China denies lab link to coronavirus as questions over origin mount

In this Jan. 30, 2020, file photo, a man wears a face mask as he stands along the waterfront in Wuhan in central China's Hubei Province. (AP Photo/Arek Rataj, File) more >

By Bill Gertz - The Washington Times - Wednesday, February 5, 2020

A Chinese Communist Party-affiliated newspaper has published the first semi-official response to reports the virus from Wuhan may have been produced in a government laboratory and was not caused by the natural transmission of an animal virus to humans.

Global Times, considered the editorial voice of the party, in an in-depth report this week cited Chinese experts who said that the coronavirus could not have been engineered in a laboratory.

China’s government officially has been silent on an international debate over whether the coronavirus may have come from a laboratory, or was the result of an animal virus that probably originated in bats and was transferred to humans through another animal.

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A third theory is that the virus may have been under study at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which houses China's sole Level 4 secure laboratory for conducting research on deadly viruses, and was spread through an infected worker or a test animal that was stolen or sold to a wild animal market in the city where the virus first emerged.

“The 2019 novel coronavirus is a punishment by nature to humans' unsanitary lifestyle. I promise with my life that the virus has nothing to do with the lab,” declared Shi Zhengli, a research fellow at the Wuhan Institute of Virology on her WeChat account Sunday.

China's government said last month that a preliminary assessment found that a wild animal market was the source of the outbreak.

“People should think twice when faced with conspiracy theories at the moment, experts suggest,” the Global Times said.

China's embassy in Washington, responding to previous article in The Washington Times, also strongly disputed the theory of a link between the lab and the virus.

“The spread of disinformation is destructive and risks creating panic and thwarting the global community's coordinated effort to contain the outbreak and treat the victims of the coronavirus,” embassy Minister Counselor Fang Hong wrote in a letter to The Washington Times.

According to the Global Times report, Chinese virologists asserted that humans are unable to create the coronavirus and “the allegation suggesting otherwise is groundless.” The article dismissed scientific and other reports of a human origin as conspiracy theories.

“In front of conspiracy theory, we should all think twice and think about ourselves, instead of blaming others,” Yang Gonghuan, a former vice director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told the newspaper.

**Tracking the virus**

Former Israeli military intelligence officer Dany Shoham, who has studied Chinese biological warfare, said the Wuhan virology institute is linked to Beijing's covert bio-weapons program.

“In principle, outward virus infiltration might take place either as leakage or as an indoor unnoticed infection of a person that normally went out of the concerned facility,” Dr. Shoham said. “This could have been the case with the Wuhan Institute of Virology, but so far
there isn't evidence or indication for such incident.”

The fact that the institute's high-security laboratory, the National Biosafety Laboratory, is located in Wuhan has prompted reports the highly contagious coronavirus may have been produced as part of civilian research or as part of China’s covert biological weapons program.

Dr. Mark Kortepeter, a biological warfare expert, said it would be difficult to prove any coronavirus was caused by a laboratory accident.

"Containment laboratories have multiple redundant safety mechanisms and procedures to guard against human error," said Dr. Kortepeter, professor of epidemiology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

"If something were to be released from a containment laboratory, one would have to assume there was a breach in laboratory protocol. The most likely such event would be a worker who was accidentally exposed and then inadvertently exposed others," said Dr. Kortepeter, author of “Inside the Hot Zone: A Soldier on the Front Lines of Biological Warfare.”

China has not agreed so far to let U.S. experts enter the country to investigate the virus, and has not disclosed who the first person to contract the viral disease. Dr. Nancy Messonnier, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Monday that arrangements for sending U.S. experts are still being worked out.

However, a Chinese government-funded study published Jan. 24 in the medical journal The Lancet by 29 Chinese scientists found that 13 of 41 victims surveyed had no connection to the wild animal market. Significantly, the first patient identified with the coronavirus was a man who reported pneumonia-like symptoms on Dec. 1 but had no connection to the market.

Chinese authorities hid the outbreak for nearly two months and only confirmed it publicly in state media on Jan. 23. The weeks of inaction contributed to the rapid spread of the virus which has now expanded around the world.

Sen. Tom Cotton, Arkansas Republican, joined the debate last week, questioning China’s claim for nearly two months that the virus originated from a wild animal market and that “locals had contracted it from animals in say bat soup or snake tartar.”

“That is not the case,” he said, referring to The Lancet study.
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Danny Ross  Leader  6 Feb

The Chinese government has zero credibility when it comes to disclaiming responsibility for the origin of the virus. The Chicoms would disclaim responsibility under any circumstances.

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RedCoathanger  6 Feb  Danny Ross

Of course the Chinese are stone walling allowing an outside agency to help investigate the virus because they would quickly unmask the lies regarding the origin and pathway of the virus being foisted upon the rest of the world.

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"I promise with my life that the virus has nothing to do with the lab," declared Shi Zhengli, a research fellow at the Wuhan Institute of Virology on her WeChat account Sunday.

And if you believe anything the Communist Chinese government has to say, particularly this, bridges await...