

White House and US media revive the Wuhan lab lie

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On Tuesday, Christopher Wray, the director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), publicly asserted that “the origins of the [COVID-19] pandemic are most likely a potential lab incident in Wuhan.”

Wray was the first Biden administration official to publicly assert his support for the Wuhan lab lie, a groundless conspiracy theory advocated by former President Donald Trump and his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, claiming that China was responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ahead of Wray’s statement, an article by Michael R. Gordon, the discredited journalist who notoriously promoted the Bush administration’s lies about “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq, claimed that the Department of Energy had expressed support for the lab lie. Gordon’s assertions were backed up by other “US officials,” likely from the White House, who spoke to CNN, NBC News and the *New York Times*.

As with the Bush administration’s efforts to create a justification for the illegal invasion of Iraq, in which the US intelligence agencies were tasked with making up false claims that were then sold to the public, the advocates of the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory within the US government are consciously and deliberately lying.

These lies are then fed to the public as a scientific consensus by a media that ignores the fact that the natural origins of COVID-19 are well established and that there is an overwhelming consensus among virologists in opposition to the conspiracy theory.

The public statement by Wray was coordinated with a bipartisan hearing the same day of the “Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party,” at which Democratic and Republican congressmen lined up to express their support for the Biden administration’s aggressive trade war and military escalation against China.

In his opening remarks, Committee Chairman Mike

Gallagher, a Republican, said the United States’ “competition” with China will not be “polite,” calling the US conflict with Beijing an “existential struggle over what life will look like in the 21st century.”

The star witness at the hearing, Matthew Pottinger, was the architect of the Trump administration’s plan for economic “decoupling” from China, which has been continued and intensified under Biden.

Pottinger, whom the fascist ideologue Steve Bannon praised as “one of the most significant people in the entire US government,” was among the leading public advocates within the Trump administration of the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory.

Over the coming months, the committee is expected to hold a series of meetings openly promoting the Wuhan lab conspiracy theories. As its crowning achievement, it is expected to haul Dr. Anthony Fauci, Dr. Peter Daszak and others before a reboot of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

The renewed promotion of the Wuhan lab lie is one component of a systematic campaign to demonize China and poison public opinion to justify war. The latest phase of the campaign began last month, when the Biden administration claimed that a Chinese research balloon that had accidentally blown over the United States was spying on US nuclear facilities. The government then took the unprecedented action of shooting it down, amid wall-to-wall anti-Chinese hysteria in the media.

In the three years since Bannon and his Chinese expatriate associates originated the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory, no evidence has emerged for either the accidental release of a naturally-occurring version of SARS-CoV-2 or the deliberate genetic engineering of the disease.

By contrast, the past three years have added significantly to the evidence for the natural origins of SARS-CoV-2. “The evidence is amongst the best we have for any emerging virus,” evolutionary biologist Michael

Worobey told NPR. “The scientific literature contains essentially nothing but original research articles that support a natural origin of this virus pandemic,” Worobey added to the Associated Press.

“There’s an overwhelming feeling in the scientific community regarding the natural origin of COVID-19,” vaccinologist Dr. Peter Hotez told ABC News.

Over the past three years, the leading advocates of the Wuhan lab lie, including Matt Ridley, Alina Chan and Richard Ebright, have, when pressed, made clear they do not know which version of the conspiracy theory they advocate, because “there has been no new scientific or other secure evidence” to point to one or the other, in the words of Ebright.

But in July 2022, Michael Worobey and Kristian G. Anderson published a paper in *Nature* that showed that the initial outbreak of COVID-19 was tightly clustered around the Wuhan Wet Market. The article explained that stalls holding the animals, as well as equipment used to process them, tested positive for the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Following the publication of the paper, it seemed almost impossible for the US government to continue to advocate the conspiracy theory.

But the US government’s advocacy of the Wuhan lab lie has nothing to do with science. It is a piece of war propaganda and disinformation of the kind in which intelligence agencies specialize. The FBI, the organization founded by J. Edgar Hoover to prosecute and blackmail left-wing opponents of American capitalism, is not in the business of investigating the origins of diseases.

Under the COINTELPRO program, the FBI carried out burglaries, illegal spying, blackmail and death threats. It waged a “no holds barred” effort to “neutralize” Dr. Martin Luther King. The “tactics employed by the FBI” were “illegal” and “indisputably degrading to a free society,” concluded the Church Committee in its final report.

Now, the FBI is launching yet another one of its famous “dirty tricks,” seeking to pin the blame for the COVID-19 pandemic on a country targeted by the United States for military conquest.

The public advocacy by the FBI of the Wuhan lab lie has exposed individuals like journalist Glenn Greenwald, comedian Jimmy Dore, and journalists Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate of the *Grayzone*, who are orienting ever more openly to the fascistic right.

Along with their open advocacy of mass infection, they have sought to scapegoat scientists, including Dr. Peter

Daszak of EcoHealth Alliance and Shi Zhengli of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, on the basis of the spurious claim that they created the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a fawning interview last October with economist Jeffrey Sachs, an advocate of the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory, Blumenthal declared that “EcoHealth Alliance... was a channel for USAID and Pentagon DARPA funding to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which remains a key culprit in the origins of Covid.”

Particularly over the past year, Blumenthal and Mate have fully embraced the pandemic policy of the far right, promoting Jay Bhattacharya and Martin Kulldorff, leading authors of the Great Barrington Declaration, which served as the model for COVID-19 policy under Trump and later Biden, leading to the deaths of over 1 million people.

Last month, they were among those who organized an “anti-war” rally based on a supposed “left-right” unity. The *World Socialist Web Site* opposed the rally, explaining that an anti-war movement cannot be built on the basis of unity with the fascist right.

With the FBI’s open embrace of the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory, they have been exposed as propagandists for the lie that will be used to justify a US war with China.

The escalating US conflict with China raises the urgent necessity of building an anti-war movement based in the working class. This movement must be linked with the defense of a scientific response to the pandemic and the struggle to stop COVID-19 infections and ultimately eliminate or eradicate the disease. The fight against the pandemic is a key social demand for workers, who are constantly exposed to the virus in unsafe and crowded workplaces by employers who cover up outbreaks and encourage workers to work even while they are actively infected.

The defense of scientists from the fascist witch-hunters and their apologists is a critical component of this struggle.



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