

China Urges WHO to Scour US Military Biolab in Search for Covid's Origins

Description

by [Ilya Tsukanov](#) via [Sputnik News](#)



Washington and Beijing are in the midst of a heated back-and-forth campaign of claims accusing one another of responsibility for unleashing the coronavirus pandemic on the world. US officials allege that the virus may have been leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, while Chinese officials claim it may have originated in a US military biolab.

Chen Xu, China's permanent representative to the United Nations office in Geneva, has sent the World Health Organisation a formal request asking the global health authority to open a probe into Fort Detrick, the Maryland-based US Army laboratory once known as the centre of America's biological weapons programme, and its possible role in the origins of the novel coronavirus.

In a [letter](#) addressed to WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Chen reiterated Beijing's position on SARS-CoV-2, which states that the Wuhan lab leak theory is an "extremely unlikely" scenario. The letter went on to ask the WHO to probe the lab at Fort Detrick, and to investigate research carried out by University of North Carolina professor Ralph Baric, suggesting that "if some parties are of the view that the 'lab leak' hypothesis remains open, it is the labs of Fort Detrick and the University of North Carolina in the US that should be subject to transparent investigation with full access."

Chen accompanied his letter with an online petition signed by over 25 million Chinese nationals demanding an investigation into Fort Detrick, as well as two documents, entitled "Doubtful Points About Fort Detrick" and "Coronavirus Research Conducted by Dr. Ralph Baric's Team at the University of North Carolina".

The latter document, [published in full](#) by Xinhua, calls into question US epidemiologist Dr. Ralph Baric's work into coronaviruses, including gain-of-function research, and points to his team's research into synthesizing and modifying SARS-related coronaviruses going back to at least 2003, including bat-related coronaviruses, since at least 2008.

In a press briefing on Wednesday, Fu Cong, director general of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's department of arms control and disarmament, commented on Chen's letter, [suggesting that](#) "the international community has long been seriously concerned about Fort Detrick," and pointing to the facility's "advanced capabilities to synthesise and modify SARS-related coronaviruses as early as 2003."

Fu pointed to "multiple" alleged biological safety-related accidents taking place at the institute, including the mysterious July 2019 shutdown, after which "outbreaks of respiratory diseases sharing similar symptoms of COVID-19" began to be reported "in the communities near Fort Detrick."

The diplomat further alleged that US biological research activities, including at Fort Detrick and an estimated 200+ US biological institutions abroad, were "not in line with the Biological Weapons Convention," and "not known [about] by the international community."

Earlier this month, China rejected a push by the WHO to continue its investigation into COVID-19's origins at the Wuhan lab, citing their support for 'scientific, not politicised' theories on the virus's roots. On 12 August, the world health authority called on Beijing to share raw data on the earliest cases of

Covid.

US President Joe Biden, who spent the 2020 campaign dismissing then-president Donald Trump's claims on Covid's Wuhan potential man-made origins, [reversed course and ordered a probe](#) into how the virus may have spread to humans in May, giving intelligence agencies until the end of August to put a report on his desk. Chinese media have [accused](#) Washington of using "second-hand, unreliable evidence to compile a report that tries to smear China," while officials in Beijing continue to support the original WHO-China joint study, which concluded that a leak from the Wuhan lab was "highly unlikely".

In addition to the 'China did it'/'US did it' theories being pushed by officials in both countries, some US lawmakers, including Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, have hinted that both nations may be directly or indirectly responsible. In a recent Senate probe, Paul asked questions about the complex web of US government financing for potentially dangerous coronavirus gain-of-function research at Wuhan in the years leading up to the pandemic. In July, Paul grilled coronavirus czar Anthony Fauci, accusing him of backing such funding and lying to Congress about it. Fauci vocally denied the allegations and told Paul that he "did not know what [he was] talking about".