

# Over 100,000 Released Documents Expose COVID Origin Fraud

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › An investigative report by Vanity Fair contributor Katherine Eban, based on more than 100,000 EcoHealth Alliance documents, shows a disturbing reality of “murky grant agreements, flimsy NIH oversight and pursuit of government grants by pitching increasingly risky global research”
- › In 2014, EcoHealth received a \$3.7 million NIAID grant to study the risk of bat coronavirus emergence and the potential for outbreaks in human populations. Nearly \$600,000 of that went to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which was a key collaborator
- › The 2014 grant highlights the truth of what critics of gain-of-function (GOF) research have been saying for years, which is that this kind of research never achieves its aims. They say it needs to be done to prevent and/or get ahead of pandemics, but not a single pandemic has ever been averted and, instead, GOF research may actually be the cause of them
- › EcoHealth president Peter Daszak’s behavior has added fuel to suspicions of a lab leak — potentially of a virus that he himself helped create. In 2015, he warned a global pandemic might occur from a laboratory incident, especially the sort of virus manipulation research being done in Wuhan. Despite this history, in February 2020, Daszak wrote a “scientific consensus statement” published in The Lancet that condemned the lab leak theory as a wild conspiracy theory
- › It appears those who insist SARS-CoV-2 is of natural origin, despite all the evidence to the contrary, are doing so because they don’t want risky virological research to be blamed for the COVID pandemic

In a March 31, 2022, investigative report,<sup>1</sup> Vanity Fair contributor Katherine Eban reviewed the contents of more than 100,000 EcoHealth Alliance documents, including meeting minutes and internal emails and reports, most of which predate the COVID-19 pandemic, showing a disturbing reality of “murky grant agreements, flimsy NIH oversight and pursuit of government grants by pitching increasingly risky global research.”<sup>2</sup>

April 4, 2022, Eban discussed her investigative report with “Rising” cohosts Ryan Grim and Robby Soave (video above). The various documents were released in accordance with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests by several parties, including BuzzFeed, The Intercept, U.S. Right to Know, White Coat Waste, GOP Oversight and others.<sup>3</sup>

EcoHealth Alliance president Peter Daszak admits to “cultivating” government connections for years by attending fancy cocktail parties in Washington D.C., oftentimes giving presentations alongside Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and internal correspondence reveal his obsession with funding – to the point of pitching risky research proposals to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

## **The Missing Gene Sequence**

Eban begins her story with the account of Jesse D. Bloom, Ph.D., a computational virologist and evolutionary biologist with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. June 18, 2021, Bloom sent the draft of a preprint article he’d written to Fauci and Fauci’s boss, Dr. Francis Collins, then-director of the National Institutes of Health.

According to Eban, the paper “contained sensitive revelations” about the NIH, and Bloom wanted Fauci to see it before it went to print and became public knowledge.

*“Under ordinary circumstances, the preprint might have sparked a respectful exchange of views. But this was no ordinary preprint, and no ordinary moment,”* Eban writes.<sup>4</sup>

The origin of SARS-CoV-2 was highly contested at this point, with most officials still insisting it had evolved naturally and jumped species, while a growing group of independent investigators kept pointing to genetic discrepancies that made natural evolution highly unlikely.

“A growing contingent were asking if it could have originated inside a nearby laboratory that is known to have conducted risky coronavirus research funded in part by the United States,” Eban writes, referring to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in Wuhan, China, where the COVID-19 outbreak first occurred. Eban continues:<sup>5</sup>

*“Bloom’s paper was the product of detective work he’d undertaken after noticing that a number of early SARS-CoV-2 genomic sequences mentioned in a published paper from China had somehow vanished without a trace.*

*The sequences, which map the nucleotides that give a virus its unique genetic identity, are key to tracking when the virus emerged and how it might have evolved.*

*In Bloom’s view, their disappearance raised the possibility that the Chinese government might be trying to hide evidence about the pandemic’s early spread. Piecing together clues, Bloom established that the NIH itself had deleted the sequences from its own archive at the request of researchers in Wuhan.*

*Now, he was hoping Fauci and his boss, NIH director Francis Collins, could help him identify other deleted sequences that might shed light on the mystery.”*

On a brief side note, The Epoch Times addressed the alleged deletion of genetic sequences from its database at the request of a Chinese researcher in an April 2, 2022, article.<sup>6</sup> NIH media branch chief Amanda Fine told The Epoch Times that the sequences were not actually erased; the data were merely removed from public access, so the data is now only available to those who have its accession number.

## **Contentious Disagreements**

Collins responded by scheduling a Zoom meeting for June 20, 2021, to which he invited Fauci, Kristian Andersen, Ph.D., an evolutionary biologist, and Robert Garry, Ph.D., a virologist. Bloom invited evolutionary biologist Sergei Pond, Ph.D., and Rasmus Nielsen, Ph.D., a genetic biologist with expertise in statistical and computational aspects of evolutionary theory and genetics.

The meeting was a contentious one, and it so troubled Bloom that, six months later, he wrote a detailed account of it. After Bloom had described his findings and the questions it raised, Andersen jumped in, saying he found Bloom's analysis "deeply troubling." Eban writes:<sup>7</sup>

*"If the Chinese scientists wanted to delete their sequences from the database, which NIH policy entitled them to do, it was unethical for Bloom to analyze them further, he claimed. And there was nothing unusual about the early genomic sequences in Wuhan.*

*Instantly, Nielsen and Andersen were 'yelling at each other,' Bloom wrote, with Nielsen insisting that the early Wuhan sequences were 'extremely puzzling and unusual.'*

*Andersen ... leveled a third objection. Andersen, Bloom wrote, 'needed security outside his house, and my pre-print would fuel conspiratorial notions that China was hiding data and thereby lead to more criticism of scientists such as himself.'*

*Fauci then weighed in, objecting to the preprint's description of Chinese scientists 'surreptitiously' deleting the sequences. The word was loaded, said Fauci, and the reason they'd asked for the deletions was unknown.*

*That's when Andersen made a suggestion that surprised Bloom. He said he was a screener at the preprint server, which gave him access to papers that weren't yet public.*

*He then offered to either entirely delete the preprint or revise it 'in a way that would leave no record that this had been done.' Bloom refused, saying that he doubted either option was appropriate, 'given the contentious nature of the meeting.'*

*At that point, both Fauci and Collins distanced themselves from Andersen's offer, with Fauci saying, as Bloom recalled it, 'Just for the record, I want to be clear that I never suggested you delete or revise the pre-print.' They seemed to know that Andersen had gone too far."*

## **EcoHealth, a Government-Funded Sponsor of Risky Research**

The June 20 Zoom call reflected "a siege mentality at the NIH," Eban writes, "whose cause was much larger than Bloom and the missing sequences." The NIH had a publicity problem, because it was becoming known that the NIH/NIAID had funded potentially risky gain-of-function (GOF) research at the WIV through the EcoHealth Alliance. Bloom's questions only ratcheted up an already delicate situation.

In 2014, EcoHealth received a \$3.7 million NIAID grant to study the risk of bat coronavirus emergence and the potential for outbreaks in human populations. Nearly \$600,000 of that went to the WIV, which was a key collaborator. (By that time, Daszak had already been working with Shi Zhengli, the director of the WIV best known as "the bat woman," for nine years. In all, since 2005, Shi and Daszak have collaborated on 17 scientific papers.<sup>8</sup>)

The 2014 grant highlights the truth of what critics of GOF research have been saying for years, which is that this kind of research never achieves its aims.<sup>9</sup> They say it needs to be done to prevent and/or get ahead of pandemics, but not a single pandemic has ever been averted, and instead, GOF research may actually be the cause of them.

EcoHealth utterly failed to predict, let alone prevent, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the initial outbreak occurring in the vicinity of the WIV raised suspicions of a lab leak from the start.

The NIH/NIAID's obvious attempts to hide their involvement with GOF research on bat coronaviruses at the WIV has only worsened such suspicions, as did the Chinese government's refusal to share raw patient data or participate in efforts to investigate SARS-CoV-2's origin.

Curiously, in September 2019, three months before COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic, the WIV also took down its virus database, which at the time contained some 22,000 samples of viruses and their genetic sequences, and they've refused international requests to restore it ever since.

On the flipside, in what appears to have been an act of beneficent reciprocity to its American allies, the WIV deleted mentions of its collaboration with the NIAID/NIH and other American research partners from its website in March 2021, after Senate members started grilling Fauci about his funding of GOF research at the WIV.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, they also deleted a scientific article discussing genetic research on the SARS virus.<sup>11</sup>

## **Daszak's Suspicious Behavior**

Daszak's behavior has also added fuel to suspicions of a lab leak – potentially of a virus that he himself helped create. For example:

- In an October 2015 Nature article, Daszak warned a global pandemic might occur from a laboratory incident, and that “the risks were greater with the sort of virus manipulation research being carried out in Wuhan.”<sup>12</sup>

Earlier that year, he also gave a speech at a National Academies of Science seminar on reducing risk from emerging infectious diseases, and among the material he presented was a paper titled, “Assessing Coronavirus Threats,” which included an examination of the “spillover potential” from “genetic and experimental studies” on viruses.

Specifically, he highlighted the danger of experimenting on “humanized mice,” meaning lab mice that have been genetically altered to carry human genes, cells or

tissues.

Yet despite his history of such warnings, in February 2020, Daszak wrote a “scientific consensus statement” published in The Lancet that condemned the lab leak theory as nothing more than a wild conspiracy theory.<sup>13</sup>

- EcoHealth received funding from the USAID PREDICT program, which was involved in identifying viruses with pandemic potential. The director of that program, Dennis Carroll, is now suspected of having stolen taxpayer funds by using PREDICT funds to pay for expenses related to his own organization, the Global Virome Project (GVP).<sup>14</sup>

In March 2019 email, Daszak noted that lawyers had flagged this conflict of interest and had suggested changes to a board of directors’ letter. Daszak wrote: “I realize this isn’t the language you wanted, but it’s safer for us at this sensitive point where we still receive USAID funding ... for GVP related activities.”<sup>15</sup>

The comment seems to confirm that Daszak was aware that what Carroll was doing was inappropriate and potentially illegal, and he helped cover up Carroll’s improprieties.

- Nathan Wolfe, a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader graduate, has been on EcoHealth’s editorial board since 2004, and in 2017, they cowrote a study on bat coronaviruses.<sup>16</sup> Wolf is the founder of Metabiota, now implicated in the operation of U.S.-funded biolabs in Ukraine that Russia claims have been conducting secret bioweapons research.<sup>17</sup>
- Daszak is also one of the 15 coauthors of the 2015 paper, “SARS-Like Cluster of Circulating Bat Coronavirus Pose Threat for Human Emergence,”<sup>18</sup> which biowarfare expert Francis Boyle claims is “the smoking gun” that reveals the culprits responsible for the COVID pandemic.

Other coauthors and funders of that paper include Collins, Fauci and Ralph Baric, Ph.D., who has been doing coronavirus research on humanized mice together with

Shi – the very research Daszak had warned could pose the most serious pandemic hazard.

## **Why the Lack of Transparency From All Involved?**

The efforts by Collins, Fauci, Dazak and other members of the scientific community to stifle debate about the genesis of SARS-CoV-2 – most of whom have clear connections to bat coronavirus GOF research and/or the WIV – raises obvious questions about motive.

*“Could it have been to protect science from the ravings of conspiracy theorists?” Eban asks.<sup>19</sup> “Or to protect against a revelation that could prove fatal to certain risky research that they deem indispensable? Or to protect vast streams of grant money from political interference or government regulation? ...*

*Perhaps more than anyone, Peter Daszak ... was uniquely positioned to help the world crack open the origin mystery, not least by sharing what he knew.*

*But last year, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, the Columbia University economist who oversees the Lancet’s COVID-19 commission, dismissed Daszak from the helm of a task force investigating the virus’s genesis, after he flatly refused to share progress reports from his contested research grant.*

*(... Daszak said he was ‘simply following NIH guidance’ when he declined Sachs’s request, because the agency was withholding the reports in question ‘until they had adjudicated a FOIA request.’ The reports are now publicly available, he said.)*

*‘[Daszak] and NIH have acted badly,’ Sachs told Vanity Fair. ‘There has been a lack of transparency ...’*

*He said that the NIH should support an ‘independent scientific investigation’ to examine the ‘possible role’ in the pandemic of the NIH, EcoHealth Alliance, the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and a partner laboratory at the University of North*

*Carolina. 'Both hypotheses are still very much with us,' he said, and 'need to be investigated seriously and scientifically' ..."*

## **Alarm Bells Went Off in 2016**

Getting back to the \$3.7 million NIAID grant EcoHealth received in 2014, Eban recounts how warning bells went off in 2016, when EcoHealth was late on submitting its annual progress report. "The agency threatened to withhold funds until he filed it," she writes, and "The report he finally did submit worried the agency's grant specialists."

According to the report, Daszak and his collaborators were seeking to create an infectious clone of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), a novel coronavirus with a 35% mortality rate.

*"The report also made clear that the NIH grant had already been used to construct two chimeric coronaviruses similar to the one that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which emerged in 2002 and went on to cause at least 774 deaths worldwide.*

*(A chimeric virus is one that combines fragments of different viruses.) These revelations prompted the NIH's grant specialists to ask a critical question: Should the work be subject to a federal moratorium on what was called gain-of-function research?" Eban writes.<sup>20</sup>*

*"With that, Daszak's grant got tangled in a yearslong debate that had divided the virology community. In 2011, two scientists separately announced that they had genetically altered Highly Pathogenic Asian Avian Influenza A (H5N1), the bird flu virus that has killed at least 456 people since 2003.*

*The scientists gave the virus new functions – enabling it to spread efficiently among ferrets, which are genetically closer to humans than mice – as a way to gauge its risks to people. Both studies had received NIH funding.*

*The scientific community erupted in conflict over what became known as gain-of-function research. Proponents claimed it could help prevent pandemics by highlighting potential threats.*

*Critics argued that creating pathogens that didn't exist in nature ran the risk of unleashing them. As the dispute raged, Fauci worked to strike a middle ground, but ultimately supported the research ...*

*In October 2014, the Obama administration imposed a moratorium on new federal funding for research that could make influenza, MERS, or SARS viruses more virulent or transmissible, while a review took place. But the moratorium, as written, left loopholes, which allowed Daszak to try to save the research.*

*On June 8, 2016, he wrote to the NIH's grant specialists that the SARS-like chimeras from the completed experiment were exempt from the moratorium, because the strains used had not previously been known to infect humans ..."*

## **NIH Circumvented Moratorium Rules on Gain of Function**

In his letter to the NIH, Daszak also referenced a 2015 paper written by Shi and Baric, which detailed an experiment in which they mixed components of SARS-like viruses of different species to create a novel chimera capable of directly infecting human cells. Incidentally, this research was funded by both the NIH and EcoHealth.

According to Daszak, the chimera produced was less lethal than the original SARS, so his chimera would probably be less lethal as well. However, the NIH grant specialists were far from reassured that his MERS chimera wouldn't be dangerous, as Shi and Baric in that 2015 paper had noted the danger of such experiments, stressing that "scientific review panels may deem similar studies ... too risky to pursue."

*"If anything, the MERS study Daszak proposed was even riskier," Eban writes.<sup>21</sup>*

*"So he pitched a compromise to the NIH: that if any of the recombined strains showed 10 times greater growth than a natural virus, 'we will immediately:*

*i) stop all experiments with the mutant, ii) inform our NIAID Program Officer and the UNC [Institutional Biosafety Committee] of these results and iii) participate in decision making trees to decide appropriate paths forward.”*

July 7, 2016, the NIH agreed to Daszak’s proposal, which as Eban notes “relied entirely on mutual transparency.” Shi would be responsible for informing Daszak if any of the recombinations had 10 times the growth rate of a natural virus, and Daszak would inform the agency of the results, so they could decide the fate of the experiment.

Jack Nunberg, director of the Montana Biotechnology Center, told Eban that allowing this kind of high-risk research to be pursued at the WIV was “simply crazy.” “Reasons are lack of oversight, lack of regulation, the environment in China ... that is what really elevates it to the realm of, ‘No, this shouldn’t happen.’”

**“ Wain-Hobson has his own hypothesis for what is taking place: The group of scientists pushing the claim of natural origin, he says, ‘want to show that virology is not responsible [for causing the pandemic]. That is their agenda.’ ~ Katherine Eban”**

Indeed, in January 2021, declassified intelligence from the U.S. State Department claims Chinese military scientists have been working with the WIV since at least 2017, raising questions about whether research at the WIV was serving a dual purpose.

## **Dangerous DARPA Proposal**

In late March 2018, EcoHealth, facing financial troubles, in collaboration with Shi and Baric, pitched a proposal<sup>22</sup> to DARPA with the hopes of securing fresh funding.

Part of the proposal included examining SARS-like bat coronaviruses for furin cleavage sites, which is what allows the virus to infect human cells. They also proposed inserting

a furin cleavage site, ostensibly to create an infectious coronavirus, and to test it on mice with humanized lungs.

The furin cleavage site of SARS-CoV-2 is one of the curious hallmarks that makes it stand out as a potential manufactured bioweapon, as coronaviruses don't have this feature naturally, that we know of. They then proposed mapping high-risk areas and testing various substances in an effort to reduce the viral shedding among bats.

*"By almost any definition, this was gain-of-function research," Eban writes.<sup>23</sup>*

*"The federal moratorium had been lifted in January 2017 and replaced with a review system called the HHS P3CO Framework (for Potential Pandemic Pathogen Care and Oversight). This required a safety review by the agency funding the research."*

Yet the EcoHealth Alliance, in its DARPA proposal, insisted the research would be exempt from the P3CO framework. DARPA rejected the proposal, and told Eban that part of the reason for the rejection was "because of the horrific lack of common sense" of it.

DARPA grant reviewers viewed EcoHealth as a "ragtag group," and the WIV was assessed as having subpar safety standards. An unnamed former DARPA official who was there at the time of the proposal told Eban that allowing EcoHealth Alliance to be the prime contractor for a research project with national security risks would be like "having your rental car agency trying to run an armada."

Importantly, the grant application failed to adequately assess the GOF risks, and the possibility of the work constituting dual-use research of concern (DURC). In other words, EcoHealth didn't consider how the research might be repurposed as a bioweapon, or how it might endanger national security.

Simon Wain-Hobson, after reviewing the DARPA proposal, has stated it's "basically a road map to a SARS-CoV-2-like virus."<sup>24</sup> Daszak, however, claims the research was never implemented, not by EcoHealth, Baric or Shi, as far as he's aware of.

Still, the question remains: Did the GOF research that Shi and Baric published (and EcoHealth funded) in 2015 result in the creation of SARS-CoV-2? While Shi and Baric did that research at Baric's lab in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, might Shi or others have expounded on the work at the WIV?

Daszak has been unwilling to release certain SARS coronavirus sequences from the work at the WIV, claiming he needs the Chinese government to authorize their release. But this explanation seems to “undercut the entire rationale for having the U.S. government help fund a global collaboration on virus emergence,” Eban notes, adding:<sup>25</sup>

*“Wain-Hobson has his own hypothesis for what is taking place: The group of scientists pushing the claim of natural origin, he says, ‘want to show that virology is not responsible [for causing the pandemic]. That is their agenda.’”*

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