

Germany's Federal Intelligence Service spreads far-right Wuhan lab conspiracy theory

Tamino Dreisam
19 March 2025

Recent media reports are proliferating the claim that the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) has evidence the coronavirus responsible for COVID-19 is not of natural origin but came from a laboratory in the Chinese city of Wuhan. The basis for this is said to be data from Chinese research institutions, which the BND claimed it obtained as part of an intelligence operation code-named "Saaremaa." According to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the BND came to this conclusion as early as 2020 and estimates the probability of its correctness at 80 to 95 percent.

In fact, there is no scientific evidence for this "Wuhan Lab Theory"—nor can it be scientifically proven. It is a conspiracy theory that was already being advanced by right-wing extremist circles in 2020. Since then, it has been scientifically refuted multiple times but is increasingly being adopted by the political establishment.

Large sections of the media responded to the BND's "evidence," which was neither specifically cited nor critically questioned, by adopting this far-right conspiracy theory and presenting the "Wuhan lab theory" as being just as likely or even more likely than the scientifically supported theory of the virus's natural origin at an animal market in Wuhan.

An article from broadcaster ZDF even went so far as to speculate about China's "biological warfare," claiming that a research department at the National University of Defence Technology in China had been working for years on a virus "that distinguishes which ethnic groups it attacks and which it does not."

A debate on the issue was scheduled for Thursday in the Bundestag (parliament). Several politicians have already indicated that it would be used to intensify the

warmongering against China.

For example, Konstantin von Notz (Greens), chairman of the Parliamentary Control Panel (PKGr) which has oversight of the secret services, stated: "Should it be confirmed that this pandemic is man-made, something fundamental must change in our perception of this catastrophe." Wolfgang Kubicki, deputy chairman of the Liberal Democrats (FDP) and vice-president of the Bundestag, called for the Chinese ambassador to be summoned.

Instead of rejecting the unscientific quackery of the Wuhan lab theory, the outgoing Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democrat, SPD) declared that it was "becoming increasingly easy to manipulate viruses, including other pathogens, so that they are dangerous to humans." In this regard, one must be "better prepared," he added.

China itself responded to the sweeping accusations of the BND and German politicians and media with a statement from Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning. She said that China "firmly rejects any form of political manoeuvring on the issue of the coronavirus," adding that scientific questions should be assessed by scientists.

And scientists speak a clear language and strongly reject the alleged "findings" of the BND. Christian Drosten, the leading virologist at the Charité hospital in Berlin and a member of an expert panel to which the BND's assessment was presented, criticised the fact that the raw data was not made available to the scientists. "I cannot, therefore, give a scientific opinion simply because I do not have access to the data," he explained. In addition, all members of the panel were obliged to maintain confidentiality.

Drosten emphasised that it was important “for the public to understand what it means to make a scientific assessment. That means you have raw data, you analyse it, and you publish that analysis.” However, the raw data must also be published with the publication, “so that other scientists can also analyse it using their own methods and challenge what you are putting out there in public.”

That was the core of scientific discourse, he said, adding that without proper scientific evaluation, you are merely making assertions. “Whether it’s a professor, a secret service or a politician who makes the claim, it’s just an assertion,” Drosten said. Therefore, he did not want to be associated with the accusation that the virus was created in a laboratory.

In 2020, Drosten and other scientists had already signed a statement in the renowned medical journal *The Lancet* condemning “conspiracy theories” about the virus having a “non-natural origin.” According to Drosten, the current state of information also indicated that a natural origin was far more likely—“that is also the assumption of almost all scientists working on the subject.”

From the outset, the *World Socialist Web Site* has defended the scientific approach to the origins of the coronavirus. When Trump’s new CIA director John Ratcliffe published a “reassessment” of the origins of Covid-19 in January, we wrote:

The natural origin of the COVID pandemic, at the Huanan Seafood market in Wuhan, remains the only convincing explanation of the pandemic and is supported by the scientific evidence that has emerged over the last five years. The lab-leak conspiracy theory, by contrast, was cooked up by Chinese expatriate anti-communists allied with [Trump fascist adviser] Bannon, and given pseudo-scientific cover by the former science editor of the *New York Times*, Nicholas Wade, and other equally disreputable characters.

The fact that large sections of official politics and the media are now relying on alleged “evidence” from the BND, and join along with this outfit, does not lend any credibility to the conspiracy theory. The Federal Intelligence Service, Germany’s domestic spy agency, which was set up by leading Nazis following World War Two, has a long tradition of spreading lies in preparation for wars. During the illegal 2003 US attack on Iraq, alleged “evidence” of Saddam

Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction came from the BND, among others.

The current campaign takes place against the background of the formation of a government in Berlin that is planning a rearmament campaign similar to that of the Nazis, as well as an unprecedented programme of social austerity—and has already decided on a level of arms spending of historic proportions, even before the new government enters office. In this situation, the fact that the media and establishment politicians are spreading far-right conspiracy theories about the origin of the coronavirus shows once again how consciously they are strengthening far-right and fascist forces.

With the constant escalation of wars and the intensifying conflicts between the major powers, China is also increasingly coming into the crosshairs of German imperialism. The Wuhan lab conspiracy theory prepares the ideological ground for a confrontation with China. At the same time, on the fifth anniversary of the pandemic, it is a desperate attempt by the ruling class to divert attention away from its own responsibility for the devastating effects of the pandemic. Not the Wuhan laboratory, but the deliberate policy of allowing the virus to spread uncontrolled in the interests of capitalist profit is the reason for almost 200,000 coronavirus deaths in Germany alone and almost 30 million worldwide.



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