

Washington Post promotes Trump's other "big lie": The Wuhan Lab theory

Andre Damon
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On Thursday, the House Select January 6 Committee held a public hearing documenting how former president Donald Trump used his "big lie" about the 2020 election to justify an attempted fascist coup, aiming to abolish the peaceful transfer of power and turn the United States into a dictatorship.

But that same day, the *Washington Post* published an editorial promoting Trump's other big lie: the claim that COVID-19 is a man-made virus created at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China.

The *Post* promotes the "hypothesis" that "the infection might have resulted from a laboratory accident or an inadvertent spill connected to the Wuhan Institute of Virology." It adds, "At the time, the WIV was carrying out experiments using genetically modified viruses similar to the pandemic strain."

The *Post* frames its promotion of Trump's racist effort to blame China for the COVID-19 pandemic as a declaration that "two broad hypotheses have arisen about how the virus first infected humans in Wuhan in late 2019."

This is like saying that there are "two broad hypotheses" about the validity of the 2020 presidential election results. No, there are not. There is the truth, and there is a right-wing conspiracy theory.

Trump's claim that the 2020 election was stolen had no evidence to support it and was a transparent falsification. It does not require forensic examinations of voting machines, polling booths, or electoral records. Any politician or journalist who gives the slightest credence to this claim is a fascist sympathizer.

Trump's election lie was concocted by Trump advisers Stephen K. Bannon, Peter Navarro, Jason Miller, and their co-conspirators, organized around Bannon's Podcast, "War Room: Pandemic." On January 5, the day before Trump's coup attempt, Bannon declared, "all hell is going to break loose tomorrow."

Bannon's podcast was, however, created to promote a different lie. On January 25, 2020, Bannon rebranded his "War Room: Impeachment" podcast to focus on the claim

that China had created COVID-19 as a biological weapon to attack the United States. He called it "War Room: Pandemic," which is its name to this day.

In the first episode of the podcast, taped on January 25, Bannon invited *Washington Times* columnist Bill Gertz to speak about an upcoming article (of which Bannon had advanced knowledge) asserting that "Coronavirus may have originated in lab linked to China's biowarfare program."

Days earlier, Bannon's business partner and collaborator, the Chinese expatriate Miles Guo, published an article asserting that "the real source of the coronavirus is from 'a lab in Wuhan' linked to its covert biological weapons programs."

Trump, Navarro and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would all promote the claim that COVID-19 was a biological weapon created by the Chinese Communist Party. Trump's Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger would promote a variant of the lie claiming that COVID-19 was released by accident.

This conspiracy theory would be embraced by the editorial boards of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, as well as by leading columnists for the *New York Times*.

In the midst of this right-wing firestorm, led by the fascist gutter press (*Breitbart*, the *National Pulse*, *Newsmax*, OAN) and supported by the "mainstream media," the World Health Organization published its interim report on the origins of COVID-19 in March, 2021.

The report dismissed 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."

It declared the possibility that COVID-19 spilled over to humans from a lab leak 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."

Most critically of all, the report did not recommend further inquiries into the potential laboratory origins of COVID-19, cutting across the efforts of warmongers, xenophobes and

demagogues of both parties to turn the scientific investigation into the origins of COVID-19 into a witch-finding expedition that could be used to accuse China of a cover-up.

America's yellow press howled with indignation, with leading US newspapers condemning the findings and making personal attacks against committee member Peter Daszak, the most vocal opponent of the conspiracy theory within the scientific community.

Under relentless pressure from the US State Department, which officially endorses the conspiracy theory, the World Health Organization disbanded its committee into the origins of the disease and formed a new one: The Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO).

That group published its preliminary report Thursday. In the period between the reports, the evidence of zoonotic origins of COVID-19 has only grown, with the identification of coronaviruses that are extremely similar to COVID-19 in the wild, and more information tying the initial outbreak to the Huanan wet market, which carried out a significant trade in wild animals.

There has, at the same time, been no new evidence to indicate a laboratory origin of COVID-19, adding to the nonexistent prior evidence, bringing the total evidence supporting the conspiracy theory to zero.

Reflecting this reality, the SAGO report concludes, "At the present time, currently available epidemiological and sequencing data suggest ancestral strains to SARS-CoV-2 have a zoonotic origin with the closest genetically related viruses being beta coronaviruses, identified in *Rhinolophus* bats in China in 2013 (96.1%) and Laos in 2020 (96.8%)."

It adds, "there has not been any new data made available to evaluate the laboratory as a pathway of SARS-CoV-2 into the human population."

But while recognizing that new scientific findings have worked to refute the conspiracy theory, the SAGO, under relentless political pressure by the United States, declared, it "remains important to consider... the possibility of the introduction of SARS-CoV-2 into the human population through a laboratory incident."

This assertion came despite the protests of three members of the Committee, who declared, "there is no new scientific evidence to question the conclusion of the WHO-convened global study of origins of SARS-CoV-2: China Part mission report published in March 2021."

In other words, after the World Health Organization disbanded its team investigating the origins of COVID-19 under right-wing political pressure, removed all outspoken opponents of the conspiracy theory, and brought in figures sympathetic to the right-wing campaign, all the report could

come up with was fundamentally the same conclusion as the earlier study: "At the present time, currently available epidemiological and sequencing data suggest ancestral strains to SARS-CoV-2 have a zoonotic origin."

Commenting on the SAGO study, a source close to an earlier WHO-China joint study on the origins of COVID-19 observed, "even though they removed the alleged 'conflicted' members they still end up with the same conclusion!"

"The irony is, we had a window where China was supplying new data. The right wing pushed politically against the WHO team's work, they disbanded the team, brought in a lab leak contingent, removed people who argued that there was no evidence and who were politically expedient and now have a report that is demanding lab info from China under a politically charged atmosphere, without any evidence to support that line of inquiry."

The source added, "The *Post* piece simply adds to the politicization of this, and ironically will continue to keep the window closed for any real understanding of COVID origins."

The *Post*'s promotion of the Wuhan Lab Lie is transparently political. Last month, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said in a major speech on US-China relations, "we will remain focused on the most serious long-term challenge to the international order—and that's posed by the People's Republic of China."

He continued, "China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.... We will defend our interests against any threat."

The efforts of the *Post* to promote the Wuhan Lab Lie are aimed at stoking xenophobic hatred of China to promote the military aims of the United States. They must be rejected with the contempt they deserve.



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