

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN DEVIN NUNES
RANKING MEMBER, PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE
BEFORE THE SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS
CRISIS
HEARING ON, “LED BY SCIENCE: THE COVID-19 ORIGIN STORY”
JUNE 29, 2021

Thank you Ranking Member Scalise and Ranking Member Comer. I am happy to be here today to discuss the work of Intelligence Committee Republicans to uncover the truth behind the origins of COVID-19.

For nearly a decade, House Intelligence Committee Republicans have been investigating China’s malign activities across the globe. From concerns over Huawei, to China’s Belt and Road initiative, to its theft of our intellectual property and increasingly aggressive activities in the South China Sea, we have actively worked to determine the nature and scope of nefarious Chinese activity. We have faced the China threat head-on because I believe what is at stake here is nothing less than our future as a free society.

I also want to recognize the efforts of our colleagues in this room. I commend all of you for your strong leadership on this front, both in this Select Committee, via House Republicans’ China Task Force, and on the Roadmap for COVID-19 accountability, released last week.

The Chinese government, the Chinese Communist Party, and the People’s Liberation Army represent an existential threat to freedom across the globe. Strong, dynamic, and fearless leadership is what is needed to combat a threat of this magnitude.

Unfortunately, Democrats possess none of those qualities, particularly when it comes to China. President Biden has failed to do anything meaningful to hold China accountable. Congressional Democrats seemingly have no interest in protecting our nation and people from this threat. And the media continues to serve as a propagandist mouthpiece for China, the Biden White House and Democrat leadership.

Consequently, last month, Committee Republicans released an interim report on COVID-19 and the Wuhan Institute of Virology laboratory. That report describes our efforts to understand how the COVID-19 virus originated.

In brief, here is what we found.

First, there is simply no substantive evidence supporting the theory that the SARS-CoV-2 virus was transferred from animal to human, and recent scientific scholarship suggests that such a “zoonotic” transfer is unlikely. Chinese researchers have failed to find the original bat population or species from which the virus may have jumped, despite an intensive search and testing more than 80,000 animals.

Second, there were multiple warnings about safety at the Wuhan lab, beginning as far back as 2017. Health and science experts from the U.S. Embassy in Beijing warned that the lab’s work to make bat coronaviruses infectious for humans, coupled with grave safety control concerns, could result in the accidental unleashing of a SARS-like pandemic.

Third, our report outlines how China engaged in highly sensitive “Gain of Function” research at the Wuhan lab. As we all know by now, Gain of Function research can produce dangerous viral strains that could intentionally or unintentionally cause a pandemic. The NIAID, under the leadership of Dr. Fauci, funneled U.S. taxpayer dollars to the Wuhan lab for Gain of Function research.

Fourth, the People’s Liberation Army reportedly conducts secret scientific research at the Wuhan lab, and the head of the lab is a Major General in the PLA who is recognized as China’s top biowarfare expert. Given the Chinese government’s documented biological weapons program and the Chinese military presence at the lab, it is difficult to understand why the U.S. Government permitted and funded collaborative research there.

Finally, China has prevented a fulsome and credible investigation into the origins of COVID-19. Why would they do such a thing if the virus originated from an animal? China’s interference, of course, is what allegedly led the Biden Administration to insist that China cooperate or “face isolation in the international community.”

This is, of course, a weak and ineffective position to take. Like most authoritarian nations, China does not respect weakness. Stronger steps are needed to ensure we can (1) get to the bottom of this matter and (2) have confidence in the result.

Let's not forget: The Biden Administration only called on China to cooperate a week AFTER our report was issued, and AFTER the Republicans' efforts to investigate the origins of COVID-19 had begun to resonate with the American people. As with many other things, Democrats are not interested in finding the truth, they are interested in cynically getting ahead of the story.

Remember my comment about the media acting like a propagandist mouthpiece for the Democrat Party? A year ago, the media labeled President Trump and Republicans as racists and xenophobes for suggesting the virus was not zoonotic but was the result of a lab leak. The possibility that the virus originated in a lab was dismissed as a conspiracy theory by the press. In fact, Facebook banned and removed posts that claimed the virus may have come from a lab. Why? Well, because they feared that information would support statements made by President Trump. The fact is that Democrats and their allies in the media were more interested in hurling insults at their political opponents than fostering an open discourse about the origin of a virus that has killed more than 3 million people worldwide.

In contrast, House Intelligence Committee Republicans have aggressively pursued the truth.

Thank you.

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