

# No evidence COVID created in Chinese lab: US intelligence

June 24 2023

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The head of US intelligence said Friday that there was no evidence that the COVID-19 virus was created in the Chinese government's Wuhan research lab.

In a declassified report, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) said they had no information backing recent claims that three scientists at the lab were some of the very first infected with COVID-19 and may have created the [virus](#) themselves.

Drawing on intelligence collected by various member agencies of the US intelligence community (IC), the ODNI report said some scientists at the Wuhan lab had done genetic engineering of coronaviruses similar to COVID-19.

But the US "has no information" indicating they had done such work on the specific COVID-9 virus, known as SARS-CoV-2, or on any "close progenitor, or a backbone virus that is closely related-enough to have been the source of the pandemic."

The report, made for Congress and carrying an unreleased classified annex, came three months after lawmakers [demanded](#) a fuller explanation of US intelligence's information on the origins of the pandemic which erupted at the end of 2019.

Some lawmakers allege that the virus was created out of so-called gain-of-function genetic engineering research at Wuhan, and that Beijing had covered up evidence to show it was a man-made disease.

Reiterating a conclusion announced in March, the ODNI report said "almost all" of its constituent agencies, which include the NSA, the CIA and FBI, assess that COVID-19 was not genetically engineered and most believe as well it was not laboratory-adapted.

But the ODNI report, as in March, did not dismiss the possibility that COVID-19 was being examined in the Wuhan lab at the time and may have leaked out through carelessness.

ODNI said the intelligence community [remained divided](#) on whether the pandemic arose from a natural occurrence of the virus—perhaps transferred from animals like bats—or a from lab leak.

The report said the Wuhan lab had done pathogen research and vaccine development together with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) "for public health needs."

But the coronaviruses used in this research "were too distantly related to have led to the creation of SARS-CoV-2," the report said.

It firmly rejected allegations that COVID-19 was developed by the PLA as a bioweapon.

The ODNI report responded to the allegation that three of the scientists at the Wuhan facility who were working on coronaviruses came down with COVID-19 around just ahead of the outbreak.

It said US intelligence found that several Wuhan researchers did become "mildly" ill in the Fall of 2019.

Some of their symptoms were consistent with COVID-19; other symptoms not consistent, it said.

It also said US intelligence did not know if those who became sick handled live viruses in their work.

"The IC continues to assess that this information neither supports nor refutes either hypothesis of the pandemic's origins because the researchers' symptoms could have been caused by a number of diseases," it said.

Citation: No evidence COVID created in Chinese lab: US intelligence (2023, June 24) retrieved 6 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-evidence-covid-chinese-lab-intelligence.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.