

New Cache of Documents Exposes Lies to Congress

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✓ Fact Checked

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Freedom of Information Act litigation by The Intercept against the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has resulted in the release of 900+ pages of previously undisclosed documents detailing the work of EcoHealth Alliance, an NIH/NIAID-funded organization that subcontracted gain-of-function research on bat coronaviruses to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in China
- › Released documents include two previously unpublished grant proposals funded by the NIAID and project updates relating to EcoHealth Alliance's research
- › The documents allegedly reveal a novel SARS-related coronavirus was created that was more pathogenic to humanized mice than the virus from which it was constructed
- › According to Richard Ebright, Ph.D., a molecular biologist and biodefense expert at Rutgers University, "The documents make it clear that assertions by the NIH director, Francis Collins, and the NIAID director, Anthony Fauci, that the NIH did not support gain-of-function research or potential pandemic pathogen enhancement at WIV are untruthful"
- › In the wake of The Intercept report and the additional grant documentation, some GOP members are calling on Fauci to resign while others want him fired from his position on the White House COVID-19 response team

A story that is now exploding and being reported across political party lines is damning new evidence showing Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), lied when he insisted he'd never funded gain-of-function research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in China.

Ongoing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) litigation by The Intercept against the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has resulted in the release of 900+ pages of previously undisclosed documents detailing the work of EcoHealth Alliance, an NIH/NIAID-funded organization that subcontracted gain-of-function (GoF) research on bat coronaviruses to the WIV.

Grant Proposals Shed Light on GoF Coronavirus Research

As reported by The Intercept, September 6, 2021:¹

“The trove of documents includes two previously unpublished grant proposals that were funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as well as project updates relating to EcoHealth Alliance’s research, which has been scrutinized amid increased interest in the origins of the pandemic ...

‘This is a road map to the high-risk research that could have led to the current pandemic,’ said Gary Ruskin, executive director of U.S. Right To Know, a group that has been investigating the origins of Covid-19.

One of the grants, titled ‘Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence,’² outlines an ambitious effort led by EcoHealth Alliance President Peter Daszak to screen thousands of bat samples for novel coronaviruses. The research also involved screening people who work with live animals.

The documents contain several critical details about the research in Wuhan, including the fact that key experimental work with humanized mice was conducted at a biosafety level 3 lab at Wuhan University Center for Animal Experiment – and not at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, as was previously assumed.

The documents raise additional questions about the theory that the pandemic may have begun in a lab accident, an idea that Daszak has aggressively dismissed.”

The “Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence” grant³ was originally awarded in 2014 for a five-year period lasting until 2019. The second grant, “Understanding Risk of Zoonotic Virus Emergency in Emerging Infectious Disease Hotspots of Southeast Asia,”⁴ was awarded in August 2020 and is ongoing through 2025.

NIAID Circumvented US Moratorium on GoF Research

In October 2014, a U.S. moratorium on federal funding of GoF research “that may be reasonably anticipated to confer attributes to influenza, Mers, or Sars viruses such that the virus would have enhanced pathogenicity and/or transmissibility in mammals via the respiratory route,” took effect.^{5,6}

The ban came on the heels of high-profile lab mishaps at the CDC and controversial experiments in which the bird flu virus was engineered to become more lethal and contagious between ferrets.

However, the NIH/NIAID did not put a stop to the EcoHealth Alliance’s research subcontracted to the WIV. They allowed the research to proceed, despite the moratorium, ostensibly because it was initiated before the federal funding pause was put in place.

The decision was criticized by Simon Wain-Hobson, a virologist at Pasteur Institute in Paris, who pointed out that “If the [new] virus escaped, nobody could predict the trajectory.”⁷ The moratorium was officially lifted at the end of December 2017.⁸

Curiously, while the moratorium was a direct order by President Obama, when the moratorium was lifted at the end of 2017, it was done so by the NIH and NIAID, without explanation or public debate. Fauci reportedly didn’t even discuss it with his boss, health secretary Alex Azar. Azar found out the moratorium had been lifted through reading media reports three years later, in 2021.⁹

After the moratorium was lifted in 2017, a special review board, the Potential Pandemic Pathogens Control and Oversight (the P3CO Review Framework), was created within the

Department of Human Health Services (DHHS) to evaluate whether grants involving dangerous pathogens are worth the risks. The review board is also responsible for ensuring proper safeguards are in place for approved research.¹⁰

According to Richard Ebright, Ph.D., a molecular biologist and biodefence expert at Rutgers University, an NIH grant for research involving the modification of bat coronaviruses at the WIV was sneaked through because the NIAID didn't flag it for review.¹¹

In other words, the WIV received federal funding from the NIAID without the research first receiving a green-light from the HHS review board. The NIAID apparently used a convenient loophole in the review framework. As it turns out, it's the funding agency's responsibility to flag potential gain-of-function research for review. If it doesn't, the review board has no knowledge of it.

According to Ebright, the NIAID and NIH have “systemically thwarted – indeed systematically nullified – the HHS P3CO Framework by declining to flag and forward proposals for review.”¹²

Identifying, Altering Coronaviruses Likely to Infect Humans

As reported by The Intercept, under the “Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence” grant,¹³ EcoHealth Alliance received a total of \$3.1 million, \$599,000 of which went to the WIV to identify and alter bat coronaviruses suspected of being able to infect humans.

“ The materials ... reveal for the first time that one of the resulting novel, laboratory-generated SARS-related coronaviruses — one not been previously disclosed publicly — was more pathogenic to humanized mice than the starting virus from which it was constructed ... and thus not only was reasonably

anticipated to exhibit enhanced pathogenicity, but, indeed, was demonstrated to exhibit enhanced pathogenicity. ~ Dr. Richard Ebright, Ph.D.”

Long before the COVID-19 outbreak, scientists had expressed concerns about these kinds of experiments, as researchers may end up creating the very thing they fear the most. The grant in question actually acknowledged such concerns, stating that:

“Fieldwork involves the highest risk of exposure to SARS or other CoVs, while working in caves with high bat density overhead and the potential for fecal dust to be inhaled.”

The Intercept quotes molecular biologist Alina Chan, who insists the grant document shows Daszak has every reason to take the lab-leak theory seriously.

“In this proposal, they actually point out that they know how risky this work is,” she told The Intercept.¹⁴ “They keep talking about people potentially getting bitten – and they kept records of everyone who got bitten. Does EcoHealth have those records? And if not, how can they possibly rule out a research-related accident?”

Pandemic Pathogen Enhancement Took Place

The Intercept also contacted Ebright to get his take on the new grant documents and what they tell us about the creation of novel viruses in the Wuhan lab:¹⁵

“The viruses they constructed were tested for their ability to infect mice that were engineered to display human type receptors on their cell,” Ebright wrote to The Intercept after reviewing the documents. Ebright also said the documents make it clear that two different types of novel coronaviruses were able to infect humanized mice.

'While they were working on SARS-related coronavirus, they were carrying out a parallel project at the same time on MERS-related coronavirus,' Ebright said, referring to the virus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome.'

In a series of Twitter posts, Ebright went further, stating:^{16,17}

"The materials show that the 2014 and 2019 NIH grants to EcoHealth with subcontracts to WIV funded gain-of-function research as defined in federal policies in effect in 2014-2017 and potential pandemic pathogen enhancement as defined in federal policies in effect in 2017-present.

(This had been evident previously from published research papers that credited the 2014 grant and from the publicly available summary of the 2019 grant. But this now can be stated definitively from progress reports of the 2014 grant and the full proposal of the 2017 grant.)

The materials confirm the grants supported the construction – in Wuhan – of novel chimeric SARS-related coronaviruses that combined a spike gene from one coronavirus with genetic information from another coronavirus, and confirmed the resulting viruses could infect human cells.

The materials reveal that the resulting novel, laboratory-generated SARS-related coronaviruses also could infect mice engineered to display human receptors on cells ('humanized mice').

The materials further reveal for the first time that one of the resulting novel, laboratory-generated SARS-related coronaviruses – one not been previously disclosed publicly – was more pathogenic to humanized mice than the starting virus from which it was constructed ... and thus not only was reasonably anticipated to exhibit enhanced pathogenicity, but, indeed, was demonstrated to exhibit enhanced pathogenicity.

The documents make it clear that assertions by the NIH Director, Francis Collins, and the NIAID Director, Anthony Fauci, that the NIH did not support gain-

of-function research or potential pandemic pathogen enhancement at WIV are untruthful.”

Fauci Called on to Resign

In the wake of The Intercept report and the additional grant documentation, some GOP members are calling on Fauci to resign while others want him fired from his position on the White House COVID-19 response team.¹⁸

U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., has already referred Fauci to the Department of Justice for an investigation for possible perjury charges, relating to his Congressional testimony in May¹⁹ and July²⁰ 2021, where he vehemently denied ever having funded gain-of-function research.

Paul specifically asked the DOJ to investigate whether Fauci violated 18 U.S. Code § 1001²¹ — which makes it a federal crime to make “any materially false, fictitious or fraudulent statement or representation” as part of “any investigation or review” conducted by Congress — or any other statute.

Concerns About Lax Security at the WIV Date Back to 2018

Why does it matter whether the NIH/NIAID funded GoF research at the WIV? Well, as noted by The Hill anchors Ryan Grim, Kim Iversen and Robby Soave in the video above, the public has a right to know how our tax dollars are being used and the right to have a say when it comes to deciding whether risky research that could wipe out humanity should be conducted.

Public officials and researchers themselves are not necessarily the best people to make decisions that involve morals and ethics, and unless curtailed by the public, many will happily engage in dangerous and ethically questionable experiments for the sake of science. But just because something can be done doesn't mean it should be done.

When it comes to GoF research on pathogens, history is replete with examples of deadly diseases escaping from laboratories. A Vox article²² written just months before the

SARS-CoV-2 pandemic documents many of them and shows how it has only been luck that they haven't caused a major global pandemic.

Fauci's decision to fund GoF research at the WIV through EcoHealth Alliance is particularly questionable in light of evidence suggesting the WIV was known to have poor safety standards.

What Really Happened in Wuhan?

In her book, "What Really Happened in Wuhan: the Cover-Ups, the Conspiracies and the Classified Research," Sharri Markson goes through this evidence. An excerpt from the book was published in The Times, September 4, 2021:²³

"It's late March 2018 and the U.S. career diplomat Rick Switzer has just flown home to Beijing after a trip to Wuhan. Along with his colleague Jamie Fouss, the U.S. consul-general in Wuhan, he'd led a delegation of American environmental, science, technology and health consular staff to inspect the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where he'd met Shi Zhengli, the 'batwoman.'

It was two years before a pandemic would arise from that very city – perhaps even that very laboratory – and he was deeply concerned about what he saw during his visit. The consular official at the US embassy in Beijing tapped out a 'sensitive but unclassified' cable to send back to the State Department.

He needed to let Washington know just what was going on inside China's new level-4 biocontainment facility dealing with the world's deadliest and most contagious pathogens. The cable warned of poor safety practices at the laboratory."

Diplomat Warned of Pandemic Risk at Wuhan Lab

Switzer's cable specifically warned that the lab's work on coronaviruses' human transmission potential represented a pandemic risk, were such viruses to escape.

Shi Zhengli, director for the Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases at the WIV, had for years been “trying to determine how coronaviruses gain the ability to skip from one species to another by ‘inserting different segments from the human SARS-CoV spike protein into the spike protein of the bat virus,’” Markson writes.

Switzer feared the escape of a pathogen with pandemic potential was quite possible, as the lab was short on appropriately trained technicians and investigators needed for safe operations. Switzer was also concerned about the fact that institute officials were limiting approval for international scientists to conduct work at the lab. Markson writes:²⁴

“What made this particularly alarming was the work the laboratory was conducting. Disturbingly, Switzer and Fouss discovered the laboratory was setting up its very own database identifying all deadly viruses with pandemic potential.

It would be its own version of a concept called the Global Virome Project (GVP), the cable stated. ‘The GVP aims to launch this year as an international collaborative effort to identify within ten years virtually all of the planet’s viruses that have pandemic or epidemic potential and the ability to jump to humans,’ the cable read.

This revelation – of such a database being developed by a laboratory where the U.S. had no oversight – should have been highly alarming. Except it’s unclear whether anybody with any level of seniority ever read this cable after it was sent to the State Department and intelligence apparatus in Washington.”

NIH Has Been Major Funder of WIV for a Decade

Despite this obvious lack of oversight or insight into the work at the WIV, the NIH has been a major funder of the lab, along with the National Science Foundation of China. Over the past decade, the NIH has funded at least 60 scientific projects at the lab.²⁵

Other U.S. agencies have also funded research at the WIV, including USAID, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the China–U.S. Collaborative Program on Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Diseases, as well as the New York Blood Center, the University of North Carolina and the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.²⁶

That Fauci and the WIV have a cherished relationship is also suggested by the fact that once Fauci started being questioned about his funding of GoF at the lab, the WIV apparently tried to help out by deleting mentions of its collaboration with the NIAID/NIH and other American research partners from its website. It also deleted descriptions of GoF on the SARS virus. Markson writes:²⁷

“In hindsight we can clearly see that health authorities, the U.S. government and international governments all ignored the warnings from eminent scientists, and allowed the dangerous scientific research to go ahead. The public was never brought into these debates.

A pandemic is something that affects all of us – we have lost loved ones, battled serious illness, lost jobs, had our businesses and ways of life destroyed. While the origins of Covid-19 have not yet been established, it’s clear this type of research carries grave risks.

What was even more terrifying was that not only was the NIH funding gain-of-function research in the U.S. – but it was funding research in China, where it had no oversight and no way of knowing how safe the laboratories were where these risky experiments were taking place.”

Fauci is clearly committed to continuing risky GoF research, seeing how the NIAID, in August 2020, announced a five-year, \$82-million investment in a new global network of Centers for Research in Emerging Infectious Diseases.²⁸

The EcoHealth Alliance will receive \$7.5 million²⁹ from this grant, and planned research will include GoF-type experiments that the NIAID says³⁰ will "determine what genetic or other changes make [animal] pathogens capable of infecting humans." In other words,

more of the exact same kind of research suspected of being the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic will be funded for the next five years unless somebody stops it.

British Documentary Details Evidence for Lab Leak

While frank and open discussion about the lab-leak theory was banned for over a year, it's finally getting some well-deserved airtime. The British Channel 4 investigative documentary, "Did COVID Leak From a Lab in China?" offers up strong evidence for just that.

It also makes explicit how China misled the world about its research with dangerous pathogens, and makes clear that Fauci lied when claiming no GoF research was ever funded by the NIH/NIAID.

One "smoking gun" is a research article written by WIV scientists titled "Discovery of a Rich Gene Pool of Bat SARS-Related Coronaviruses Provides New Insights Into the Origin of SARS Coronavirus."³¹ This research was funded by the NIH and meets the Department of Health and Human Services' definition of gain-of-function research.^{32,33}

The Channel 4 documentary addressed this paper. When asked whether the NIH ever funded gain-of-function research at the WIV, David Relman, a research physician at Stanford University, replies, "Yes. Indirectly, but yes. How do we know? The paper says, right on the front page, 'Supported by NIAID, NIH.'"

Intelligence Assessment on COVID-19 Origins Falls Short

At President Biden's request, the Intelligence Community (IC) released an unclassified summary³⁴ of its investigation into the origin of SARS-CoV-2, August 27, 2021. Was the virus genetically engineered and/or the result of a lab leak? The report is overall inconclusive, but does state that:

"One IC element assesses with moderate confidence that the first human infection with SARS-CoV-2 most likely was the result of a laboratory-associated incident, probably involving experimentation, animal handling, or sampling by

the Wuhan Institute of Virology. These analysts give weight to the inherently risky nature of work on coronaviruses.”

According to the IC, the U.S. government is simply unable to reach a conclusive assessment on the origins of the virus without the assistance and cooperation of China. In a commentary published by the Organic Consumers Association, Alexis Baden states,³⁵ “This is an entirely unsatisfactory and disingenuous statement that fails to acknowledge fact-finding that can and must be completed by the U.S. government.”

Baden calls for a “full investigation into U.S.-funded virus hunting, gain-of-function experiments on potential pandemic pathogens and biological weapons research.” She goes on to list “five questions that only the U.S. can answer.” In summary, those questions include:

1. Did Ralph Baric hide the relationship between SARS-CoV-2 and his infamous lab-created virus SHC014-MA15, published in the 2015 paper³⁶ “A SARS-like Cluster of Circulating Bat Coronaviruses Shows Potential for Human Emergence”?

In this experiment, the spike protein from SHC014 was inserted into a SARS coronavirus backbone, thereby creating a coronavirus capable of binding to human ACE2 receptors and efficiently replicate in human airway cells. The virus also circumvented antibodies and vaccines.

While published in 2015, Baric didn’t deposit the new virus sequence into the GenBank until late May 2020, and when he did, he misnamed it SHC015-MA15. At present, all we have is Baric’s word that this virus bears no resemblance to SARS-CoV-2.

2. Why did U.S. government officials collude to hide evidence that SARS-CoV-2 was genetically engineered?
3. How did U.S. funding contribute to the origin of SARS-CoV-2?
4. What can U.S. doctors, scientists, military personnel and citizens who were in Wuhan in the second half of 2019 tell us about the first cases?

5. Can the U.S. rebut Chinese accusations that SARS-CoV-2 came from Fort Detrick?

Baden comes up with many additional questions under each rubric, and I highly recommend reading her article in its entirety. Like me, Baden, believes we must ban GoF research if we want to avoid another pandemic like COVID-19.

In the House Foreign Affairs Committee report³⁷ “The Origins of COVID-19: An Investigation of the Wuhan Institute of Virology,” published in August 2021, Congressman Michael McCaul states:

“[T]here is legislation Congress can pass that would not only hold those responsible accountable but also help to prevent a future pandemic, including but not limited to: Institute a ban on conducting and funding any work that includes gain-of-function research until an international and legally binding standard is set, and only where that standard is verifiably being followed.”

So far, more than 50,000 Americans have signed the Organic Consumers Association’s petition to ban GoF research. If you agree, please take a moment to sign your name to it now.

[Sign the Petition](#)

Sources and References

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