

US fails to provide evidence for COVID-19 “lab leak” claims

Andre Damon
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On May 25, US President Joe Biden publicly embraced the conspiracy theory that COVID-19 may have been released from China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology, ordering the US intelligence agencies to produce a report within 90 days into the potentially man-made origins of the disease.

Three months later, the US intelligence agencies have failed to produce a shred of evidence to substantiate claims by the Trump administration, Biden administration and every major US media outlet that a lab leak is a “plausible” scenario.

This was despite what was, according to media reports, a “giant” US effort. On August 5, CNN reported that the US was examining “a giant catalog of information [that] contains genetic blueprints drawn from virus samples studied at the lab in Wuhan, China.”

To process the massive amount of data in its possession, US intelligence agencies were “relying on supercomputers at the Department of Energy’s National Labs, a collection of 17 elite government research institutions.”

In its reporting, CNN strongly indicated that the United States had carried out a cyberattack on medical and scientific institutions, writing “the machines involved in creating and processing this kind of genetic data from viruses are typically connected to external cloud-based servers—leaving open the possibility they were hacked.”

And after all this, what are the findings? The report was, in the massaged words of the *New York Times* write-up, defined by an “absence of conclusions.” It did not, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal*, “yield a definitive conclusion.” Both newspapers claim to be passing on the statements of “senior officials.”

The *Times* and the *Journal* claim that the intelligence

agencies could not come to a conclusion due to “China’s refusal to continue to cooperate with international investigations” and China’s refusal to “give access to certain data sets.”

However, neither report mentioned CNN’s reporting about US access to a “giant” catalog of secret data, and why, if the US had access to the data being “hidden” by China, nothing was found.

The reason why the US intelligence agencies failed to find anything is simple: There is no evidence, secret or otherwise, that the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) has anything to do with the origins of COVID-19.

More than half a year since the Trump State Department released a fact sheet claiming that researchers at the WIV showed symptoms, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, “consistent with... common seasonal illnesses,” there has not been a single piece of evidence—whether made public or even hinted at—that substantiates the lab leak “theory.”

In March of this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) team investigating the origins of COVID-19 said in its report that it had seriously considered the lab leak hypothesis but declared it “extremely unlikely” based on the absence of evidence. The report expressed willingness to follow up on “new evidence supplied around possible laboratory leaks,” but since then, none has been provided.

The members of the team “found no evidence for leads to follow up,” and that remains so to this day, they wrote in an article published in *Nature* on Wednesday, timed to correspond with the submission of the intelligence agencies’ report.

The scientists warned that the United States’ single-minded efforts to blame China for the pandemic were seriously undermining the fight to determine the actual origins of the disease. They wrote, “The search for the

origins of SARS-CoV-2 is at a critical juncture. There is willingness to move forward from both the WHO international team and the Chinese team.”

But as time passes, “SARS-CoV-2 antibodies wane,” while farms that provide wild animals to the public “are now closed and the animals have been culled, making any evidence of early coronavirus spillover increasingly difficult to find.”

“We were getting a little concerned that there really is virtually no debate about the bulk of the recommendations that are not related to the lab hypothesis, and of course there’s a lot of discussion of the lab story, particularly coming from the US,” Marion Koopmans, a Dutch virologist and member of the WHO delegation, told the *New York Times*.

“Our concern is that because of that emphasis, the rest doesn’t get any more attention.”

In the face of the United States’ failure to provide any evidence to back up its inflammatory conspiracy theory, the US media has turned its focus to accusing China of promoting its own inflammatory conspiracy theories. There is no merit to the claims by figures within China that a “lab leak” by the US military is responsible for the pandemic. However, everything that the US media now accuses China of doing applies with even more validity to the US media.

In a report placed far higher than the article reporting the US intelligence agencies’ failure to find evidence of a laboratory origin of the coronavirus, the *New York Times* wrote yesterday:

When a conspiracy theory started circulating in China suggesting that the coronavirus escaped from an American military lab, it had largely stayed on the fringe. Now, the ruling Communist Party has propelled the idea firmly into the mainstream...

Beijing is peddling groundless theories that the United States may be the true source of the coronavirus, as it pushes back against efforts to investigate the pandemic’s origins in China. The disinformation campaign started last year, but Beijing has raised the volume in recent weeks, reflecting its anxiety about being blamed for the pandemic that has killed millions globally.

These lines would be entirely correct if re-written as follows:

When a conspiracy theory started circulating in the **United States** suggesting that the coronavirus escaped from a **Chinese** military lab, it had largely stayed on the fringe. Now, the ruling **Democratic Party** has propelled the idea firmly into the mainstream...

Washington is peddling groundless theories that the **Wuhan Institute of Virology** may be the true source of the coronavirus, as it pushes back against efforts to investigate the pandemic’s origins... The disinformation campaign started last year, but **Washington** has raised the volume in recent weeks, reflecting its anxiety about being blamed for the pandemic that has killed millions globally.

The “Wuhan Lab” conspiracy theory, which originated in the fascist circles of Chinese expatriates around Steve Bannon and the far-right *Epoch Times* newspaper, has been promoted by the Biden White House, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* because it serves a pressing need for American capitalism.

Nearly 650,000 people are dead in the United States from COVID-19, and millions more have been either seriously sickened or lost a loved one. As workers demand an end to the pandemic through the eradication of COVID-19, there will be calls for accountability from the political figures who sacrificed human lives in the name of preserving private profit. Workers must and will draw the conclusion that the responsibility for this disaster lies not with China but with American capitalism.



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