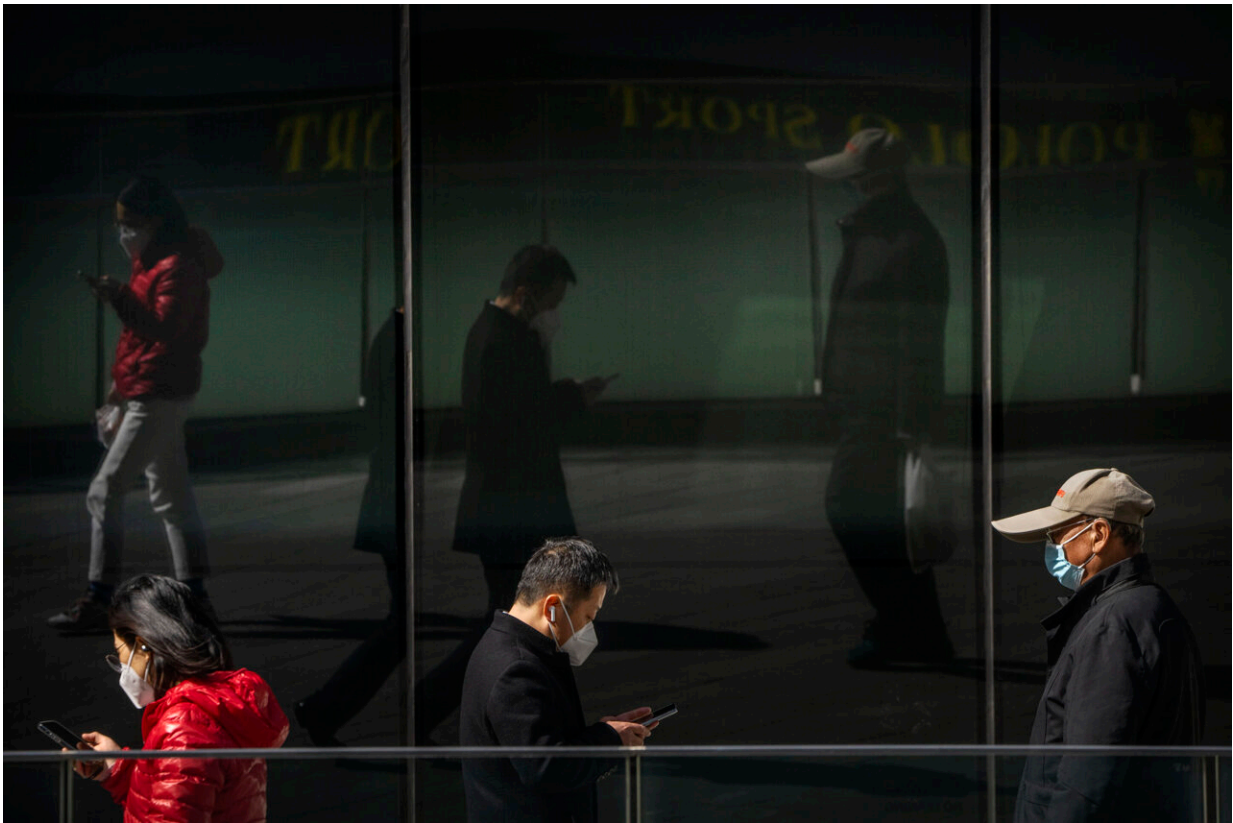


China dismisses FBI statement on COVID-19 lab leak theory

March 1 2023



People wearing face masks are reflected in windows as they walk at a shopping and office complex in Beijing, Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein

For the second day in a row, China on Wednesday dismissed U.S.

suggestions that the COVID-19 pandemic may have been triggered by a virus that leaked from a Chinese laboratory.

Responding to comments by FBI Director Christopher Wray, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the involvement of the U.S. intelligence community was evidence enough of the "politicization of origin tracing."

"By rehashing the lab-leak theory, the U.S. will not succeed in discrediting China, and instead, it will only hurt its own credibility," Mao said.

"We urge the U.S. to respect science and facts ... stop turning origin tracing into something about politics and intelligence, and stop disrupting social solidarity and origins cooperation," she said.

In an interview with Fox News that aired Tuesday, Wray said, "The FBI has for quite some time now assessed that the origins of the [pandemic](#) are most likely a potential lab incident in (central China's) Wuhan."

"Here you are talking about a potential leak from a Chinese government-controlled lab," Wray said.

Referring to efforts to trace the origin of the coronavirus, he added, "I will just make the observation that the Chinese government, it seems to me, has been doing its best to try to thwart and obfuscate the work here, the work that we're doing, the work that our U.S. government and close foreign partners are doing. And that's unfortunate for everybody."



People wearing face masks walk past rows of lanterns at a tourist shopping street in Beijing, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein

On Tuesday, Mao pushed back at a report from the U.S. Department of Energy that assessed with "low confidence" that the virus that was first detected in Wuhan in late 2019 leaked from a nearby government laboratory.

The report hasn't been made public and officials in Washington stressed that U.S. agencies are not in agreement on the origin of the virus.

Mao on Tuesday insisted that China has been "open and transparent" in the search for the virus' origins and has "shared the most data and research results on virus tracing and made important contributions to

global virus tracing research."

A World Health Organization expert group said last year that "key pieces of data" to explain how the pandemic began were still missing. The scientists cited avenues of research that were needed, including studies evaluating the role of wild animals and [environmental studies](#) in places where the virus might have first spread.



People wearing face masks walk through a shopping and office complex in Beijing, Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein



People wearing face masks walk through a shopping and office complex in Beijing, Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein

The Associated Press has previously reported that the Chinese government was strictly controlling research into the origin of the pandemic that has killed more than 6.8 million people worldwide, clamping down on some work and promoting fringe theories that it could have come from outside the country.

Some scientists are open to the lab-leak theory, but many scientists believe the virus came from animals, mutated, and jumped to people, as has happened with other viruses in the past. Experts say the origin of the pandemic may not be known for many years—if ever.

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