

The Wuhan lab lie: “Weapons of mass destruction” redux

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In an uncanny instance of history repeating itself, the script used to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq based on false claims about “weapons of mass destruction” is being used to promote the United States’ aggressive military buildup against China.

On Sunday, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article entitled, “Lab Leak Most Likely Origin of Covid-19 Pandemic, Energy Department Now Says,” which was used to launch a campaign by the entire US media to legitimize the false claim that COVID-19 was a man-made virus created at China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology.

None of the media coverage noted the fact that the person who wrote the *Wall Street Journal*’s report, Michael R. Gordon, is the most notorious liar in the American media, whose fabrications were so enormous that even his former employers at the *New York Times* had to repeatedly distance themselves from him.

But in the tradecraft of the American media, this problem is easily solved. Media accounts of Gordon’s reporting simply did not refer to the fact that the author has a record of lying. If anyone notes this basic fact, he is referred to, in the quasi-racist language that has become accepted in the US media, as “Chinese.”

Gordon wrote the September 8, 2002 article falsely asserting that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was seeking to build a nuclear weapon. That article, entitled “U.S. says Hussein intensifies quest for a-bomb parts,” cited anonymous Bush administration sources to promote the claim that the Iraqi government was seeking to build “weapons of mass destruction.”

On May 26, 2004, the *Times* published a letter from its editors acknowledging that it repeatedly “fell for misinformation” in its reporting on the Iraq war, citing Gordon’s reporting in particular.

Gordon’s claims were part of a pattern of false

reporting that had to be publicly retracted. In 2014, he published what he claimed were photographs of Russian soldiers operating in Ukraine, which the *Times*’ public editor since had to admit were “discredited.”

The retraction by the *Times*’ public editor quoted reporter Robert Parry, who explained the pattern in Gordon’s reporting:

All these stories draw hard conclusions from very murky evidence while ignoring or brushing aside alternative explanations. They also pile up supportive acclamations for their conclusions from self-interested sources, while treating any doubters as rubes.

And, indeed, this is the pattern of the *Wall Street Journal*’s latest article, which is, in the words of the late Parry, “Another Michael Gordon Special.”

Like so much of Gordon’s reporting, his latest article consists of hearsay about a secondary source ascribing a view to a section of the US government.

It is based on what anonymous officials told him were the contents of a report summarizing the views of different sections of the US government, which allegedly notes that the US Energy Department has changed its conclusion on the origins of COVID-19.

The article, based entirely on anonymous sources, was soon “confirmed” within hours by other strategically placed articles, also based on statements by “U.S. officials” in the *New York Times*, CNN, and NBC News, who also claimed to have knowledge about the secret document about a document.

Out of this agglomeration of nothings, of nothing

piled on top of nothing, the US media concocted a supposed sea change of views about the origins of COVID-19, whose intended effect is to make a typical person believe the lab leak theory is “credible.”

Thus, a lie, the claim that COVID-19 was made in a laboratory, was magically transfigured into the truth, all without anyone going on the record to assert it or give any facts to back it up.

But the fact that Gordon’s reporting violates the most basic journalistic principles does not mean that his writing does not reflect the aims of the White House.

Time and time again, the Bush, Obama and now Biden administrations have used Gordon to launder lies to the public while preserving some degree of deniability. In this case, too, the Biden administration is seeking to promote the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory in order to promote anti-Chinese hatred and xenophobia to justify the US military build-up in the Pacific.

The virus that causes COVID-19 was not created in a laboratory. It, like every pandemic before it, has been shown to have spread from animals to humans. In the words of Dr. Peter Hotez, “There’s an overwhelming feeling in the scientific community regarding the natural origin of COVID-19.”

What WAS “created,” however, was the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory, which was manufactured by the fascist ideologue Steve Bannon and his right-wing Chinese expatriate business partners, Miles Guo and Wang DingGang, in January 2020.

Over the next three years, the conspiracy theory was accepted by an ever-broader section of the US media. On May 25, 2021, following the publication of an earlier “Michael Gordon special,” the *Washington Post* published an article entitled, “How the Wuhan lab-leak theory suddenly became credible.”

The next day, on May 26, US President Joe Biden publicly declared that there were “two likely scenarios” of the origins of COVID-19, reaffirming the position of the State Department under Donald Trump and giving the fascist conspiracy theory equal weight with the overwhelming scientific consensus of natural origins.

Gordon’s latest report was bound by two events. On Thursday, it became known that the US is planning to triple the number of US troops stationed in Taiwan, which the United States has for decades treated as part of China.

On Tuesday, the Republican-led House of

Representatives “Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party” will hold its first high-profile meeting on “The Chinese Communist Party’s Threat to America.”

The central figure in the hearing will be Matthew Pottinger, the deputy national security adviser to Donald Trump. Pottinger was the mastermind of two interrelated policies, the effort to “decouple” the US and Chinese economies, and the promotion of the Wuhan lab lie to justify US military escalation against China.

In the words of Josh Rogin, another journalistic proponent of the Wuhan lab lie, Pottinger’s views have lived on in the Biden administration, with the “incoming Biden administration set to preserve many of the changes in the government’s approach to China that Pottinger, along with other like-minded officials, worked to implement.”

Over the past two months, however, the Biden administration has massively intensified its conflict with China, pushing through a bill at the end of last year that would directly arm Taiwan, surging US troops to the island, and this month, carrying out an attack on what was by all indications a Chinese research balloon that had blown over the United States.

The placement of the *Wall Street Journal’s* article and the wall-to-wall media coverage it has received are aimed at justifying the this threatening and aggressive military build-up near China.

All thinking people will reject the racist lies being promoted by the Biden administration and US media to scapegoat China and leading scientists for the deaths of 1 million Americans from COVID-19—deaths that are attributable to the subordination of public health to private profit under both Trump and Biden.



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