propaganda. One consequence of this propaganda is the significant growth of anti-Asian violence in the United States and internationally.

Humanity in the 21st century is making massive scientific breakthroughs, creating the possibility to rid the world of suffering, poverty, and disease. But the capitalist order breeds and feeds upon bigotry, ignorance, racism, and xenophobia, squandering vast social resources not only on the wealth of the oligarchy, but on deadly wars capable of totally destroying human society. If human progress is to prevail, capitalism must be abolished through an international movement of the working class for socialism.



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