

Scientist Peter Daszak refutes false media allegations about Wuhan research

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29 October 2021

In a letter to the National Institutes of Health made public Thursday, the world-renowned zoologist Peter Daszak of EcoHealth Alliance refuted claims that his organization failed to keep the US government apprised of coronavirus research conducted at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).

For an entire week, Daszak and his organization, which conducts vital research into the ecological origins of infectious diseases, have been subjected to a slanderous media campaign, based on the unsubstantiated allegation by National Institutes of Health (NIH) Principal Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak that EcoHealth did not disclose the findings of coronavirus research “right away.”

Tabak made this statement without seeking to verify it with EcoHealth, and he did not respond to requests for comment either by EcoHealth or by the *Wall Street Journal*, which published Daszak’s letter.

Tabak’s letter was in response to Republican lawmakers promoting the hoax that Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, was created through “gain-of-function” research at the WIV in China with funding granted by the National Institutes of Health to EcoHealth alliance.

Tabak’s unsubstantiated statements were refuted by Daszak’s well-documented letter. “EcoHealth did in fact comply with all reporting requirements,” Dr. Daszak wrote. “If NIH had indicated to us at any point that any issues needed further clarification, we would of course have complied immediately with any request.”

Daszak states that the documents he submitted to the NIH “clearly show that EcoHealth Alliance is not out of compliance with our oversight and reporting obligations, and in fact reported this experiment over 3 years and 6 months ago.”

According to Daszak, the NIH claimed that an experiment conducted in 2018 was not reported to the NIH until 2021. But Daszak’s letter provides a screenshot from a 2018 annual report of the experiment, showing it was, in fact, documented on time.

NIH administrators have, as of yet, provided no explanation for what appear to be blatantly inaccurate statements, which they made no effort to confirm or verify with EcoHealth. Their motivations for making these statements are unknown, but it is possible that, facing a vicious right-wing campaign, they may have decided to deflect blame onto a small non-profit.

In a concluding paragraph, Daszak writes:

We would like to point out that these types of mistakes about the timing or nature of our reporting can be better addressed by contacting us to request clarification prior to responding to any congressional inquiry. This will help ensure factually correct responses and will save our organization and staff from undue disparagement and unjustified accusation of inappropriate behavior that have now ensued in the press. We believe it is very important that the impressions the Congressional inquiry may take away from the incorrect information provided be addressed quickly and clearly.

Indeed, the NIH’s letter prompted a media frenzy, with news outlets, including the *Washington Post*, making no effort to ascertain the veracity of Tabak’s claims before reporting them as fact. The *Post*, in an editorial published earlier this week, wrote:

Last week, it was disclosed that the EcoHealth Alliance in August filed a report on its research in 2018–2019—the report was two years late. This just happens to be the two-year period of the pandemic and intense debate about the virus origins.

This media campaign has had a disorienting effect on the public, including principled scientists who have opposed the Wuhan lab lie. Responding to the letter, the virologist Angela Rasmussen suggested EcoHealth withheld “data from the government agency that funds your work with taxpayer dollars.”

But Rasmussen amended these claims in response to questions from the WSWS, writing, “My earlier statement was based on Tabak’s letter. I have now acknowledged that EcoHealth disputes that, which I did not know at the time.”

She added, “NIH has not responded other than to say they stand by the letter from Dr. Tabak. They should respond to EHA’s claims. If NIH screwed up and didn’t communicate with EHA, they should disclose and explain.”

Daszak’s letter was published by the *Wall Street Journal*, in a factual news account entitled, “Coronavirus Study of Bats in China Met NIH Grant Requirements, EcoHealth Says.”

Just hours earlier, the *Journal* had published an editorial demanding that Daszak be subpoenaed to testify about claims that he helped create Sars-CoV-2. The editorial consists largely of a restatement of the claims published earlier this week in the *Post*, which likewise called on Daszak to be subpoenaed.

But the *Journal* editorial was unique in noting a key fact that none of the other media outlets promoting the hoax have admitted: that the “lab leak” theory has been driven by the “populist right”—that is, the fascist movement around Donald Trump. The *Journal* editorial complained that “So far Democrats don’t seem interested,” in the ‘lab leak’ theory, “perhaps because the populist right has made this a cause.”

For nearly two years, Steve Bannon and his co-conspirators Raheem Kassam and Jason Miller, have promoted the libel that Sars-CoV-2 is a man-made virus created at the WIV. In fact, the central demand of the proponents of the lab leak hoax—that Daszak testify

under oath before Congress—originated with Bannon’s fascist podcast.

On his *War Room: Pandemic* podcast, Bannon regularly refers to the movement behind Donald Trump, of which Bannon considers himself the ideological leader, as the “populist right.”

The far-right *National Pulse* hailed the *Post* editorial, writing:

The calls follow months of *National Pulse* reporting highlighting Daszak’s extensive conflicts of interest with the WIV and the Chinese Communist Party, which should have excluded him from serving on bodies such as the World Health Organization’s COVID-19 origins investigation team. The *National Pulse*, which called for Daszak to testify in front of Congress six months ago, has also revealed the close ties between Daszak and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Fauci.

These fascistic forces have been strengthened by the slanderous media campaign against Daszak. Their lies must be exposed and opposed. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote Wednesday night,

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on all workers, students and professionals to oppose the US media’s efforts to scapegoat scientists and promote anti-Chinese xenophobia. The blame is not with scientists who sought to warn the public, but with governments who willfully disregarded science to carry out a policy of mass infection and death!



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