

White House embraces “Wuhan Lab” conspiracy theory

Bryan Dyne
26 May 2021

On Wednesday, US President Joe Biden publicly embraced the conspiracy theory that COVID-19 may have been released from China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), ordering the US intelligence agencies to produce a report within 90 days into the potentially man-made origins of the disease.

The intelligence agencies tasked with determining whether COVID-19 is a biological weapon played a leading role in one of the greatest crimes of the twenty-first century—the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, based on allegations manufactured by the Central Intelligence Agency that Iraq possessed chemical, biological, and nuclear “weapons of mass destruction.” That lie led to the death of over 1 million people and engulfed the Middle East in war that has lasted to this day.

Now, an even greater and more dangerous lie is being perpetrated. The Biden administration, like the Trump administration before it, is attempting to blame China for a disease that led by some estimates to the deaths of at least 1 million people in the US. If, as the Trump administration publicly asserted, COVID-19 is a “weaponized virus” sent by Beijing against the American population, it would constitute grounds for war against the most populous country in the world.

As with “weapons of mass destruction,” leaks from anonymous intelligence officials are being presented as evidence in a coordinated media campaign. Within a matter of a few days, the entire US media has embraced this discredited conspiracy theory, summed up by an article by the *Washington Post*’s lead fact checker entitled “How the Wuhan lab-leak theory suddenly became credible.”

The stage for this sudden reversal was set by an article published in the *Wall Street Journal* Sunday, claiming that “a previously undisclosed US intelligence report” reveals three staff at the institute became sick and sought hospital care in November 2019. The article implied that these three cases are the real origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. The *Journal* article, however, includes nothing fundamentally new beyond the contents of a fact sheet published by the Trump State Department on January 15.

In other words, the most the CIA, NSA and their counterparts could find, funded with tens of billions of dollars to spy on the entire world, is that a few people who work at the WIV

happened to get symptoms that the State Department fact sheet itself admits are “consistent with...common seasonal illnesses” the month before the virus was first detected.

The story was picked up almost immediately by other major news outlets, including the *Washington Post*, *Forbes*, the *New York Times*, Reuters, CNN and others. It has also been parroted, perhaps most shamefully of all, by Dr. Anthony Fauci, who was seen by millions of people as a voice of scientific clarity regarding the dangers of the virus as Trump was claiming that the pandemic would just “go away.”

When questioned about the *Journal*’s story on Tuesday, Fauci stated, “Because we don’t know 100 percent what the origin is, it’s imperative that we look and we do an investigation.” His comments are a complete 180-degree turn from what he said last year when asked a similar question. At the time he stated: “A number of very qualified evolutionary biologists have said that everything about the stepwise evolution over time strongly indicates that it evolved in nature and then jumped species.”

According to the original proponents of the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory, such as the Chinese billionaire Miles Guo and the far-right *Epoch Times*, the Chinese government created SARS-CoV-2 as a biological weapon using funding for “gain-of-function” experiments by the US National Institute of Health. This line was picked up by numerous right-wing politicians, including Rand Paul, who as recently as May 11 accused Fauci of authorizing such research.

In the watered-down version now promoted by the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, COVID-19 “may have” escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology. In both scenarios, however, blame for the at least 3.5 million deaths caused by the pandemic is placed squarely on China.

Such assertions were rejected by an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) this past January and February. Drawing on the collective efforts of an international team of the world’s leading epidemiological researchers from Australia, China, Denmark, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Qatar, Russia, the United States and Vietnam, the joint WHO-China report considered the possibility of a laboratory leak and dismissed it as extremely unlikely. The report declared, “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.”

The WHO report instead reaffirmed what every credible scientist takes as correct, that the virus came from a natural source, most likely from a population of bats, and jumped through a series of other animals before finally mutating to be contagious and deadly to humans.

Lacking any positive evidence for their “man-made virus” angle, both the Biden administration and the US media began to denounce the WHO report as untrustworthy because Chinese public health officials were involved. To that end, Biden enlisted 13 of its closer allies and released a joint statement on March 30 calling for an “independent” investigation that would not have Chinese “interference and undue influence.”

Essentially, they are insisting that China do the impossible: 100 percent prove the negative that the virus did not originate in one of its labs. At the same time, knowing that it can take years to locate the natural origin of a new disease—it took 13 years to confirm the origins of the first SARS virus, and the origins of Ebola are still being researched—they are taking the anti-scientific approach of proposing a theory and claiming that any gaps in knowledge of the pandemic’s origins support their claim.

It is worth noting that such hypotheses about the origins of COVID-19 bear a remarkable similarity to older right-wing ideas about the origins of HIV, that it was developed by the United States government in order to suppress various populations, particularly those of African and Hispanic descent and homosexuals. Fauci, who helped lead the initial fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the 1980s, is no doubt aware of these parallels, and of the immensely detrimental effect they have had on educating workers and youth about the dangers of the disease and the precautions that can be taken to prevent it.

Promoting the false idea that the coronavirus pandemic is man-made is even more dangerous. Over the course of just 15 months, more than 600,000 people in the US have been reported dead from COVID-19, and the true tally is likely closer to 1 million. The official global death toll is over three-and-a-half million. There is an immense amount of social anger over so many having died that is looking for an outlet. By promoting the Wuhan lab lie, the Biden administration is seeking to deflect responsibility for the policies of the financial elite and blame its geopolitical adversary in a form of “war guilt.”

Such actions are part and parcel of the Biden administration’s war drive against China. Since taking office, Biden has attempted to create a political framework to wage war, backed by the media. These include claims of Chinese genocide against its Muslim Uyghur minority, potential Chinese aggression against Taiwan, and, above all, the implication that the mass suffering of the past year and a half is ultimately because of—at

best—China’s neglect, or—at worst—the most lethal bio-weapon ever unleashed.

By promoting these ideas, the Biden administration is also attempting to take pressure off its own domestic policy, which is essentially the same as Trump’s. The American working class is keenly aware that the vast majority of the deaths caused by the pandemic could have been prevented if basic public health measures had been put into place from the very beginning, measures that Trump fought against at every step and which Biden is now abandoning wholesale.

Now that Biden, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* have given life to the Wuhan lab lie, it will become part of the political bloodstream of the country. Having legitimized it, they will lose control of it as the extreme right wing is strengthened by the propagation of such reactionary conceptions. It will serve as a motive for violent attacks on Asian Americans, which have surged over the past year.

The *Washington Post* has explicitly promoted the fascistic Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) as someone who “from the start” promoted this conspiracy theory and who “the history books” may eventually “reward.” Cotton maintains that the 2020 election was stolen and that Trump is still the legitimate chief executive, and giving him such credibility only supports the political forces behind the January 6 insurrection.

It is these forces that ultimately benefit from the atmosphere of anti-science and xenophobia being engendered by the Biden administration and the US media establishment. They have no interest in protecting the lives of the American population, much less seeking the “truth” of the pandemic’s origins, but are attempting to protect the country’s corporate and financial interests while preparing for new imperialist campaigns abroad.

The Biden administration’s cynical efforts to blame China for the crimes of American capitalism must be opposed. American workers must reject xenophobia and nationalism and say together with their Chinese brothers and sisters: Our enemy is the capitalist class!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact