

From: (b)(6)
To: (b)(6)
Subject: Fwd: More COVID coverup reporting
Date: Mon, 6 Jul 2020 00:30:35 +0000

From: Feith, David <(b)(6)>
Sent: Sunday, July 5, 2020 8:25 PM
To: (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) (OAG) (b)(6) (S); Ortagus, Morgan D; Stilwell, David R
Subject: Re: More COVID coverup reporting

Amen. And our colleagues in Geneva who work the WHO are providing details (b)(5)
(b)(5)

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David Feith
Senior Advisor
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)
U.S. Department of State
(b)(6) (o)
(b)(6) (c)
(b)(6) @state.gov

On July 5, 2020 at 8:20:25 PM EDT (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:

Hopefully (b)(5)

(b)(6) (E/STAS)

The Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

From: Feith, David <(b)(6)>

Sent: Thursday, July 2, 2020 11:35:17 PM

To: EAP-FO-Principals-DL (b)(7)(E) DL NSC Asia

(b)(6) Matthew Pottinger (b)(6)
Kissel, Mary E (b)(6) Ortagus, Morgan D (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(Geneva) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (Bangkok) (b)(6) (b)(6)
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Subject: RE: More COVID coverup reporting

Amazing:

WHO admits China never reported the existence of coronavirus outbreak

The Washington Examiner [7/2/2020 4:31 PM, Jerry Dunleavy, Neutral] reports that the World Health Organization backtracked on its assertion that the Chinese government alerted the United Nations agency about the coronavirus outbreak. The WHO quietly updated its "Timeline of WHO's response to COVID-19" on Tuesday following the House Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans' mid-June Interim Report on Origins of COVID-19 Pandemic (led by ranking member and China task force Chairman Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas), which concluded that "despite public reporting to the contrary ... China never notified the WHO about the outbreak in Wuhan." "I'm glad to see the WHO and the Chinese Communist Party have both read my interim report on the origins of the pandemic and are finally admitting to the world the truth – the CCP never reported the virus outbreak to the WHO in violation of WHO regulations," McCaul said in a statement to the Washington Examiner. "The question now is whether the CCP will continue their false propaganda campaign that continues to claim they warned the world or whether they will come clean and begin to work with the world health community to get to the bottom of this deadly pandemic."

The Washington Free Beacon [7/2/2020 12:38 PM, Adam Kredo, Neutral] reports that the quiet admission from the international health organization flies in the face of claims from some of its top officials, including WHO director general Tedros Adhanom, who maintained for months that China had informed his organization about the emerging sickness. China and its allies at the WHO insisted in multiple interviews and press conferences that China came to the health organization with information about the virus. This is now known to be false. The WHO's backtracking lends credibility to a recent congressional investigation that determined China concealed information about the virus and did not initially inform the WHO, as it was required to do. The WHO's updated timeline, posted online this week, now states that officials first learned about the virus on Dec. 31, 2019, through information posted on a U.S. website by doctors working in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged. This contradicts the agency's initial timeline, which said that China first presented this information at that date. That initial timeline stated that the "Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province" on Dec. 31. Chinese officials and state-controlled media also claimed for months that the communist regime informed the WHO on or around Dec. 31. In recent days, however, Chinese officials have dropped that talking point.

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 10:35 PM

To: EAP-FO-Principals-DL (b)(7)(E) DL NSC Asia
 (b)(6) Matthew Pottinger (b)(6)
 (b)(6); Ortagus, Morgan D (b)(6) (h)(6)
 (b)(6) @state.gov (b)(6) @state.gov (b)(6)
 (Geneva) (h)(6) (b)(6)
 (h)(6) (Bangkok) (b)(6)
Subject: More COVID coverup reporting

Lest we forget. Highlights of particularly notable bits, including on the Jan. 3 order to destroy samples, Professor Zhang Yongzhen releasing the genome sequence before the government, early Wall Street Journal reporting that angered officials, the coverup complicating the first foreign case in Bangkok, etc.

<https://apnews.com/3c061794970661042b18d5aeaaed9fae?>

China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO
 By The Associated Press
 June 2, 2020

Throughout January, the World Health Organization publicly praised China for what it called a speedy response to the new coronavirus. It repeatedly thanked the Chinese government for sharing the genetic map of the virus “immediately,” and said its work and commitment to transparency were “very impressive, and beyond words.”

But behind the scenes, it was a much different story, one of significant delays by China and considerable frustration among WHO officials over not getting the information they needed to fight the spread of the deadly virus, The Associated Press has found.

Despite the plaudits, China in fact sat on releasing the genetic map, or genome, of the virus for more than a week after three different government labs had fully decoded the information. Tight controls on information and competition within the Chinese public health system were to blame, according to dozens of interviews and internal documents.

Chinese government labs only released the genome after another lab published it ahead of authorities on a virologist website on Jan. 11. Even then, China stalled for at least two weeks more on providing WHO with detailed data on patients and cases, according to recordings of internal meetings held by the U.N. health agency through January — all at a time when the outbreak arguably might have been dramatically slowed.

WHO officials were lauding China in public because they wanted to coax more information out of the government, the recordings obtained by the AP suggest. Privately, they complained in meetings the week of Jan. 6 that China was not sharing enough data to assess how effectively the virus spread between people or what risk it posed to the rest of the world, costing valuable time.

"We're going on very minimal information," said American epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove, now WHO's technical lead for COVID-19, in one internal meeting. "It's clearly not enough for you to do proper planning."

"We're currently at the stage where yes, they're giving it to us 15 minutes before it appears on CCTV," said WHO's top official in China, Dr. Gauden Galea, referring to the state-owned China Central Television, in another meeting.

The story behind the early response to the virus comes at a time when the U.N. health agency is under siege, and has agreed to an independent probe of how the pandemic was handled globally. After repeatedly praising the Chinese response early on, U.S. President Donald Trump has blasted WHO in recent weeks for allegedly colluding with China to hide the extent of the coronavirus crisis. He cut ties with the organization on Friday, jeopardizing the approximately \$450 million the U.S. gives every year as WHO's biggest single donor.

In the meantime, Chinese President Xi Jinping has vowed to pitch in \$2 billion over the next two years to fight the coronavirus, saying China has always provided information to WHO and the world "in a most timely fashion."

The new information does not support the narrative of either the U.S. or China, but instead portrays an agency now stuck in the middle that was urgently trying to solicit more data despite limits to its own authority. Although international law obliges countries to report information to WHO that could have an impact on public health, the U.N. agency has no enforcement powers and cannot independently investigate epidemics within countries. Instead, it must rely on the cooperation of member states.

The recordings suggest that rather than colluding with China, as Trump declared, WHO was kept in the dark as China gave it the minimal information required by law. However, the agency did try to portray China in the best light, likely as a means to secure more information. And WHO experts genuinely thought Chinese scientists had done "a very good job" in detecting and decoding the virus, despite the lack of transparency from Chinese officials.

WHO staffers debated how to press China for gene sequences and detailed patient data without angering authorities, worried about losing access and getting Chinese scientists into trouble. Under international law, WHO is required to quickly share information and alerts with member countries about an evolving crisis. Galea noted WHO could not indulge China's wish to sign off on information before telling other countries because "that is not respectful of our responsibilities."

In the second week of January, WHO's chief of emergencies, Dr. Michael Ryan, told colleagues it was time to "shift gears" and apply more pressure on China, fearing a repeat of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome that started in China in 2002 and killed nearly 800 people worldwide.

"This is exactly the same scenario, endlessly trying to get updates from China about what was

going on,” he said. “WHO barely got out of that one with its neck intact given the issues that arose around transparency in southern China.”

Ryan said the best way to “protect China” was for WHO to do its own independent analysis with data from the Chinese government, because otherwise the spread of the virus between people would be in question and “other countries will take action accordingly.” Ryan also noted that China was not cooperating in the same way some other countries had in the past.

“This would not happen in Congo and did not happen in Congo and other places,” he said, probably referring to the Ebola outbreak that began there in 2018. “We need to see the data.....It’s absolutely important at this point.”

The delay in the release of the genome stalled the recognition of its spread to other countries, along with the global development of tests, drugs and vaccines. The lack of detailed patient data also made it harder to determine how quickly the virus was spreading — a critical question in stopping it.

Between the day the full genome was first decoded by a government lab on Jan. 2 and the day WHO declared a global emergency on Jan. 30, the outbreak spread by a factor of 100 to 200 times, according to retrospective infection data from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The virus has now infected over 6 million people worldwide and killed more than 375,000.

“It’s obvious that we could have saved more lives and avoided many, many deaths if China and the WHO had acted faster,” said Ali Mokdad, a professor at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

However, Mokdad and other experts also noted that if WHO had been more confrontational with China, it could have triggered a far worse situation of not getting any information at all.

If WHO had pushed too hard, it could even have been kicked out of China, said Adam Kamradt-Scott, a global health professor at the University of Sydney. But he added that a delay of just a few days in releasing genetic sequences can be critical in an outbreak. And he noted that as Beijing’s lack of transparency becomes even clearer, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus’s continued defense of China is problematic.

“It’s definitely damaged WHO’s credibility,” said Kamradt-Scott. “Did he go too far? I think the evidence on that is clear....it has led to so many questions about the relationship between China and WHO. It is perhaps a cautionary tale.”

WHO and its officials named in this story declined to answer questions asked by The Associated Press without audio or written transcripts of the recorded meetings, which the AP was unable to supply to protect its sources.

“Our leadership and staff have worked night and day in compliance with the organization’s rules and regulations to support and share information with all Member States equally, and engage in

frank and forthright conversations with governments at all levels,” a WHO statement said.

China’s National Health Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had no comment. But in the past few months, China has repeatedly defended its actions, and many other countries — including the U.S. — have responded to the virus with even longer delays of weeks and even months.

“Since the beginning of the outbreak, we have been continuously sharing information on the epidemic with the WHO and the international community in an open, transparent and responsible manner,” said Liu Mingzhu, an official with the National Health Commission’s International Department, at a press conference on May 15.

The race to find the genetic map of the virus started in late December, according to the story that unfolds in interviews, documents and the WHO recordings. That’s when doctors in Wuhan noticed mysterious clusters of patients with fevers and breathing problems who weren’t improving with standard flu treatment. Seeking answers, they sent test samples from patients to commercial labs.

By Dec. 27, one lab, Vision Medicals, had pieced together most of the genome of a new coronavirus with striking similarities to SARS. Vision Medicals shared its data with Wuhan officials and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, as reported first by Chinese finance publication Caixin and independently confirmed by the AP.

On Dec. 30, Wuhan health officials issued internal notices warning of the unusual pneumonia, which leaked on social media. That evening, Shi Zhengli, a coronavirus expert at the Wuhan Institute of Virology who is famous for having traced the SARS virus to a bat cave, was alerted to the new disease, according to an interview with Scientific American. Shi took the first train from a conference in Shanghai back to Wuhan.

The next day, Chinese CDC director Gao Fu dispatched a team of experts to Wuhan. Also on Dec. 31, WHO first learned about the cases from an open-source platform that scouts for intelligence on outbreaks, emergencies chief Ryan has said.

WHO officially requested more information on Jan. 1. Under international law, members have 24 to 48 hours to respond, and China reported two days later that there were 44 cases and no deaths.

By Jan. 2, Shi had decoded the entire genome of the virus, according to a notice later posted on her institute’s website.

Scientists agree that Chinese scientists detected and sequenced the then-unknown pathogen with astonishing speed, in a testimony to China’s vastly improved technical capabilities since SARS, during which a WHO-led group of scientists took months to identify the virus. This time, Chinese virologists proved within days that it was a never-before-seen coronavirus. Tedros would later say Beijing set “a new standard for outbreak response.”

But when it came to sharing the information with the world, things began to go awry.

On Jan. 3, the National Health Commission issued a confidential notice ordering labs with the virus to either destroy their samples or send them to designated institutes for safekeeping. The notice, first reported by Caixin and seen by the AP, forbade labs from publishing about the virus without government authorization. The order barred Shi's lab from publishing the genetic sequence or warning of the potential danger.

Chinese law states that research institutes cannot conduct experiments on potentially dangerous new viruses without approval from top health authorities. Although the law is intended to keep experiments safe, it gives top health officials wide-ranging powers over what lower-level labs can or cannot do.

"If the virologist community had operated with more autonomy....the public would have been informed of the lethal risk of the new virus much earlier," said Edward Gu, a professor at Zhejiang University, and Li Lantian, a PhD student at Northwestern University, in a paper published in March analyzing the outbreak.

Commission officials later repeated that they were trying to ensure lab safety, and had tasked four separate government labs with identifying the genome at the same time to get accurate, consistent results.

By Jan. 3, the Chinese CDC had independently sequenced the virus, according to internal data seen by the Associated Press. And by just after midnight on Jan. 5, a third designated government lab, the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, had decoded the sequence and submitted a report — pulling all-nighters to get results in record time, according to a state media interview. Yet even with full sequences decoded by three state labs independently, Chinese health officials remained silent. The WHO reported on Twitter that investigations were under way into an unusual cluster of pneumonia cases with no deaths in Wuhan, and said it would share "more details as we have them."

Meanwhile, at the Chinese CDC, gaps in coronavirus expertise proved a problem.

For nearly two weeks, Wuhan reported no new infections, as officials censored doctors who warned of suspicious cases. Meanwhile, researchers found the new coronavirus used a distinct spike protein to bind itself to human cells. The unusual protein and the lack of new cases lulled some Chinese CDC researchers into thinking the virus didn't easily spread between humans — like the coronavirus that causes Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, according to an employee who declined to be identified out of fear of retribution.

Li, the coronavirus expert, said he immediately suspected the pathogen was infectious when he spotted a leaked copy of a sequencing report in a group chat on a SARS-like coronavirus. But the Chinese CDC team that sequenced the virus lacked specialists in the molecular structure of coronaviruses and failed to consult with outside scientists, Li said. Chinese health authorities rebuffed offers of assistance from foreign experts, including Hong Kong scientists barred from a fact-finding mission to Wuhan and an American professor at a university in China.

On Jan. 5, the Shanghai Public Clinical Health Center, led by famed virologist Zhang Yongzhen, was the latest to sequence the virus. He submitted it to the GenBank database, where it sat awaiting review, and notified the National Health Commission. He warned them that the new virus was similar to SARS and likely infectious.

"It should be contagious through respiratory passages," the center said in an internal notice seen by the AP. "We recommend taking preventative measures in public areas."

On the same day, WHO said that based on preliminary information from China, there was no evidence of significant transmission between humans, and did not recommend any specific measures for travelers.

The next day, the Chinese CDC raised its emergency level to the second highest. Staffers proceeded to isolate the virus, draft lab testing guidelines, and design test kits. But the agency did not have the authority to issue public warnings, and the heightened emergency level was kept secret even from many of its own staff.

By Jan. 7, another team at Wuhan University had sequenced the pathogen and found it matched Shi's, making Shi certain they had identified a novel coronavirus. But Chinese CDC experts said they didn't trust Shi's findings and needed to verify her data before she could publish, according to three people familiar with the matter. Both the National Health Commission and the Ministry of Science and Technology, which oversees Shi's lab, declined to make Shi available for an interview.

A major factor behind the gag order, some say, was that Chinese CDC researchers wanted to publish their papers first. "They wanted to take all the credit," said Li Yize, a coronavirus researcher at the University of Pennsylvania.

Internally, the leadership of the Chinese CDC is plagued with fierce competition, six people familiar with the system explained. They said the agency has long promoted staff based on how many papers they can publish in prestigious journals, making scientists reluctant to share data.

As the days went by, even some of the Chinese CDC's own staff began to wonder why it was taking so long for authorities to identify the pathogen.

"We were getting suspicious, since within one or two days you would get a sequencing result," a lab technician said, declining to be identified for fear of retribution.

On Jan. 8, the Wall Street Journal reported that scientists had identified a new coronavirus in samples from pneumonia patients in Wuhan, pre-empting and embarrassing Chinese officials. The lab technician told the AP they first learned about the discovery of the virus from the Journal.

The article also embarrassed WHO officials. Dr. Tom Grein, chief of WHO's acute events management team, said the agency looked "doubly, incredibly stupid." Van Kerkhove, the

American expert, acknowledged WHO was “already late” in announcing the new virus and told colleagues that it was critical to push China.

Ryan, WHO’s chief of emergencies, was also upset at the dearth of information.

“The fact is, we’re two to three weeks into an event, we don’t have a laboratory diagnosis, we don’t have an age, sex or geographic distribution, we don’t have an epi curve,” he complained, referring to the standard graphic of outbreaks scientists use to show how an epidemic is progressing.

After the article, state media officially announced the discovery of the new coronavirus. But even then, Chinese health authorities did not release the genome, diagnostic tests, or detailed patient data that could hint at how infectious the disease was.

By that time, suspicious cases were already appearing across the region.

On Jan. 8, Thai airport officers pulled aside a woman from Wuhan with a runny nose, sore throat, and high temperature. Chulalongkorn University professor Supaporn Wacharapluesadee’s team found the woman was infected with a new coronavirus, much like what Chinese officials had described. Supaporn partially figured out the genetic sequence by Jan. 9, reported it to the Thai government and spent the next day searching for matching sequences.

But because Chinese authorities hadn’t published any sequences, she found nothing. She could not prove the Thai virus was the same pathogen sickening people in Wuhan.

“It was kind of wait and see, when China will release the data, then we can compare,” said Supaporn.

On Jan. 9, a 61-year-old man with the virus passed away in Wuhan — the first known death. The death wasn’t made public until Jan. 11.

WHO officials complained in internal meetings that they were making repeated requests for more data, especially to find out if the virus could spread efficiently between humans, but to no avail.

“We have informally and formally been requesting more epidemiological information,” WHO’s China representative Galea said. “But when asked for specifics, we could get nothing.”

Emergencies chief Ryan grumbled that since China was providing the minimal information required by international law, there was little WHO could do. But he also noted that last September, WHO had issued an unusual public rebuke of Tanzania for not providing enough details about a worrisome Ebola outbreak.

“We have to be consistent,” Ryan said. “The danger now is that despite our good intent...especially if something does happen, there will be a lot of finger-pointing at WHO.”

Ryan noted that China could make a “huge contribution” to the world by sharing the genetic material immediately, because otherwise “other countries will have to reinvent the wheel over the coming days.”

On Jan. 11, a team led by Zhang, from the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, finally published a sequence on virological.org, used by researchers to swap tips on pathogens. The move angered Chinese CDC officials, three people familiar with the matter said, and the next day, his laboratory was temporarily shuttered by health authorities.

Zhang referred a request for comment to the Chinese CDC. The National Health Commission, which oversees the Chinese CDC, declined multiple times to make its officials available for interviews and did not answer questions about Zhang.

Supaporn compared her sequence with Zhang’s and found it was a 100% match, confirming that the Thai patient was ill with the same virus detected in Wuhan. Another Thai lab got the same results. That day, Thailand informed the WHO, said Tanarak Plipat, deputy director-general of the Department of Disease Control at Thailand’s Ministry of Public Health.

After Zhang released the genome, the Chinese CDC, the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences raced to publish their sequences, working overnight to review them, gather patient data, and send them to the National Health Commission for approval, according to documentation obtained by the AP. On Jan. 12, the three labs together finally published the sequences on GISAID, a platform for scientists to share genomic data.

By then, more than two weeks had passed since Vision Medicals decoded a partial sequence, and more than a week since the three government labs had all obtained full sequences. Around 600 people were infected in that week, a roughly three-fold increase.

Some scientists say the wait was not unreasonable considering the difficulties in sequencing unknown pathogens, given accuracy is as important as speed. They point to the SARS outbreak in 2003 when some Chinese scientists initially — and wrongly — believed the source of the epidemic was chlamydia.

“The pressure is intense in an outbreak to make sure you’re right,” said Peter Daszak, president of the EcoHealthAlliance in New York. “It’s actually worse to go out to go to the public with a story that’s wrong because the public completely lose confidence in the public health response.”

Still, others quietly question what happened behind the scenes.

Infectious diseases expert John Mackenzie, who served on a WHO emergency committee during the outbreak, praised the speed of Chinese researchers in sequencing the virus. But he said once central authorities got involved, detailed data trickled to a crawl.

“There certainly was a kind of blank period,” Mackenzie said. “There had to be human to human transmission. You know, it’s staring at you in the face... I would have thought they would have been much more open at that stage.”

On Jan. 13, WHO announced that Thailand had a confirmed case of the virus, jolting Chinese officials.

The next day, in a confidential teleconference, China's top health official ordered the country to prepare for a pandemic, calling the outbreak the "most severe challenge since SARS in 2003", as the AP previously reported. Chinese CDC staff across the country began screening, isolating, and testing for cases, turning up hundreds across the country.

Yet even as the Chinese CDC internally declared a level one emergency, the highest level possible, Chinese officials still said the chance of sustained transmission between humans was low.

WHO went back and forth. Van Kerkhove said in a press briefing that "it is certainly possible there is limited human-to-human transmission." But hours later, WHO seemed to backtrack, and tweeted that "preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission" – a statement that later became fodder for critics.

A high-ranking official in WHO's Asia office, Dr. Liu Yunguo, who attended medical school in Wuhan, flew to Beijing to make direct, informal contacts with Chinese officials, recordings show. Liu's former classmate, a Wuhan doctor, had alerted him that pneumonia patients were flooding the city's hospitals, and Liu pushed for more experts to visit Wuhan, according to a public health expert familiar with the matter.

On Jan. 20, the leader of an expert team returning from Wuhan, renowned government infectious diseases doctor Zhong Nanshan, declared publicly for the first time that the new virus was spreading between people. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the "timely publication of epidemic information and deepening of international cooperation."

Despite that directive, WHO staff still struggled to obtain enough detailed patient data from China about the rapidly evolving outbreak. That same day, the U.N. health agency dispatched a small team to Wuhan for two days, including Galea, the WHO representative in China.

They were told about a worrying cluster of cases among more than a dozen doctors and nurses. But they did not have "transmission trees" detailing how the cases were connected, nor a full understanding of how widely the virus was spreading and who was at risk.

In an internal meeting, Galea said their Chinese counterparts were "talking openly and consistently" about human-to-human transmission, and that there was a debate about whether or not this was sustained. Galea reported to colleagues in Geneva and Manila that China's key request to WHO was for help "in communicating this to the public, without causing panic."

On Jan. 22, WHO convened an independent committee to determine whether to declare a global health emergency. After two inconclusive meetings where experts were split, they decided against it — even as Chinese officials ordered Wuhan sealed in the biggest quarantine in history.

The next day, WHO chief Tedros publicly described the spread of the new coronavirus in China as "limited."

For days, China didn't release much detailed data, even as its case count exploded. Beijing city officials were alarmed enough to consider locking down the capital, according to a medical expert with direct knowledge of the matter.

On Jan. 28, Tedros and top experts, including Ryan, made an extraordinary trip to Beijing to meet President Xi and other senior Chinese officials. It is highly unusual for WHO's director-general to directly intervene in the practicalities of outbreak investigations. Tedros' staffers had prepared a list of requests for information.

"It could all happen and the floodgates open, or there's no communication," Grein said in an internal meeting while his boss was in Beijing. "We'll see."

At the end of Tedros' trip, WHO announced China had agreed to accept an international team of experts. In a press briefing on Jan. 29, Tedros heaped praise on China, calling its level of commitment "incredible."

The next day, WHO finally declared an international health emergency. Once again, Tedros thanked China, saying nothing about the earlier lack of cooperation.

"We should have actually expressed our respect and gratitude to China for what it's doing," Tedros said. "It has already done incredible things to limit the transmission of the virus to other countries."

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David Feith

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Sender: (b)(6)

Recipient: (b)(6)

From: "Ortagus, Morgan D" (b)(6)
Stilwell, David R (b)(6)
To: Buangan, Richard L (b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6)
Subject: Fwd: AP Exclusive: China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO
Date: Tue, 2 Jun 2020 11:40:34 +0000

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From: PA Press Clips <PAPressMediaMonitors@state.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 5:06:01 AM

To: PA Monitoring Group <PAMonitoringGroup@state.gov>

Subject: AP Exclusive: China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO

China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO

By The Associated Press

2 hours ago

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But behind the scenes, it was a much different story, one of significant delays by China and considerable frustration among WHO officials over not getting the information they needed to fight the spread of the deadly virus, The Associated Press has found.

Despite the plaudits, China in fact sat on releasing the genetic map, or genome, of the virus for more than a week after three different government labs had fully decoded the information. Tight controls on information and competition within the Chinese public health system were to blame, according to dozens of interviews and internal documents.

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"We're currently at the stage where yes, they're giving it to us 15 minutes before it appears on CCTV," said WHO's top official in China, Dr. Gauden Galea, referring to the state-owned China Central Television, in another meeting.

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The delay in the release of the genome stalled the recognition of its spread to other countries, along with the global development of tests, drugs and vaccines. The lack of detailed patient data also made it harder to determine how quickly the virus was spreading — a critical question in stopping it.

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"It's obvious that we could have saved more lives and avoided many, many deaths if China and the WHO had acted faster," said Ali Mokdad, a professor at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

However, Mokdad and other experts also noted that if WHO had been more confrontational with China, it could have triggered a far worse situation of not getting any information at all.

If WHO had pushed too hard, it could even have been kicked out of China, said Adam Kamradt-Scott, a global health professor at the University of Sydney. But he added that a delay of just a few days in releasing genetic sequences can be critical in an outbreak. And he noted that as Beijing's lack of transparency becomes even clearer, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus's continued defense of China is problematic.

"It's definitely damaged WHO's credibility," said Kamradt-Scott. "Did he go too far? I think the evidence on that is clear....it has led to so many questions about the relationship between China and WHO. It is perhaps a cautionary tale."

WHO and its officials named in this story declined to answer questions asked by The Associated Press without audio or written transcripts of the recorded meetings, which the AP was unable to supply to protect its sources.

"Our leadership and staff have worked night and day in compliance with the organization's rules and regulations to support and share information with all Member States equally, and engage in frank and forthright conversations with governments at all levels," a WHO statement said.

China's National Health Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had no comment. But in the past few months, China has repeatedly defended its actions, and many other countries — including the U.S. — have responded to the virus with even longer delays of weeks and even months.

"Since the beginning of the outbreak, we have been continuously sharing information on the epidemic with the WHO and the international community in an open, transparent and responsible manner," said Liu Mingzhu, an official with the National Health Commission's International Department, at a press conference on May 15.

The race to find the genetic map of the virus started in late December, according to the story that unfolds in interviews, documents and the WHO recordings. That's when doctors in Wuhan noticed mysterious clusters of patients with fevers and breathing problems who weren't improving with standard flu treatment. Seeking answers, they sent test samples from patients to commercial labs.

By Dec. 27, one lab, Vision Medicals, had pieced together most of the genome of a new coronavirus with striking similarities to SARS. Vision Medicals shared its data with Wuhan officials and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, as reported first by Chinese finance publication Caixin and independently confirmed by the AP.

On Dec. 30, Wuhan health officials issued internal notices warning of the unusual pneumonia, which leaked on social media. That evening, Shi Zhengli, a coronavirus expert at the Wuhan Institute of Virology who is famous for having traced the SARS virus to a bat cave, was alerted to the new disease, according to an interview with Scientific American. Shi took the first train from a conference in Shanghai back to Wuhan.

The next day, Chinese CDC director Gao Fu dispatched a team of experts to Wuhan. Also on Dec. 31, WHO first learned about the cases from an open-source platform that scouts for intelligence on outbreaks, emergencies chief Ryan has said.

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Scientists agree that Chinese scientists detected and sequenced the then-unknown pathogen with astonishing speed, in a testimony to China's vastly improved technical capabilities since SARS, during which a WHO-led group of scientists took months to identify the virus. This time, Chinese virologists proved within days that it was a never-before-seen coronavirus. Tedros would later say Beijing set "a new standard for outbreak response."

But when it came to sharing the information with the world, things began to go awry.

On Jan. 3, the National Health Commission issued a confidential notice ordering labs with the virus to either destroy their samples or send them to designated institutes for safekeeping. The notice, first reported by Caixin and seen by the AP, forbade labs from publishing about the virus without government authorization. The order barred Shi's lab from publishing the genetic sequence or warning of the potential danger.

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Meanwhile, at the Chinese CDC, gaps in coronavirus expertise proved a problem.

For nearly two weeks, Wuhan reported no new infections, as officials censored doctors who warned of suspicious cases. Meanwhile, researchers found the new coronavirus used a distinct spike protein to bind itself to human cells. The unusual protein and the lack of new cases lulled some Chinese CDC researchers into thinking the virus didn’t easily spread between humans — like the coronavirus that causes Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, according to an employee who declined to be identified out of fear of retribution.

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“It should be contagious through respiratory passages,” the center said in an internal notice seen by the AP. “We recommend taking preventative measures in public areas.”

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The next day, the Chinese CDC raised its emergency level to the second highest. Staffers proceeded to isolate the virus, draft lab testing guidelines, and design test kits. But the agency did not have the authority to issue public warnings, and the heightened emergency level was kept secret even from many of its own staff.

By Jan. 7, another team at Wuhan University had sequenced the pathogen and found it matched Shi's, making Shi certain they had identified a novel coronavirus. But Chinese CDC experts said they didn't trust Shi's findings and needed to verify her data before she could publish, according to three people familiar with the matter. Both the National Health Commission and the Ministry of Science and Technology, which oversees Shi's lab, declined to make Shi available for an interview.

A major factor behind the gag order, some say, was that Chinese CDC researchers wanted to publish their papers first. "They wanted to take all the credit," said Li Yize, a coronavirus researcher at the University of Pennsylvania.

Internally, the leadership of the Chinese CDC is plagued with fierce competition, six people familiar with the system explained. They said the agency has long promoted staff based on how many papers they can publish in prestigious journals, making scientists reluctant to share data.

As the days went by, even some of the Chinese CDC's own staff began to wonder why it was taking so long for authorities to identify the pathogen.

"We were getting suspicious, since within one or two days you would get a sequencing result," a lab technician said, declining to be identified for fear of retribution.

On Jan. 8, the Wall Street Journal reported that scientists had identified a new coronavirus in samples from pneumonia patients in Wuhan, pre-empting and embarrassing Chinese officials. The lab technician told the AP they first learned about the discovery of the virus from the Journal.

The article also embarrassed WHO officials. Dr. Tom Grein, chief of WHO's acute events management team, said the agency looked "doubly, incredibly stupid." Van Kerkhove, the American expert, acknowledged WHO was "already late" in announcing the new virus and told colleagues that it was critical to push China.

Ryan, WHO's chief of emergencies, was also upset at the dearth of information.

"The fact is, we're two to three weeks into an event, we don't have a laboratory diagnosis, we don't have an age, sex or geographic distribution, we don't have an epi curve," he complained, referring to the standard graphic of outbreaks scientists use to show how an epidemic is progressing.

After the article, state media officially announced the discovery of the new coronavirus. But even then, Chinese health authorities did not release the genome, diagnostic tests, or detailed patient data that could hint at how infectious the disease was.

By that time, suspicious cases were already appearing across the region.

On Jan. 8, Thai airport officers pulled aside a woman from Wuhan with a runny nose, sore throat, and high temperature. Chulalongkorn University professor Supaporn Wacharapluesadee's team found the woman was infected with a new coronavirus, much like what Chinese officials had described. Supaporn partially figured out the genetic sequence by Jan. 9, reported it to the Thai government and spent the next day searching for matching sequences.

But because Chinese authorities hadn't published any sequences, she found nothing. She could not prove the Thai virus was the same pathogen sickening people in Wuhan.

"It was kind of wait and see, when China will release the data, then we can compare," said Supaporn.

On Jan. 9, a 61-year-old man with the virus passed away in Wuhan — the first known death. The death wasn't made public until Jan. 11.

WHO officials complained in internal meetings that they were making repeated requests for more data, especially to find out if the virus could spread efficiently between humans, but to no avail.

"We have informally and formally been requesting more epidemiological information," WHO's China representative Galea said. "But when asked for specifics, we could get nothing."

Emergencies chief Ryan grumbled that since China was providing the minimal information required by international law, there was little WHO could do. But he also noted that last September, WHO had issued an unusual public rebuke of Tanzania for not providing enough details about a worrisome Ebola outbreak.

"We have to be consistent," Ryan said. "The danger now is that despite our good intent...especially if something does happen, there will be a lot of finger-pointing at WHO."

Ryan noted that China could make a "huge contribution" to the world by sharing the genetic material immediately, because otherwise "other countries will have to reinvent the wheel over the coming days."

On Jan. 11, a team led by Zhang, from the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, finally published a sequence on virological.org, used by researchers to swap tips on pathogens. The move angered Chinese CDC officials, three people familiar with the matter said, and the next day, his laboratory was temporarily shuttered by health authorities.

Zhang referred a request for comment to the Chinese CDC. The National Health Commission, which oversees the Chinese CDC, declined multiple times to make its officials available for interviews and did not answer questions about Zhang.

Supaporn compared her sequence with Zhang's and found it was a 100% match, confirming that the Thai patient was ill with the same virus detected in Wuhan. Another Thai lab got the same results. That day, Thailand informed the WHO, said Tanarak Plipat, deputy director-general of the Department of Disease Control at Thailand's Ministry of Public Health.

After Zhang released the genome, the Chinese CDC, the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences raced to publish their sequences, working overnight to review them, gather patient data, and send them to the National Health Commission for approval, according to documentation obtained by the AP. On Jan. 12, the three labs together finally published the sequences on GISAID, a platform for scientists to share genomic data.

By then, more than two weeks had passed since Vision Medicals decoded a partial sequence, and more than a week since the three government labs had all obtained full sequences. Around 600 people were infected in that week, a roughly three-fold increase.

Some scientists say the wait was not unreasonable considering the difficulties in sequencing unknown pathogens, given accuracy is as important as speed. They point to the SARS outbreak in 2003 when some Chinese scientists initially — and wrongly — believed the source of the epidemic was chlamydia.

"The pressure is intense in an outbreak to make sure you're right," said Peter Daszak, president of the EcoHealthAlliance in New York. "It's actually worse to go out to go to the public with a story that's wrong because the public completely lose confidence in the public health response."

Still, others quietly question what happened behind the scenes.

Infectious diseases expert John Mackenzie, who served on a WHO emergency committee during the outbreak, praised the speed of Chinese researchers in sequencing the virus. But he said once central authorities got involved, detailed data trickled to a crawl.

"There certainly was a kind of blank period," Mackenzie said. "There had to be human to human transmission. You know, it's staring at you in the face... I would have thought they would have been much more open at that stage."

On Jan. 13, WHO announced that Thailand had a confirmed case of the virus, jolting Chinese officials.

The next day, in a confidential teleconference, China's top health official ordered the country to prepare for a pandemic, calling the outbreak the "most severe challenge since SARS in 2003", as the AP previously reported. Chinese CDC staff across the country began screening, isolating, and testing for cases, turning up hundreds across the country.

Yet even as the Chinese CDC internally declared a level one emergency, the highest level possible, Chinese officials still said the chance of sustained transmission between humans was low.

WHO went back and forth. Van Kerkhove said in a press briefing that "it is certainly possible there is limited human-to-human transmission." But hours later, WHO seemed to backtrack, and tweeted that "preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission" — a statement that later became fodder for critics.

A high-ranking official in WHO's Asia office, Dr. Liu Yunguo, who attended medical school in Wuhan, flew to Beijing to make direct, informal contacts with Chinese officials, recordings show. Liu's former classmate, a Wuhan doctor, had alerted him that pneumonia patients were flooding the city's hospitals, and Liu pushed for more experts to visit Wuhan, according to a public health expert familiar with the matter.

On Jan. 20, the leader of an expert team returning from Wuhan, renowned government infectious diseases doctor Zhong Nanshan, declared publicly for the first time that the new virus was spreading

between people. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the “timely publication of epidemic information and deepening of international cooperation.”

Despite that directive, WHO staff still struggled to obtain enough detailed patient data from China about the rapidly evolving outbreak. That same day, the U.N. health agency dispatched a small team to Wuhan for two days, including Galea, the WHO representative in China.

They were told about a worrying cluster of cases among more than a dozen doctors and nurses. But they did not have “transmission trees” detailing how the cases were connected, nor a full understanding of how widely the virus was spreading and who was at risk.

In an internal meeting, Galea said their Chinese counterparts were “talking openly and consistently” about human-to-human transmission, and that there was a debate about whether or not this was sustained. Galea reported to colleagues in Geneva and Manila that China’s key request to WHO was for help “in communicating this to the public, without causing panic.”

On Jan. 22, WHO convened an independent committee to determine whether to declare a global health emergency. After two inconclusive meetings where experts were split, they decided against it — even as Chinese officials ordered Wuhan sealed in the biggest quarantine in history. The next day, WHO chief Tedros publicly described the spread of the new coronavirus in China as “limited.”

For days, China didn’t release much detailed data, even as its case count exploded. Beijing city officials were alarmed enough to consider locking down the capital, according to a medical expert with direct knowledge of the matter.

On Jan. 28, Tedros and top experts, including Ryan, made an extraordinary trip to Beijing to meet President Xi and other senior Chinese officials. It is highly unusual for WHO’s director-general to directly intervene in the practicalities of outbreak investigations. Tedros’ staffers had prepared a list of requests for information.

“It could all happen and the floodgates open, or there’s no communication,” Grein said in an internal meeting while his boss was in Beijing. “We’ll see.”

At the end of Tedros’ trip, WHO announced China had agreed to accept an international team of experts. In a press briefing on Jan. 29, Tedros heaped praise on China, calling its level of commitment “incredible.”

The next day, WHO finally declared an international health emergency. Once again, Tedros thanked China, saying nothing about the earlier lack of cooperation.

“We should have actually expressed our respect and gratitude to China for what it’s doing,” Tedros said. “It has already done incredible things to limit the transmission of the virus to other countries.”

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Stilwell, David R (b)(6)

Buangan, Richard L (b)(6)

Recipient:

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

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To: (b)(6)
Subject: Fwd: AP Exclusive: China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO
Date: Tue, 2 Jun 2020 13:33:55 +0000

FYI, AP story on China and WHO notification.

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Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 6:47 AM
To: SPOX <SPOX@state.gov>; IO-PG <IO-PG@state.gov>; EAP-Press <EAP-Press@state.gov>; OES-PA-DG <OES-PA-DG@state.gov>; (h)(6) (Wuhan) (b)(6)
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To: PA Monitoring Group <PAMonitoringGroup@state.gov>
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China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO

By The Associated Press

2 hours ago

Throughout January, the World Health Organization publicly praised China for what it called a speedy response to the new coronavirus. It repeatedly thanked the Chinese government for sharing the genetic map of the virus "immediately," and said its work and commitment to transparency were "very impressive, and beyond words."

But behind the scenes, it was a much different story, one of significant delays by China and considerable frustration among WHO officials over not getting the information they needed to fight the spread of the deadly virus, The Associated Press has found.

Despite the plaudits, China in fact sat on releasing the genetic map, or genome, of the virus for more than a week after three different government labs had fully decoded the information. Tight controls on information and competition within the Chinese public health system were to blame, according to dozens of interviews and internal documents.

Chinese government labs only released the genome after another lab published it ahead of authorities on a virologist website on Jan. 11. Even then, China stalled for at least two weeks more on providing WHO with detailed data on patients and cases, according to recordings of internal meetings held by the U.N. health agency through January — all at a time when the outbreak arguably might have been dramatically slowed.

WHO officials were lauding China in public because they wanted to coax more information out of the government, the recordings obtained by the AP suggest. Privately, they complained in meetings the

week of Jan. 6 that China was not sharing enough data to assess how effectively the virus spread between people or what risk it posed to the rest of the world, costing valuable time.

"We're going on very minimal information," said American epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove, now WHO's technical lead for COVID-19, in one internal meeting. "It's clearly not enough for you to do proper planning."

"We're currently at the stage where yes, they're giving it to us 15 minutes before it appears on CCTV," said WHO's top official in China, Dr. Gauden Galea, referring to the state-owned China Central Television, in another meeting.

The story behind the early response to the virus comes at a time when the U.N. health agency is under siege, and has agreed to an independent probe of how the pandemic was handled globally. After repeatedly praising the Chinese response early on, U.S. President Donald Trump has blasted WHO in recent weeks for allegedly colluding with China to hide the extent of the coronavirus crisis. He cut ties with the organization on Friday, jeopardizing the approximately \$450 million the U.S. gives every year as WHO's biggest single donor.

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In the meantime, Chinese President Xi Jinping has vowed to pitch in \$2 billion over the next two years to fight the coronavirus, saying China has always provided information to WHO and the world "in a most timely fashion."

The new information does not support the narrative of either the U.S. or China, but instead portrays an agency now stuck in the middle that was urgently trying to solicit more data despite limits to its own authority. Although international law obliges countries to report information to WHO that could have an impact on public health, the U.N. agency has no enforcement powers and cannot independently investigate epidemics within countries. Instead, it must rely on the cooperation of member states.

The recordings suggest that rather than colluding with China, as Trump declared, WHO was kept in the dark as China gave it the minimal information required by law. However, the agency did try to portray China in the best light, likely as a means to secure more information. And WHO experts genuinely thought Chinese scientists had done "a very good job" in detecting and decoding the virus, despite the lack of transparency from Chinese officials.

WHO staffers debated how to press China for gene sequences and detailed patient data without angering authorities, worried about losing access and getting Chinese scientists into trouble. Under international law, WHO is required to quickly share information and alerts with member countries about an evolving crisis. Galea noted WHO could not indulge China's wish to sign off on information before telling other countries because "that is not respectful of our responsibilities."

In the second week of January, WHO's chief of emergencies, Dr. Michael Ryan, told colleagues it was time to "shift gears" and apply more pressure on China, fearing a repeat of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome that started in China in 2002 and killed nearly 800 people worldwide.

"This is exactly the same scenario, endlessly trying to get updates from China about what was going on," he said. "WHO barely got out of that one with its neck intact given the issues that arose around transparency in southern China."

Ryan said the best way to "protect China" was for WHO to do its own independent analysis with data from the Chinese government, because otherwise the spread of the virus between people would be in question and "other countries will take action accordingly." Ryan also noted that China was not cooperating in the same way some other countries had in the past.

"This would not happen in Congo and did not happen in Congo and other places," he said, probably referring to the Ebola outbreak that began there in 2018. "We need to see the data.....It's absolutely important at this point."

The delay in the release of the genome stalled the recognition of its spread to other countries, along with the global development of tests, drugs and vaccines. The lack of detailed patient data also made it harder to determine how quickly the virus was spreading — a critical question in stopping it.

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After the article, state media officially announced the discovery of the new coronavirus. But even then, Chinese health authorities did not release the genome, diagnostic tests, or detailed patient data that could hint at how infectious the disease was.

By that time, suspicious cases were already appearing across the region.

On Jan. 8, Thai airport officers pulled aside a woman from Wuhan with a runny nose, sore throat, and high temperature. Chulalongkorn University professor Supaporn Wacharapluesadee's team found the woman was infected with a new coronavirus, much like what Chinese officials had described. Supaporn partially figured out the genetic sequence by Jan. 9, reported it to the Thai government and spent the next day searching for matching sequences.

But because Chinese authorities hadn't published any sequences, she found nothing. She could not prove the Thai virus was the same pathogen sickening people in Wuhan.

"It was kind of wait and see, when China will release the data, then we can compare," said Supaporn.

On Jan. 9, a 61-year-old man with the virus passed away in Wuhan — the first known death. The death wasn't made public until Jan. 11.

WHO officials complained in internal meetings that they were making repeated requests for more data, especially to find out if the virus could spread efficiently between humans, but to no avail.

"We have informally and formally been requesting more epidemiological information," WHO's China representative Galea said. "But when asked for specifics, we could get nothing."

Emergencies chief Ryan grumbled that since China was providing the minimal information required by international law, there was little WHO could do. But he also noted that last September, WHO had issued an unusual public rebuke of Tanzania for not providing enough details about a worrisome Ebola outbreak.

"We have to be consistent," Ryan said. "The danger now is that despite our good intent...especially if something does happen, there will be a lot of finger-pointing at WHO."

Ryan noted that China could make a "huge contribution" to the world by sharing the genetic material immediately, because otherwise "other countries will have to reinvent the wheel over the coming days."

On Jan. 11, a team led by Zhang, from the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, finally published a sequence on virological.org, used by researchers to swap tips on pathogens. The move angered Chinese CDC officials, three people familiar with the matter said, and the next day, his laboratory was temporarily shuttered by health authorities.

Zhang referred a request for comment to the Chinese CDC. The National Health Commission, which oversees the Chinese CDC, declined multiple times to make its officials available for interviews and did not answer questions about Zhang.

Supaporn compared her sequence with Zhang's and found it was a 100% match, confirming that the Thai patient was ill with the same virus detected in Wuhan. Another Thai lab got the same results. That

day, Thailand informed the WHO, said Tanarak Plipat, deputy director-general of the Department of Disease Control at Thailand's Ministry of Public Health.

After Zhang released the genome, the Chinese CDC, the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences raced to publish their sequences, working overnight to review them, gather patient data, and send them to the National Health Commission for approval, according to documentation obtained by the AP. On Jan. 12, the three labs together finally published the sequences on GISAID, a platform for scientists to share genomic data.

By then, more than two weeks had passed since Vision Medicals decoded a partial sequence, and more than a week since the three government labs had all obtained full sequences. Around 600 people were infected in that week, a roughly three-fold increase.

Some scientists say the wait was not unreasonable considering the difficulties in sequencing unknown pathogens, given accuracy is as important as speed. They point to the SARS outbreak in 2003 when some Chinese scientists initially — and wrongly — believed the source of the epidemic was chlamydia.

"The pressure is intense in an outbreak to make sure you're right," said Peter Daszak, president of the EcoHealthAlliance in New York. "It's actually worse to go out to go to the public with a story that's wrong because the public completely lose confidence in the public health response."

Still, others quietly question what happened behind the scenes.

Infectious diseases expert John Mackenzie, who served on a WHO emergency committee during the outbreak, praised the speed of Chinese researchers in sequencing the virus. But he said once central authorities got involved, detailed data trickled to a crawl.

"There certainly was a kind of blank period," Mackenzie said. "There had to be human to human transmission. You know, it's staring at you in the face... I would have thought they would have been much more open at that stage."

On Jan. 13, WHO announced that Thailand had a confirmed case of the virus, jolting Chinese officials.

The next day, in a confidential teleconference, China's top health official ordered the country to prepare for a pandemic, calling the outbreak the "most severe challenge since SARS in 2003", as the AP previously reported. Chinese CDC staff across the country began screening, isolating, and testing for cases, turning up hundreds across the country.

Yet even as the Chinese CDC internally declared a level one emergency, the highest level possible, Chinese officials still said the chance of sustained transmission between humans was low.

WHO went back and forth. Van Kerkhove said in a press briefing that "it is certainly possible there is limited human-to-human transmission." But hours later, WHO seemed to backtrack, and tweeted that "preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission" — a statement that later became fodder for critics.

A high-ranking official in WHO's Asia office, Dr. Liu Yunguo, who attended medical school in Wuhan, flew to Beijing to make direct, informal contacts with Chinese officials, recordings show. Liu's former classmate, a Wuhan doctor, had alerted him that pneumonia patients were flooding the city's hospitals, and Liu pushed for more experts to visit Wuhan, according to a public health expert familiar with the matter.

On Jan. 20, the leader of an expert team returning from Wuhan, renowned government infectious diseases doctor Zhong Nanshan, declared publicly for the first time that the new virus was spreading between people. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the "timely publication of epidemic information and deepening of international cooperation."

Despite that directive, WHO staff still struggled to obtain enough detailed patient data from China about the rapidly evolving outbreak. That same day, the U.N. health agency dispatched a small team to Wuhan for two days, including Galea, the WHO representative in China.

They were told about a worrying cluster of cases among more than a dozen doctors and nurses. But they did not have "transmission trees" detailing how the cases were connected, nor a full understanding of how widely the virus was spreading and who was at risk.

In an internal meeting, Galea said their Chinese counterparts were "talking openly and consistently" about human-to-human transmission, and that there was a debate about whether or not this was sustained. Galea reported to colleagues in Geneva and Manila that China's key request to WHO was for help "in communicating this to the public, without causing panic."

On Jan. 22, WHO convened an independent committee to determine whether to declare a global health emergency. After two inconclusive meetings where experts were split, they decided against it — even as Chinese officials ordered Wuhan sealed in the biggest quarantine in history. The next day, WHO chief Tedros publicly described the spread of the new coronavirus in China as "limited."

For days, China didn't release much detailed data, even as its case count exploded. Beijing city officials were alarmed enough to consider locking down the capital, according to a medical expert with direct knowledge of the matter.

On Jan. 28, Tedros and top experts, including Ryan, made an extraordinary trip to Beijing to meet President Xi and other senior Chinese officials. It is highly unusual for WHO's director-general to directly intervene in the practicalities of outbreak investigations. Tedros' staffers had prepared a list of requests for information.

"It could all happen and the floodgates open, or there's no communication," Grein said in an internal meeting while his boss was in Beijing. "We'll see."

At the end of Tedros' trip, WHO announced China had agreed to accept an international team of experts. In a press briefing on Jan. 29, Tedros heaped praise on China, calling its level of commitment "incredible."

The next day, WHO finally declared an international health emergency. Once again, Tedros thanked China, saying nothing about the earlier lack of cooperation.

"We should have actually expressed our respect and gratitude to China for what it's doing," Tedros said.
"It has already done incredible things to limit the transmission of the virus to other countries."

Sender: (b)(6)

Recipient: (b)(6)

From: "Pottinger, Matthew F. EOP/WHO" (b)(6)
To: Debi Birx (b)(6)
Subject: Fwd: A Tale of Two Versions
Date: Sun, 1 Mar 2020 19:32:17 +0000

Interesting note from a colleague at State about the paper you requested. Bottom line is that (b)(5)

(b)(5)

Matt Pottinger
Assistant to the President &
Deputy National Security Advisor
The White House

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b)(6)
Date: March 1, 2020 at 2:16:30 PM EST
To: "Kanapathy, Ivan J. EOP/NSC" (b)(6)
Cc: "Fritz, Jonathan D" (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) (b)(6)
"Keshap, Atul" (b)(6), "Stilwell, David R"
(b)(6) "Hooker, Allison M. EOP/NSC" (b)(6)
"Iltebir, Elnigar EOP/NSC" (b)(6) "Tobin, Elizabeth D. EOP/NSC"
(b)(6) (b)(6) >, "Pottinger, Matthew F.
EOP/WHO" (b)(6)
Subject: A Tale of Two Versions

All,

It is the best of times; it is the worst of times. Now the Chinese scientists seem to be suggesting that the AVID-19 has peaked as of Feb 11.

Here is my brief analysis and comparison of the Chinese version and the English version of the same article, both published on the Chinese CDC website. There are some interesting differences, briefly summarized as follows:

1. The Chinese version

It is clearly meant for a Chinese domestic audience with strong emphasis on the OFFICIAL, Party Central-directed nature of the research.

a. It states at the top of the Chinese version that this research is funded directly by the Chinese government, more specifically by the PRC Ministry of Sciences and Technologies (NMP)'s National Science and Technology Major Project, and the PRC's National Natural Science Foundation of China or NSFC,

b. It also states that the NSFC sponsors this COVID19 research paper as part of the larger research on public health issues related to the CCP's Belt and Road Initiative.

c. In the acknowledgement at the end of the paper, it devotes a special "Thank You" section: "Salute to those comrades who are fighting in the frontline for the Prevention and Control of the Novel Coronavirus!" (向战斗在新型肺炎疫情防控一线的同志们致敬!)

2.The English version

It adopts several misleading, if not deceptive, methods to hide or at least down play the official nature of the paper, summarized as follows:

a. It adds a disclaimer which **DOES NOT** exist in the Chinese version: "*The opinions expressed herein reflect the collective views of the co-authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the National Center for AIDS/STD Control and Prevention of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.*"

This disclaimer could be very significant because it could mean two things: first, it could well be the Chinese CDC's oblique dissent to the paper's findings and to stake a plausible deniability if the paper's findings should turn out to be fake, flawed or manufactured; or secondly, it may indicate that the Chinese CDC wants to tell the international community that this publication is apolitical and scientific, not influenced by a government internationally known for its habitual mendacity.

b. It moves the government funding information from the top page in the Chinese version to the very bottom of the English version with a strong denial of any Party-central interference: "*The work was supported by National Science and Technology Foundation of China (2018ZX10201002-008-002 and by National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC, 71934002). The funder had no role in the design and conduct of the study; collection, management, analysis, and interpretation of the data; preparation, review, or approval of the manuscript; and decision to submit the manuscript for publication.*"

This strong statement also **DOES NOT** exist in the Chinese version. Based upon the deepening distrust of the CCP government in handling the COVID19 crisis by the vast number of Chinese who have expressed their opinions online, this statement, if published in the Chinese version, could have led to an avalanche of ridicule and mockery.

c. The English version also does not have any reference to the BRI research connection.

d. The English version is conspicuously de-ideologicalized by striking out the "Salute to the heroic comrades" part in the Chinese version. It simply states that "*The team thanks all local health workers for their contributions in providing testing, treatment, and care to COVID-19 patients in China,*" which is quite different and less ideologically gung ho than "*Salute to those comrades who are fighting in the frontline for the Prevention and Control of the Novel Coronavirus!*" that shows up in the Chinese version.

(b)(6)



(b)(6)
Policy Planning Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)
(c)

On Feb 29, 2020, at 5:50 PM, (b)(6) wrote:

Here it is—

(b)(6)

><http://weekly.chinacdc.cn/en/article/id/e53946e2-c6c4-41e9-9a9b-fea8db1a8f51><<https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fweekly.chinacdc.cn%2Fen%2Farticle%2Fid%2Fe53946e2-c6c4-41e9-9a9b-fea8db1a8f51&data=02%7C01%7CYuMM%40state.gov%7C60465bc7f67c4acb078a08d7bd68d06f%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C1%7C637186130182424854&sdata=IZ0NhO9AxUKTnsPBm%2F0bahgOhAyfGaYop87UN6zz6JU%3D&reserved=0>><

<Chinese CDC Paper on COVID19 English.pdf>

x

(b)(6)
Policy Planning Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)
(c)

On Feb 29, 2020, at 5:44 PM, (b)(6) wrote:

Folks,

After my LeiFeng-esque good deed today, I just realized the Chinese CDC had actually published an English version of the paper online—sans references to “comrades,” etc.

I will send it along momentarily.

(b)(6)

x

(b)(6)
Policy Planning Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)

(b)(6) (c)

On Feb 29, 2020, at 5:17 PM, (b)(6) wrote:

Hold on, Just realized there is a typo in Table 2, Line 1, column 1. It should be "Pre-Dec.31,2019" not "Pre-Feb. 31,2019."

Correct version is attached.

(b)(6)

<Table 2 Overview of Diagnosis revised.pdf>

x

(b)(6)
Policy Planning Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)
(c)

On Feb 29, 2020, at 4:52 PM, (b)(6) wrote:

Ivan,

Here are all the charts and graphs translated into English.

(b)(6)

<Table 1 National Overview of Cases Deaths and Fatality Rate.pdf>

<cidf_k784refb1.pdf>

<368109bc-4617-48f1-a627-8b9c1b248004.jpg>

<aac48b65-f9ac-444a-9a2e-ae5dbfd731de.jpg>

<5cccd0-628b-44a7-8c6f-f2319471ed4b.jpg>

<f90bae95-43f3-4ce4-a5cd-abf0e209796b.jpg>

x

(b)(6)
Policy Planning Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)
(c)

On Feb 29, 2020, at 10:22 AM, Kanapathy, Ivan J. EOP/NSC (b)(6) wrote:

(b)(6)

Please take a crack at it. Speed is of the essence. We do need something tomorrow night. Thanks so much. This is for the task force (Debbie Birx is the new WH COVID Task Force coordinator, reporting directly to the VP). (b)(5)

Will also take what translation services does for us in parallel. Thanks, Jonathan.

Best

Ivan

Ivan Kanapathy

Deputy Senior Director for Asian Affairs

National Security Council

The White House

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Saturday, February 29, 2020 10:05 AM

To: Kanapathy, Ivan J. EOP/NSC (b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)

(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)

Keshap, Atul (b)(6) Stilwell, David R (b)(6) Hooker, Allison M.

EOP/NSC (b)(6) Iltebir, Elnigar EOP/NSC (b)(6)

Tobin, Elizabeth D. EOP/NSC (b)(6)

Subject: Re: Paper

Ivan,

There is an Office of Translation Services at State, but they are slow and very costly—they contract jobs out (about \$.20 per character!) it would be a miracle for them to get this done by tomorrow.

Do you know the purpose for translating this document? For MP's personal use? Share it with the task force? Verbatim translation for official use?

What takes time is to recreate the charts and graphics in a pdf file. (Easier for Word)

Alternatively, I can take a crack at it with the following options:

1. Hand mark the Chinese in the charts and graphics, scan and send them to you—it takes me minutes
2. Summarize the key findings and analysis in this report, by COB today
3. The whole thing, COB tomorrow

(b)(6)

☒

(b)(6)

Policy Planning Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State

(b)(6)

(o)

(c)

On Feb 29, 2020, at 7:21 AM, Kanapathy, Ivan J. EOP/NSC
wrote:

(b)(6)

State colleagues,

Please see below and attached.

Do we have access to any translation services that can be utilized over the weekend? This request is coming directly from the COVID Task Force.

Thank you,

Ivan

Ivan Kanapathy
Deputy Senior Director for Asian Affairs
National Security Council
The White House

(b)(6)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Pottinger, Matthew F. EOP/WHO" (b)(6)

Date: February 29, 2020 at 07:05:35 EST

To: DL NSC Asia (b)(6)

Subject: Fwd: Paper

Team

Can we get State or IC to translate this paper this weekend? Need it by end of day Sunday.

(b)(5)

Thx.

Matt Pottinger
Assistant to the President &
Deputy National Security Advisor
The White House

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Birx, Deborah L" (b)(6)
Date: February 29, 2020 at 1:41:31 AM EST
To: "Pottinger, Matthew F. EOP/WHO" (b)(6)
Subject: Paper

<COVID19.pdf>

Sender: "Pottinger, Matthew F. EOP/WHO" (b)(6)
Recipient: Debi Birx (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
To: Kenna, Lisa D (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 28)
Date: Tue, 28 Apr 2020 15:59:26 +0000

(b)(5)

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~ DeControlled

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2020 11:50 AM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject: Fw: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 28)

Attached/below is an open source timeline produced by (b)(6) outlining PRC actions prior to/during the COVID-19 outbreak.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2020 11:39
To: Stilwell, David R (b)(6) EAP-EO-Principals-DL (b)(6)
(b)(6) Matthew Pottinger (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) Ortogus, Morgan D (b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6) Buangan, Richard L
(b)(6)
(b)(6) Snyder, Nicholas (b)(6)
(b)(6) Storch, Thomas (b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6) (Bangkok) (b)(6) Kritenbrink, Daniel J (Hanoi)
(b)(6) Harris, Harry B (Seoul) <HarrisHB@state.gov>; Adam Boehler
(b)(6)
(b)(6) C_Policy (b)(6)
(b)(6)
Zadrozny, John A. EOP/WHO (b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6) Snyder, Nicholas JC (b)(6) Welch, Jennifer D
(b)(6)
Subject: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 28)

Attached includes an additional topline theme (the assault on international transparency), along with updates as of April 28.

Updated major themes:

--The silenced and the disappeared: E.g. Wuhan doctors Li Wenliang, Ai Fen and others; journalists Fang Bin, Chen Quishi, and Li Zehua; activist Xu Zhiyong; professor Xu Zhangrun; billionaire and Xi Jinping critic Ren Zhiqiang; online activists Cai Wei, Tang, and Chen Mei...

--The suppression and destruction of evidence: E.g. virus samples ordered destroyed at genomics labs, wildlife market stalls bleached, genome sequence not shared publicly, Shanghai lab closed for "rectification" after sharing genome on its own, academic articles subjected to prior review by the Ministry of Science and Technology, data on asymptomatic "silent carriers" kept secret...

--The deadly denial of human-to-human transmission: Despite evidence of human-human transmission from early December, PRC authorities deny it until Jan. 20. The World Health Organization does the same. Yet officials in Taiwan raised concerns as early as Dec. 31, as did experts in Hong Kong on Jan. 4...

--The endangerment of other countries: Millions of people leave Wuhan after the outbreak and before Beijing locks down the city on Jan. 23. Thousands fly overseas. Throughout February, Beijing presses the U.S., Italy, India, Australia, Southeast Asian neighbors and others not to protect themselves via travel restrictions, even as the PRC imposes severe restrictions at home...

--The assault on international transparency: As EU diplomats prepare a report on the pandemic, PRC successfully presses Brussels to strike language on PRC disinformation. As Australia calls for an independent inquiry into the pandemic, PRC threatens to cut off trade with Australia. (PRC has likewise responded furiously to US calls for transparency.)

New timeline elements in the attached:

— 2020 —

January 26: Major General Chen Wei, the Chinese military's top epidemiologist and virologist, assumes a senior position at the Wuhan Institute of Virology overseeing coronavirus vaccine research.

January 31: Acclaimed author and Wuhan resident Fang Fang writes online, "How many people have died in Wuhan and their families destroyed? . . . But so far not a single person has said sorry or taken responsibility. I've even seen a writer use the phrase 'complete victory'. What are they talking about?" Her "Wuhan Diary" writings become an increasing target of scorn online, backed by state media outlets, in a campaign she says recalls the Cultural Revolution.

February 6: The leaders of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine write to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on the importance of

information-sharing and transparency “for managing the 2019-nCoV outbreak and for preventing future outbreaks.” “Samples collected as early as possible in the outbreak in Wuhan and samples from wildlife would be particularly valuable,” they write, adding that the president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences has indicated that the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory “is willing to share isolates of the 2019 nCov with the international community.” This transfer apparently never happened.

February 16: The Wuhan Institute of Virology issues a public denial that its former researcher Huang Yanling is “patient zero,” as speculated on Chinese social media based on the disappearance of Huang’s biographical information from the Institute’s website and Huang’s unknown whereabouts. Institute researcher Shi Zhengli writes on social media that she “guaranteed with her own life” that the outbreak was unrelated to the lab. She instructs “those who believe and spread malicious media rumors to close their stinky mouths. (In 2004, China suffered a SARS outbreak due to a lab leak that killed one person and infected nine. PRC authorities blamed negligence and punished five senior officials at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.)

April 18: Yuan Zhiming, vice director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology and director of the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory, tells state broadcaster CGTN, “There is absolutely no way that the virus originated from our institute. . . . I hope such a conspiracy theory will not affect cooperation among scientists around the world.”

April 21: A study published in the Lancet by researchers from Hong Kong estimates that China might have had tens of thousands more coronavirus cases than officials have disclosed.

April 22: Citizen journalist Li Zehua surfaces for the first time since February, saying that his detention included a quarantine in Wuhan and another in his hometown, after which he was reunited with his family. He says in a video: “During the whole process, the police enforced law in a civilised manner, ensured my rest time and food. They also cared about me very much. . . . I’m grateful to all the people who looked after me and cared about me. I wish all people suffering the epidemic can pull through. God bless China. I wish the world can unite together.”

April 24: Under pressure from Beijing, the European Union softens a published report on Covid-19 disinformation. The final text removed a draft reference to Beijing’s “global disinformation” campaign and struck mention of the diplomatic dispute between China and France over Chinese PPE exports and the aggressive rhetoric of China’s ambassador in Paris.

April 25: SCMP reports Chinese police have detained three Beijing residents (Cai Wei, a woman surnamed Tang, and Chen Mei) who helped publish articles about Covid-19 on open-source website Github that were previously censored from mainstream PRC media and social media, including material about Wuhan doctor Ai Fen.

April 27: PRC ambassador to Australia Cheng Jingye threatens economic harm if Australia continues pushing for an independent investigation into the coronavirus. “Maybe the ordinary [Chinese] people will say ‘Why should we drink Australian wine? Eat Australian beef?’,” Cheng said, also citing the tourism and higher-education sectors. Australian Foreign Minister Marise

Payne answered: "We reject any suggestion that economic coercion is an appropriate response to a call for such an assessment, when what we need is global cooperation."

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(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6)

(o)

(c)

(b)(6)

On April 17, 2020 at 7:19:08 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated timeline attached, through April 17. New elements include:

— 2015 —

November 9: Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (including Shi Zhengli) and several U.S. labs (including the FDA's National Center for Toxicological Research) publish a study in *Nature Medicine* entitled "A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence." It stated: "To examine the emergence potential (that is, the potential to infect humans) of circulating bat CoVs, we built a chimeric virus encoding a novel, zoonotic CoV spike protein—from the RsSHC014-CoV sequence that was isolated from Chinese horseshoe bats—in the context of the SARS-CoV mouse-adapted backbone."

— 2019 —

March 2: Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology publish a study in the medical journal *Viruses* noting that "it is highly likely that future SARS- or MERS-like coronavirus outbreaks will originate from bats, and there is an increased probability that this will occur in China."

March 5: Gao Fu, director of the PRC's CDC, says in a speech: "Viruses like SARS could emerge anytime, but there'll never be another SARS incident. That's thanks to how well our national contagious disease surveillance system works."

— 2020 —

January 3: The Wuhan Health Commission sets narrow criteria for confirming that a case is officially part of the outbreak, saying patients can be counted only if they had ties to the Huanan seafood market, excluding the growing number of cases with no such ties. An official from a district disease control center in Wuhan also tells a hospital doctor handling infection reports that "this was a special contagious disease and we should report only after superiors had notified us."

January 6: The head of an expert team sent to Wuhan from Beijing, Xu Jianguo, reports that "China has many years of disease control, there's absolutely no chance that this will spread

widely because of Spring Festival travel,” and there is “no evidence of human-to-human transmission.”

January 10: After leading a second expert team from Beijing to Wuhan, prominent PRC government expert Wang Guangfa tells state broadcaster CCTV that the Wuhan pneumonia was “under control” and mostly a “mild condition.” His team reported no clear signs of human-to-human transmission, though more than half a dozen doctors already were ill. [On March 15, Wang wrote on social media that he “always suspected it was human-to-human transmissible.”]

January 14: In a confidential teleconference with provincial health officials, PRC National Health Commission chief Ma Xiaowei reportedly warns that the novel virus is “the most severe challenge since SARS in 2003, and is likely to develop into a major public health event,” adding that “clustered cases suggest that human-to-human transmission is possible.” Citing the case reported in Thailand the day prior, Ma warns of spread overseas and during China’s coming Lunar New Year festivities. It would be another six days before any of these official concerns are made public.

January 15: A day after the confidential teleconference, China’s CDC initiates the highest-level emergency response internally and the National Health Commission distributes 63 pages of instructions to provinces on identifying cases and equipping doctors with protective gear. These instructions are marked “internal,” “not to be spread on the internet,” and “not to be publicly disclosed.”

February 15: Finance magazine Barron’s finds that China’s official coronavirus data fit a near-perfect model that is almost impossible to naturally occur, as the number of cumulative deaths reported could be predicted by a simple mathematical formula to a 99.99% accuracy.

March 3: WHO chief Tedros plays down the risk of asymptomatic silent carriers, citing official PRC data: “COVID-19 does not transmit as efficiently as influenza, from the data we have so far. With influenza, people who are infected but not yet sick are major drivers of transmission, which does not appear to be the case for COVID-19. Evidence from China is that only 1% of reported cases do not have symptoms, and most of those cases develop symptoms within two days.” Later reports cited classified PRC data showing up to 33% of cases were asymptomatic (see March 22).

April 17: Wuhan raises its official tally of Covid-19 fatalities by 1,290, to nearly 3,900, blaming the initial undercount on cases unrecognized, untreated, or underreported by overstressed hospitals.

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)

(b)(6) (c)

(b)(6)

On April 13, 2020 at 9:51:31 AM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated timeline attached. This version notes at the top that major themes include:

--The silenced and the disappeared: E.g. Wuhan doctors Li Wenliang, Ai Fen and others; journalists Fang Bin, Chen Quishi, and Li Zehua; activist Xu Zhiyong; professor Xu Zhangrun; billionaire CCP member and Xi Jinping critic Ren Zhiqiang...

--The suppression and destruction of evidence: E.g. virus samples ordered destroyed at genomics labs, wildlife market stalls bleached, genome sequence not shared publicly, Shanghai lab closed for "rectification" after sharing genome on its own, academic articles subjected to prior review by the Ministry of Science and Technology...

--The deadly denial of human-to-human transmission: Despite evidence of human-human transmission from early December, PRC authorities deny it until Jan. 20. The World Health Organization does the same. Yet officials in Taiwan raised concerns about human-human transmission as early as Dec. 31, as did experts in Hong Kong on Jan. 4...

--The endangerment of other countries: Millions of people leave Wuhan after the outbreak and before Beijing locks down the city on Jan. 23. Thousands fly overseas. When Beijing cuts off travel from Hubei Province to the rest of China, it doesn't stop travel from Hubei to the rest of the world. Throughout February, Beijing presses the U.S., Italy, India, Australia, Southeast Asian neighbors and others not to protect themselves via travel restrictions...

New timeline elements in the attached:

--2013--

Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology collect a sample of horseshoe bat feces from a cave in Yunnan Province, China. The sample, labeled RaTG13, is later found to contain a virus 96.2% identical to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

--2019--

February 20: Researchers at Hong Kong University publish a study of bat coronaviruses, warning: "bat-animal and bat-human interactions, such as the presence of live bats in wildlife wet markets and restaurants in Southern China, are important for interspecies transmission of [coronaviruses] and may lead to devastating global outbreaks."

December 30: Wuhan Institute of Virology researcher Shi Zhengli (known as "bat-woman" for her research) is called by the Institute's director and summoned back to Wuhan from a conference in Shanghai to study samples of the novel coronavirus. "Could they have come from our lab?" Shi feared.

--2020--

January 7: Shi Zhengli of the Wuhan Institute of Virology recalled in a March 11 interview with Scientific American that by January 7 her team found that the novel coronavirus's sequence did not match any of the viruses her team had sampled from bat caves. "That really took a load off my mind," she said. But the novel sequence was 96% identical to one her team had sampled previously in Yunnan.

January 13: The first coronavirus case outside of China is reported in Bangkok when a 61-year-old woman from Wuhan tests positive four days after arriving from China with a fever at the airport. The patient had begun exhibiting symptoms (fever, chills, sore throat, headache) three days before leaving Wuhan.

January 15: The patient who becomes the first confirmed U.S. case leaves Wuhan and arrives in the U.S., carrying the coronavirus.

January 22: WHO holds emergency committee meeting, decides not to declare the novel coronavirus a "public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)." WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says afterward that declaring a PHEIC is a decision he takes "extremely seriously" and is "only prepared to make with appropriate consideration of all the evidence." The emergency committee meeting excluded Taiwan from its deliberations.

January 23: Despite locking down Wuhan and cutting off travel from the surrounding Hubei Province to the rest of China, PRC officials did not cut off travel from Hubei Province to the rest of the world.

January 24: Officials in Beijing prevent the Wuhan Institute of Virology from sharing samples of the novel coronavirus with the University of Texas biocontainment lab, overruling an initial agreement by the Wuhan lab to share these samples.

January 30: WHO declares a public-health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), after nearly 10,000 cases of the virus are confirmed, including in at least 18 countries outside of China.

February 6: Researchers from South China University of Technology publish a study concluding that "the killer coronavirus probably originated from a laboratory in Wuhan. Safety level may need to be reinforced in high risk biohazardous laboratories." The paper is soon withdrawn because it "was not supported by direct proofs," according to author Botao Xiao. "No scientists have confirmed or refuted the paper's findings," scholar Yanzhong Huang wrote on March 5.

February 16: The Wuhan Institute of Virology issues a public denial that its former researcher Huang Yanling is "patient zero," as speculated on Chinese social media based on changes to the Institute's website and Huang's unknown whereabouts. Institute researcher Shi Zhengli writes on social media that she "guaranteed with her own life" that the outbreak was unrelated to the lab. [In 2004, China suffered a SARS outbreak due to a lab leak that killed one person and infected

nine. PRC authorities blamed negligence and punished five senior officials at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.]

February 23: Xi Jinping delivers speech to PRC officials calling virus “a crisis for us and also a major test.” He stresses “social stability” and states that “the effectiveness of the prevention and control work has once again demonstrated the significant advantages of the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.”

March 11: WHO declares the novel coronavirus a “pandemic,” after the official worldwide case count is 118,000 people in 114 countries.

March 26: China bars entry of all foreigners in attempt to limit virus spread. This measure is harsher than the travel restrictions of other countries that Beijing had criticized just weeks before.

April 3: While lifting lockdown restrictions in Wuhan, officials limit funerals of those who died from the coronavirus, suppress online discussions of fatalities, scrub images of funeral homes from social media, assign minders to families in mourning, and face questions from families such as why it took the government weeks to inform the public that the virus could spread among humans.

April 3: China’s Ministry of Science and Technology announces that ongoing clinical research on the coronavirus must be reported to authorities within three days or be halted.

April 7: Human rights activists report, citing public records alone, that Chinese police punished nearly 900 people for online speech or information-sharing about the virus over three months.

April 11: Chinese universities publish online—and then apparently delete—new guidelines stating that academic papers on the origin of the novel coronavirus can be published only with the approval of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6)

(o)

(c)

(b)(6)

On April 2, 2020 at 4:58:00 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:

Updated here to include more on the WHO, and some other tweaks. Please use this document (stamped 5pm).

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

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(c)

(b)(6)

On April 2, 2020 at 3:07:15 PM EDT, Stilwell, David R (b)(6) wrote:

(b)(5)

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2020 11:16 AM

To: EAP-FO-Principals-DL (b)(6) NSC Asia

(b)(6) Matthew Pottinger (b)(6)

(b)(6) Ortagus, Morgan D (b)(6)

(b)(6) (Geneva)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Buangan, Richard L (b)(6)

(b)(6) Snyder, Nicholas

(b)(6) Storch,

Thomas (b)(6) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Kritenbrink, Daniel J (Hanoi) (b)(6) Harris,

Harry B (Seoul) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Subject: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 2)

Some of the new items in the attached:

January 4: Amid PRC denials, another expert outside mainland China begins to sound alarms over human-to-human transmission. The head of the University of Hong Kong's Centre for Infection, Ho Pak-leung, warns that Hong Kong "should implement the strictest possible monitoring system for a mystery new viral pneumonia that has infected dozens of people on the mainland, as it is highly possible that the illness is spreading from human to human."

January 23: Chinese authorities lock down Wuhan, after letting some five million people leave the city without screening in the weeks prior, amid the growing outbreak. NYT estimates seven

million people left between Jan. 1 and Jan 23. Before the lockdown, some 900 people flew from Wuhan to New York City per month on average, while some 2,200 flew to Sydney and 15,000 to Bangkok (site of the first overseas case of the novel coronavirus in mid-January). Some 85% of infected travelers went undetected.

January 30: WHO special committee on the novel coronavirus states that it “does not recommend any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available.”

January 31: U.S. shuts down entry from China for non-Americans. By this time, outbreaks were already growing in 30 cities across 26 countries. PRC state media criticize the U.S. travel advisory urging citizens not to travel to China due to health concerns. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims the U.S. action is “certainly not a gesture of goodwill.”

February 1: Referring to travel restrictions, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi tells his Indian counterpart that China “opposes certain countries’ actions that are creating tension and causing panic.”

February 3: WHO chief Tedros calls on countries not to take measures that “unnecessarily interfere with international travel and trade.” He adds, “The chances of getting this going to anywhere outside China is very low, and even in China, when you go to other provinces, it’s very low.” This statement was amplified in PRC state media.

February 6: Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang meets with Italy’s ambassador to China and “requires” Italy to suspend its decision cancelling direct flights between Italy and China. PRC press release states that Beijing “is strongly dissatisfied with the overreaction and restrictions of the Italian side” and claims that Italy agreed to resume some flights.

February 20: At a meeting with ASEAN foreign ministers, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi pressures countries to ease travel restrictions, saying: “In light³¹ of the conditions on the ground, countries need to resume people-to-people ties and cooperation.”

February 29: WHO announces that it “continues to advise against the application of travel or trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks.”

March 31: Chinese National Health Commission announces for the first time that it excluded from its national tally people who were infected with the virus but without symptoms, and that as of April 1 it would begin including these in the tally “in order to respond to society’s concern in a timely manner.”

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(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) (o)
(c)

(b)(6) @state.gov

On March 22, 2020 at 4:58:25 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Attached updates thru today, March 22. Thanks for suggestions.

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(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

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(b)(6) @state.gov

On March 18, 2020 at 7:53:15 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated coverup timeline attached, including publication of this study March 11.

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)

U.S. Department of State

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(b)(6)

On March 18, 2020 at 3:52:25 PM EDT, Feith, David (b)(6) wrote:
Shocking detail here from March 11 University of Southampton study. Estimates that if Beijing had owned up to the Wuhan virus and responded with significant measures just a week before it did, 66% of cases could have been avoided. And had Beijing responded three weeks sooner, 95% could have been avoided.

From <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/2020/03/covid-19-china.page>: "The research also found that if interventions in the country could have been conducted one week, two weeks, or three weeks earlier, cases could have been reduced by 66 percent, 86 percent and 95 percent respectively – significantly limiting the geographical spread of the disease."

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)
U.S. Department of State

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(b)(6) @state.gov

<Wuhan virus coverup timeline 2020 03 18.docx>

<Wuhan virus coverup timeline 2020 03 22.docx>

<Coronavirus coverup timeline 2020 04 02.docx>

<Coronavirus coverup timeline 2020 04 13.pdf>

<Coronavirus coverup timeline 2020 04 17.pdf>

Sender: (b)(6)

Recipient: Kenna, Lisa D (b)(6)

Summary timeline of novel coronavirus outbreak and PRC political coverup

NOTE: All information here is detailed in open sources available online, as cited in the footnotes.

Major themes observed below:

- **The silenced and the disappeared:** E.g. Wuhan doctors Li Wenliang, Ai Fen and others; journalists Fang Bin, Chen Quishi, and Li Zehua; activist Xu Zhiyong; professor Xu Zhangrun; billionaire and Xi Jinping critic Ren Zhiqiang; online activists Cai Wei, Tang, and Chen Mei...
- **The suppression and destruction of evidence:** E.g. virus samples ordered destroyed at genomics labs, wildlife market stalls bleached, genome sequence not shared publicly, Shanghai lab closed for "rectification" after sharing genome on its own, academic articles subjected to prior review by the Ministry of Science and Technology, data on asymptomatic "silent carriers" kept secret...
- **The deadly denial of human-to-human transmission:** Despite evidence of human-human transmission from early December, PRC authorities deny it until Jan. 20. The World Health Organization does the same. Yet officials in Taiwan raised concerns as early as Dec. 31, as did experts in Hong Kong on Jan. 4...
- **The endangerment of other countries:** Millions of people leave Wuhan after the outbreak and before Beijing locks down the city on Jan. 23. Thousands fly overseas. Throughout February, Beijing presses the U.S., Italy, India, Australia, Southeast Asian neighbors and others not to protect themselves via travel restrictions, even as the PRC imposes severe restrictions at home...
- **The assault on international transparency:** As EU diplomats prepare a report on the pandemic, PRC successfully presses Brussels to strike language on PRC disinformation. As Australia calls for an independent inquiry into the pandemic, PRC threatens to cut off trade with Australia. (PRC has likewise responded furiously to US calls for transparency.)

-- 2013 --

- Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology collect a sample of horseshoe bat feces from a cave in Yunnan Province, China. The sample, labeled RaTG13, is later found to contain a virus 96.2% identical to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.¹

-- 2015 --

November 9

- Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology and several U.S. labs (including the FDA's National Center for Toxicological Research) publish a study in Nature Medicine entitled "A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence." It stated: "To examine the emergence potential (that is, the potential to infect humans) of circulating bat CoVs, we built a chimeric virus encoding a novel, zoonotic CoV spike protein—from the RsSHC014-CoV sequence that was isolated from Chinese horseshoe bats—in the context of the SARS-CoV mouse-adapted backbone."²

-- 2019 --

¹ Matt Ridley, "The Bats Behind the Pandemic," The Wall Street Journal, April 9, 2020. See also Yan-Rong Guo et al., "The origin, transmission, and clinical therapies on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak – an update on the status," Military Medical Research, March 13, 2020.

² Shi Zhengli-Li et al., "A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence," Nature Medicine, online Nov. 9, 2015.

February 20

- Researchers at Hong Kong University publish a study of bat coronaviruses, warning: "bat-animal and bat-human interactions, such as the presence of live bats in wildlife wet markets and restaurants in Southern China, are important for interspecies transmission of [coronaviruses] and may lead to devastating global outbreaks."³

March 2

- Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology publish a study in the medical journal *Viruses* noting that "it is highly likely that future SARS- or MERS-like coronavirus outbreaks will originate from bats, and there is an increased probability that this will occur in China."⁴

March 5

- Gao Fu, director of the PRC's CDC, says in a speech: "Viruses like SARS could emerge anytime, but there'll never be another SARS incident. That's thanks to how well our national contagious disease surveillance system works."⁵

December 6

- Five days after a man linked to Wuhan's seafood market presented pneumonia-like symptoms, his wife also presents with pneumonia and is hospitalized in an isolation ward. The wife had no connection to the market, suggesting human-human transmission.⁶

December 27

- Zhang Jixian, a doctor from Hubei Provincial Hospital of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine, tells China's health authorities that a novel disease (then affecting some 180 patients) was caused by a new coronavirus.⁷

December 26-30

- Evidence of new virus emerges from Wuhan patient data sent to multiple Chinese genomics companies.⁸

December 30

- Ai Fen, a senior doctor at Wuhan Central Hospital, posts information on WeChat about the new virus and is reprimanded by superiors. Ai subsequently instructs her staff to wear protective clothing and masks, despite official instructions not to. "I knew there must be human-to-human transmission," she said in a later interview.⁹
- Wuhan doctor Li Wenliang also shares information about the virus on WeChat, including a photo of lab results initially shared by Ai Fen.¹⁰

³ Patrick Woo et al, "Global Epidemiology of Bat Coronaviruses," *Viruses* (journal), Feb. 2019, published online Feb. 20, 2019 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6409556/>).

⁴ Yi Fan et al., "Bat Coronaviruses in China," *Viruses*, March 2019, online March 2, 2019.

⁵ Steven Lee Myers, "China Created a Fail-Safe System to Track Contagions. It Failed," *New York Times*, March 29, 2020.

⁶ Chaolin Huang et al., "Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China," *The Lancet*, Feb. 15, 2020.

⁷ Josephine Ma, "Coronavirus: China's first confirmed Covid-19 case traced back to November 17," *South China Morning Post*, March 13, 2020.

⁸ Gao Yu et al., "In Depth: How Early Signs of a SARS-Like Virus Were Spotted, Spread, and Throttled," *Caixin Global*, February 29, 2020.

⁹ Lily Kuo, "Coronavirus: Wuhan doctor speaks out against authorities," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2020.

¹⁰ Lily Kuo, "Coronavirus: Wuhan doctor speaks out against authorities," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2020.

- Wuhan Institute of Virology researcher Shi Zhengli (known as “bat-woman” for her research) is called by the Institute’s director and summoned back to Wuhan from a conference in Shanghai to study samples of the novel coronavirus. “Could they have come from our lab?” Shi feared.¹¹

December 31

- Chinese officials alert the World Health Organization (WHO) China Country Office of several cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan,¹² claiming erroneously that “the disease is preventable and controllable.”¹³
- Chinese internet authorities begin censoring terms from social media such: Wuhan Unknown Pneumonia, SARS Variation, Wuhan Seafood Market, and keywords critical of the government’s handling of the infection.¹⁴
- Officials in Taiwan report to the World Health Organization (WHO) that “news resources today indicate that at least seven atypical pneumonia cases were reported in Wuhan, China. Their health authorities replied to the media that the cases were believed not SARS; however the samples are still under examination, and cases have been isolated for treatment,” signaling human-to-human transmission.¹⁵ But Taiwan’s information is not published on the WHO platform for data-exchange among 196 countries. Taiwan officials also alert PRC authorities.¹⁶

-- 2020 --

January 1

- Eight doctors in Wuhan who warned about new virus reports via social media in late December, including Dr. Li Wenliang, are detained and condemned for “making false statements on the Internet.”¹⁷ Li is forced to write a self-criticism saying his warnings “had a negative impact.”¹⁸
- Hubei health commission orders genomics companies to stop testing and destroy all samples.¹⁹
- Wuhan authorities close the city’s seafood market, then disinfect it without swabbing individual animals and cages or drawing blood from workers, eliminating evidence of what animal might have been the source of the coronavirus and which people had become infected but survived.²⁰

January 2

- PRC state media aggressively highlight the detentions of the Wuhan doctors. Top national TV news program Xinwen Lianbo reports the detentions while Xinhua publishes a call from Wuhan police for “all netizens to not fabricate rumors, not spread rumors, not believe rumors.”²¹ Global Times tweets that “Police in Central China’s Wuhan arrested 8 people spreading rumors about local outbreak of unidentifiable #pneumonia. Previous online posts said it was SARS.”²²

¹¹ Jane Qui, “How’s China’s ‘Bat Woman’ Hunted Down Viruses from SARS to the New Coronavirus,” *Scientific American*, March 11, 2020.

¹² Gao Yu et al., “In Depth: How Early Signs of a SARS-Like Virus Were Spotted, Spread, and Throttled,” *Caixin Global*, February 29, 2020.

¹³ Jin Wu et al., “How the Virus Got Out,” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2020.

¹⁴ Lotus Ruan et al., “Censored Contagion: How Information on the Coronavirus is Managed on Chinese Social Media,” *Citizen Lab*, March 3, 2020.

¹⁵ Vandana Rambaran, “Taiwan releases December email to WHO warning about unheeded warning about coronavirus,” *FoxNews*, April 11, 2020.

¹⁶ “Taiwan says WHO failed to act on coronavirus transmission warning,” *Financial Times*, March 19, 2020.

¹⁷ Yong Xiong and Nectar Gan, “This Chinese doctor tried to save lives, but was silenced. Now he has coronavirus,” *CNN*, February 4, 2020.

¹⁸ Jeremy Page et al., “How It All Started: China’s Early Coronavirus Missteps,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

¹⁹ Gao Yu et al., “In Depth: How Early Signs of a SARS-Like Virus Were Spotted, Spread, and Throttled,” *Caixin Global*, February 29, 2020.

²⁰ Editorial, “Stop the Wuhan Virus,” *Nature*, January 21, 2020. Also Donald G. McNeil Jr. and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “C.D.C. and W.H.O. Offers to Help China Have Been Ignored for Weeks,” *New York Times*, February 7, 2020.

²¹ Gerry Shih et al., “Early missteps and state secrecy in China probably allowed the coronavirus to spread farther and faster,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 1, 2020.

²² Global Times tweet, Jan. 2, 2020, 1:26am Beijing time (<https://twitter.com/globaltimesnews/status/1212409846684884995>).

- [On Feb. 1, Washington Post cited Chinese surgeon and writer Wang Guangbao recalling that while speculation about a SARS-like virus was rampant within medical circles around Jan. 1, the detentions of the Wuhan doctors chilled open discussion. "The eight posters getting seized made all of us doctors feel we were at risk," Wang said.²³]
- Wuhan Institute of Virology completes mapping of the novel coronavirus genome, but this breakthrough is not made public by Chinese authorities.²⁴

January 3

- China's top health authority, the National Health Commission, follows the Hubei Health Commission by issuing a gag order directing that Wuhan pneumonia samples be moved to designated testing facilities or destroyed. The National Health Commission also orders institutions not to publish any information related to the unknown disease.²⁵
- The Wuhan Health Commission sets narrow criteria for confirming that a case is officially part of the outbreak, saying patients can be counted only if they had ties to the Huanan seafood market, excluding the growing number of cases with no such ties. An official from a district disease control center in Wuhan also tells a hospital doctor handling infection reports that "this was a special contagious disease and we should report only after superiors had notified us."²⁶

January 4

- Another expert outside mainland China begins to sound alarms over human-to-human transmission. The head of the University of Hong Kong's Centre for Infection, Ho Pak-leung, warns that Hong Kong "should implement the strictest possible monitoring system for a mystery new viral pneumonia that has infected dozens of people on the mainland, as it is highly possible that the illness is spreading from human to human."²⁷

January 5

- Wuhan Municipal Health Commission stops releasing daily updates on new cases.²⁸ This continued until Jan. 18.
- WHO releases statement characterizing PRC's initial Dec. 31 notice about "pneumonia of unknown etiology." WHO states: "Based on the preliminary information from the Chinese investigation team, no evidence of significant human-to-human transmission and no health care worker infections have been reported."²⁹ This continues to ignore Taiwan's warnings of Dec. 31.
- The Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, a research lab, alerts National Health Commission that one of its professors has identified a SARS-like coronavirus and mapped its genome. The lab also recommends "appropriate prevention and control measures in public places."³⁰

January 6

²³ Gerry Shih et al., "Early missteps and state secrecy in China probably allowed the coronavirus to spread farther and faster," Washington Post, Feb. 1, 2020.

²⁴ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," Wall Street Journal, March 6, 2020.

²⁵ Gao Yu et al., "In Depth: How Early Signs of a SARS-Like Virus Were Spotted, Spread, and Throttled," *Caixin Global*, February 29, 2020.

²⁶ Steven Lee Myers, "China Ousts 2 Party Officials Amid Outrage About Coronavirus Response," New York Times, February 13, 2020.

²⁷ "Wuhan virus is probably spreading between people," RTHK, January 4, 2020.

²⁸ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," Wall Street Journal, March 6, 2020.

²⁹ "Pneumonia of unknown cause – China," WHO, January 5, 2020 (<https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unknown-cause-china/en/>).

³⁰ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," Wall Street Journal, March 6, 2020.

- US CDC offers Beijing technical expertise to help with the virus. Beijing ignores this offer for more than a month, along with repeated additional offers from HHS Secretary Alex Azar and other senior U.S. officials.³¹
- The head of an expert team sent to Wuhan from Beijing, Xu Jianguo, reports that "China has many years of disease control, there's absolutely no chance that this will spread widely because of Spring Festival travel," and there is "no evidence of human-to-human transmission."³²

January 7

- Wall Street Journal reports for the first time that Chinese scientists have tied the mystery illnesses to a new strain of coronavirus.³³
 - [Shi Zhengli of the Wuhan Institute of Virology recalled in a March 11 interview with Scientific American that by January 7 her team found that the novel coronavirus's sequence did not match any of the viruses her team had sampled from bat caves. "That really took a load off my mind," she said. But the novel sequence was 96% identical to one her team had sampled previously in Yunnan.³⁴]

January 9

- Chinese authorities identify a novel coronavirus as the likely cause of the outbreak in Wuhan, two days after the Wall Street Journal reported on Chinese scientists discovering the novel strain.³⁵ In response to Beijing's confirmation, international scientists urge Chinese authorities to quickly share data on the virus, the disease it causes, and how it spreads.³⁶
- WHO releases a statement: "Preliminary identification of a novel virus in a short period of time is a notable achievement and demonstrates China's increased capacity to manage new outbreaks. . . . According to Chinese authorities, the virus in question can cause severe illness in some patients and does not transmit readily between people. . . . WHO does not recommend any specific measures for travellers. WHO advises against the application of any travel or trade restrictions on China based on the information currently available."³⁷

January 10

- More international scientists and public-health experts call on China to share more information on the new coronavirus.³⁸
- After leading a second expert team from Beijing to Wuhan, prominent PRC government expert Wang Guangfa tells state broadcaster CCTV that the Wuhan pneumonia was "under control" and mostly a "mild condition."³⁹ His team reported no clear signs of human-to-human transmission, though more than half a dozen doctors already were ill.⁴⁰
 - On March 15, Wang wrote on social media that he "always suspected it was human-to-human transmissible."⁴¹

³¹ Donald G. McNeil Jr. and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, "C.D.C. and W.H.O. Offers to Help China Have Been Ignored for Weeks," *New York Times*, February 7, 2020.

³² "China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days," *The Associated Press*, April 15, 2020.

³³ Natasha Khan, "New Virus Discovered by Chinese Scientists Investigating Pneumonia Outbreak," *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 7, 2020.

³⁴ Jane Qui, "How's China's 'Bat Woman' Hunted Down Viruses from SARS to the New Coronavirus," *Scientific American*, March 11, 2020.

³⁵ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

³⁶ Dennis Normile, et al., "Scientists urge China to quickly share data on virus linked to pneumonia outbreak," *Science*, January 9, 2020.

³⁷ WHO Statement Regarding Cluster of Pneumonia Cases in Wuhan, China, January 9, 2020.

³⁸ Lisa Schnirring, "Pressure builds on China to share info on new coronavirus," *CIDRAP*, January 10, 2020.

³⁹ Li Yuan, "China silences critics over deadly virus outbreak," *New York times*, January 25, 2020.

⁴⁰ "China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days," *The Associated Press*, April 15, 2020.

⁴¹ "China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days," *The Associated Press*, April 15, 2020.

January 11

- Hong Kong's secretary for food and health announces, "According to the mainland authorities, there is no evidence of human to human transmission and there is also no healthcare professional being infected. . . . Also of note is after the closure of the concerned market in Wuhan, there is no new case since January 3."⁴²
- Having provided the genomic sequence of the virus to national authorities on January 5 and seen no action from them, Shanghai Public Health Clinical Centre Professor Zhang Yongzhen publishes the data on virological.org and GenBank, allowing teams around the world to begin work on testing methods.⁴³

January 12

- Professor Zhang Yongzhen's lab in Shanghai is closed by authorities for "rectification," one day after it shared genomic sequence data with the world for the first time.⁴⁴ "The closure has greatly affected the scientists and their research when they should be racing against the clock to find the means to help put the novel coronavirus outbreak under control," a lab source says.⁴⁵
- With the private Shanghai lab having already gone public, the PRC government's National Health Commission shares virus genomic information with the WHO for the first time.⁴⁶

January 13

- First coronavirus case outside of China is reported in Bangkok when a 61-year-old woman from Wuhan tests positive four days after landing with a fever at the airport.⁴⁷ The patient began exhibiting symptoms (fever, chills, sore throat, headache) three days before leaving Wuhan.⁴⁸

January 14

- In a confidential teleconference with provincial health officials, PRC National Health Commission chief Ma Xiaowei reportedly warns that the novel virus is "the most severe challenge since SARS in 2003, and is likely to develop into a major public health event," adding that "clustered cases suggest that human-to-human transmission is possible." Citing the case reported in Thailand the day prior, Ma warns of spread overseas and during China's coming Lunar New Year festivities. It would be another six days before any of these official concerns are made public.⁴⁹
- The chief of the WHO emerging diseases unit reports that "it is possible that there is limited human-to-human transmission, potentially among families, but it is very clear right now that we have no sustained human-to-human transmission."⁵⁰
- Official WHO twitter page announces: "Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel #coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in #Wuhan, #China."⁵¹ This is more than five weeks after the first evidence of human-to-human transmission in Wuhan.

⁴² David Webb tweet citing Hong Kong press archives, March 20, 2020 (<https://twitter.com/webbhk/status/1240897837501542401>).

⁴³ Zhuang Pinghui, "Chinese laboratory that first shared coronavirus genome with world ordered to close for 'rectification', hindering its Covid-19 research," South China Morning Post, Feb. 28, 2020.

⁴⁴ Zhuang Pinghui, "Chinese laboratory that first shared coronavirus genome with world ordered to close for 'rectification', hindering its Covid-19 research," South China Morning Post, Feb. 28, 2020.

⁴⁵ Zhuang Pinghui, "Shanghai lab first to publish the coronavirus genome ordered shut," Inkstone News, March 2, 2020.

⁴⁶ Gao Yu et al., "In Depth: How Early Signs of a SARS-Like Virus Were Spotted, Spread, and Throttled," *Caixin Global*, February 29, 2020.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Cheung, "Wuhan pneumonia: Thailand confirms first case outside of China," South China Morning Post, January 13, 2020.

⁴⁸ "Novel Coronavirus – Thailand (ex-China)," WHO, January 14, 2020.

⁴⁹ "China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days," The Associated Press, April 15, 2020.

⁵⁰ Stephanie Nebehay, "WHO says new China coronavirus could spread, warns hospitals worldwide," Reuters, January 14, 2020.

⁵¹ WHO tweet, January 14, 2020, 6:18am ET (<https://twitter.com/WHO/status/1217043229427761152>).

- Plainclothes police detain journalists trying to report from Wuhan's Jinyintan Hospital and force them to delete their TV footage and hand in phones and cameras for inspection.⁵²

January 15

- A day after the confidential teleconference, China's CDC initiates the highest-level emergency response internally and the National Health Commission distributes 63 pages of instructions to provinces on identifying cases and equipping doctors with protective gear. These instructions are marked "internal," "not to be spread on the internet," and "not to be publicly disclosed."⁵³
- Li Qun, head of the Chinese CDC's emergency center, plays down the human-to-human transmission threat on state television: "After careful screening and prudent judgment, we have reached the latest understanding that the risk of human-to-human transmission is low."⁵⁴
- The patient who becomes the first confirmed U.S. case leaves Wuhan and arrives in the U.S., carrying the coronavirus.⁵⁵

January 18

- Wuhan Municipal Health Commission announces new cases of the virus for the first time since before January 5.⁵⁶ The announcement comes after the close of the five-day meeting of Wuhan's Communist Party-controlled People's Congress, during which officials made daily claims of no new cases, no human-human transmission, and no infected medical workers.⁵⁷
- Wuhan hosts mass "potluck" banquet of 40,000 families in attempt to break world record.⁵⁸

January 20

- PRC state media publish first public remarks from Xi Jinping about the virus, ordering officials to contain it.⁵⁹
- Dr. Zhong Nanshan, a leading authority on respiratory health well-known for his role in fighting SARS, confirms in a TV interview that the disease is spreading from person-to-person, a fact first identified by doctors in Wuhan in December.⁶⁰ He later said that if the government had taken action earlier, in December or even early January, "the number of sick would have been greatly reduced."⁶¹

January 21

- WHO delegation concludes a two-day field visit to Wuhan, notes that "Data collected through detailed epidemiological investigation and through the deployment of the new test kit nationally suggests that human-to-human transmission is taking place in Wuhan."⁶²

January 22

⁵² Ashley Collman, "China spent the crucial first days of the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak arresting people who posted about it online and threatening journalists," *Business Insider*, January 24, 2020. Also Li Yuan, "China silences critics over deadly virus outbreak," *New York times*, January 25, 2020.

⁵³ "China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days," *The Associated Press*, April 15, 2020.

⁵⁴ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

⁵⁵ "First Travel-related Case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus Detected in United States," U.S. CDC, January 21, 2020.

⁵⁶ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

⁵⁷ Amy Qin, "China's Leader, Under Fire, Says He Led Coronavirus Fight Early On," *New York Times*, Feb. 15, 2020.

⁵⁸ Li Yuan, "China silences critics over deadly virus outbreak," *New York times*, January 25, 2020.

⁵⁹ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

⁶⁰ Gao Yu, "In Depth: How Early Signs of a SARS-Like Virus Were Spotted, Spread, and Throttled," *Caixin Global*, February 29, 2020.

⁶¹ Jeremy Page et al., "How It All Started: China's Early Coronavirus Missteps," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

⁶² "Mission summary: WHO Field Visit to Wuhan, China 20-21 January 2020," WHO, January 22, 2020.

- WHO holds emergency committee meeting, decides not to declare the novel coronavirus a “public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says afterward that declaring a PHEIC is a decision he takes “extremely seriously” and is “only prepared to make with appropriate consideration of all the evidence.”⁶³ As usual, Taiwan and its reporting was excluded from the deliberations of the committee.

January 23

- Chinese authorities lock down Wuhan, after letting some five million people leave the city without screening in the weeks prior, amid the growing outbreak.⁶⁴
 - NYT estimates seven million people left between Jan. 1 and Jan. 23. Before the lockdown, some 900 people flew from Wuhan to New York City per month on average, while some 2,200 flew to Sydney and 15,000 to Bangkok (site of the first overseas case of the novel coronavirus in mid-January). Some 85% of infected travelers went undetected.⁶⁵

January 24

- Officials in Beijing prevent the Wuhan Institute of Virology from sharing sample isolates of the novel coronavirus with the University of Texas biocontainment lab, overruling an initial agreement by the Wuhan lab to share these samples.⁶⁶
- The Lancet publishes a study noting that the first novel coronavirus case in Wuhan had no connection to the Huanan seafood market.⁶⁷

January 26

- Major General Chen Wei, the Chinese military’s top epidemiologist and virologist, assumes a senior position at the Wuhan Institute of Virology overseeing coronavirus vaccine research.⁶⁸

January 27

- Wuhan Mayor Zhou Xianwang says that rules imposed by Beijing limited what he could disclose about the threat posed by the virus: “As a local government official, after I get this kind of information I still have to wait for authorization before I can release it.”⁶⁹

January 28

- WHO Director-General Tedros visits Beijing and meets with Xi Jinping and other senior officials. “The two sides agreed that WHO will send international experts to visit China as soon as possible,” said the WHO afterward, adding that “the WHO delegation highly appreciated the actions China has implemented in response to the outbreak, its speed in identifying the virus and openness to sharing information with WHO and other countries.”⁷⁰

January 30

⁶³ Robert Delaney, “China coronavirus: World Health Organization delays declaring virus’ spread an international emergency,” January 22, 2020.

⁶⁴ Jeremy Page et al., “How It All Started: China’s Early Coronavirus Missteps,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020.

⁶⁵ Jin Wu et al., “How the Virus Got Out,” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2020.

⁶⁶ Yasmeen Abutaleb et al., “The U.S. was beset by denial and dysfunction as the coronavirus raged,” *Washington Post*, April 4, 2020.

⁶⁷ Chaolin Huang et al., “Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China,” *The Lancet*, Feb. 15, 2020.

⁶⁸ Anna Fifield, “‘Wolf Warrior’ strives to make China first with coronavirus vaccine,” *Washington Post*, March 22, 2020. Also Minnie Chan and William Zheng, “Meet the major general on China’s coronavirus scientific front line,” *South China Morning Post*, March 3, 2020.

⁶⁹ Josh Chin, “Wuhan Mayor Says Beijing Rules Partially Responsible for Lack of Transparency,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 2020.

⁷⁰ “WHO, China leaders discuss next steps in battle against coronavirus outbreak,” WHO, January 28, 2020.

- WHO declares a public-health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), after nearly 10,000 cases of the virus are confirmed,⁷¹ including in at least 18 countries outside of China.⁷² WHO special committee states that it “does not recommend any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available.”⁷³

January 31

- U.S. shuts down entry from China for non-Americans. By this time, outbreaks were already growing in at least 30 cities across 26 countries.⁷⁴
- PRC state media criticize the U.S. travel advisory urging citizens not to travel to China due to health concerns. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims the U.S. action is “certainly not a gesture of goodwill.”⁷⁵
- Acclaimed author and Wuhan resident Fang Fang writes online, “How many people have died in Wuhan and their families destroyed? . . . But so far not a single person has said sorry or taken responsibility. I’ve even seen a writer use the phrase ‘complete victory’. What are they talking about?” Her “Wuhan Diary” writings become an increasing target of scorn online, backed by state media outlets, in a campaign she says recalls the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁶

February 1

- Referring to travel restrictions, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi tells his Indian counterpart that China “opposes certain countries’ actions that are creating tension and causing panic.”⁷⁷

February 3

- WHO chief Tedros calls on countries not to take measures that “unnecessarily interfere with international travel and trade,” calling the spread outside of China “minimal and slow.”⁷⁸ He adds, “The chances of getting this going to anywhere outside China is very low, and even in China, when you go to other provinces, it’s very low.” These statements are amplified in PRC state media.⁷⁹

February 6

- China’s internet watchdog tightens controls on social media platforms following Xi Jinping directive to strengthen online media control to maintain social stability.⁸⁰
- Citizen journalist and former rights lawyer Chen Qiushi disappears in Wuhan after posting mobile-phone videos of packed hospitals and distraught families.⁸¹
- Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang meets with Italy’s ambassador to China and “requires” Italy to suspend its decision cancelling direct flights between Italy and China. PRC press release

⁷¹ Lanhee Chen, “Lost in Beijing: The Story of the WHO,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 2020.

⁷² Wilfred Chan, “The WHO Ignores Taiwan. The World Pays the Price,” *The Nation*, April 3, 2020.

⁷³ “Statement on the second meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV),” WHO, January 30, 2020.

⁷⁴ Jin Wu et al., “How the Virus Got Out,” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2020.

⁷⁵ “China criticizes ‘unfriendly US comments’ amid fight against novel coronavirus epidemic,” *Xinhua*, Feb. 1, 2020.

⁷⁶ Helen Davidson, “Chinese writer faces online backlash over Wuhan lockdown diary,” *The Guardian*, April 10, 2020 and Cao Siqi, “‘Wuhan diary’ writer escalates online spat, wears out dwindling fans,” *Global Times* (PRC state media), April 23, 2020.

⁷⁷ “China opposes some countries’ actions that create tension and panic,” *CGTN*, Feb. 1, 2020.

⁷⁸ Stephanie Nebehay, “WHO chief says widespread travel bans not necessary to beat China virus,” *Reuters*, February 3, 2020.

⁷⁹ Ai Heping and Bo Leung, “WHO chief holds to line against travel bans,” *Xinhua*, February 5, 2020.

⁸⁰ Iris Deng, “Coronavirus: China tightens social media censorship amid outbreak,” *South China Morning Post*, February 6, 2020. Also Kristin Huang, “China tires to contain outbreak of freedom of speech, closing critics’ WeChat accounts,” *SCMP*, February 26, 2020.

⁸¹ Vivian Wang, “They Documented the Coronavirus Crisis in Wuhan. Then They Vanished,” *New York Times*, February 14, 2020.

states that Beijing “is strongly dissatisfied with the overreaction and restrictions of the Italian side” and claims that Italy agreed to resume some flights.⁸²

- Researchers from South China University of Technology publish a study concluding that “the killer coronavirus probably originated from a laboratory in Wuhan. Safety level may need to be reinforced in high risk biohazardous laboratories.”⁸³
 - The paper is soon withdrawn because it “was not supported by direct proofs,” according to author Botao Xiao.⁸⁴
 - “No scientists have confirmed or refuted the paper’s findings,” scholar Yanzhong Huang wrote on March 5.⁸⁵
- The leaders of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine write to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on the importance of information-sharing and transparency “for managing the 2019-nCoV outbreak and for preventing future outbreaks.” “Samples collected as early as possible in the outbreak in Wuhan and samples from wildlife would be particularly valuable,” they write, adding that the president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences has indicated that the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory “is willing to share isolates of the 2019 nCov with the international community.”⁸⁶ This transfer apparently never happened.

February 7

- Dr. Li Wenliang dies of the novel coronavirus contracted from a patient, five weeks after his police detention for trying to alert fellow doctors to the outbreak. His death triggers an outpouring of grief and anger at Chinese authorities.⁸⁷

February 9

- Citizen journalist and local businessman Fang Bin disappears after posting videos from Wuhan that circulated widely on Chinese social media.⁸⁸

February 13

- Xi Jinping fires the Communist Party chiefs of Hubei Province and Wuhan, replacing both with proteges of his with extensive backgrounds in public security.⁸⁹

February 15

- PRC state media publishes a speech, said to have been delivered by Xi Jinping to party leaders on Feb. 3, saying he had been leading the fight against the virus “at every moment” since Jan. 7. His first public comments on the epidemic had been Jan. 20.⁹⁰
- Xi’s published speech also urges tightened control over online discussion and increased policing to ensure “positive energy” and social stability.⁹¹

⁸² “Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang Requires the Italian Side to Suspend the Decision to Cancel Direct Flights Between Italy and China; The Italian Side Agrees to Resume Some Commercial Flights,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, Feb. 7, 2020.

⁸³ Botao Xiao and Lei Xiao, “The possible origins of 2019-nCoV coronavirus,” ResearchGate, Feb. 6, 2020.

⁸⁴ James Aredy, “Coronavirus Epidemic Draws Scrutiny to Labs Handling Deadly Pathogens,” The Wall Street Journal, March 5, 2020.

⁸⁵ Yanzhong Huang, “U.S.-Chinese Distrust Is Inviting Dangerous Coronavirus Conspiracy Theories,” Foreign Affairs, March 5, 2020.

⁸⁶ Marcia McNutt, John L. Anderson and Victor J. Dzau to Kelvin Droegemeier, February 6, 2020.

⁸⁷ <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2020/02/national-academies-provide-rapid-response-to-white-house-on-coronavirus-data-needs#>.

⁸⁸ Jeremy Page et al., “How It All Started: China’s Early Coronavirus Missteps,” Wall Street Journal, March 6, 2020.

⁸⁹ Vivian Wang, “They Documented the Coronavirus Crisis in Wuhan. Then They Vanished,” New York Times, February 14, 2020.

⁹⁰ Steven Lee Myers, “China Ousts 2 Party Officials Amid Outrage About Coronavirus Response,” New York Times, February 13, 2020.

⁹¹ Amy Qin, “China’s Leader, Under Fire, Says He Led Coronavirus Fight Early On,” New York Times, Feb. 15, 2020.

⁹² “China’s Xi urges more policing as virus toll rises,” AFP, February 15, 2020.

11

April 28, 2020, 11am ET

- Activist Xu Zhiyong arrested after nearly two months on the run, and after publishing a Feb. 4 essay calling on Xi Jinping to step down for suppressing information about the virus.⁹²
- Finance magazine Barron's finds that China's official coronavirus data fit a near-perfect model that is almost impossible to naturally occur, as the number of cumulative deaths reported could be predicted by a simple mathematical formula to a 99.99% accuracy.⁹³

February 16

- The Wuhan Institute of Virology issues a public denial that its former researcher Huang Yanling is "patient zero," as speculated on Chinese social media based on the disappearance of Huang's biographical information from the Institute's website and Huang's unknown whereabouts.⁹⁴
- Institute researcher Shi Zhengli writes on social media that she "guaranteed with her own life" that the outbreak was unrelated to the lab. She instructs "those who believe and spread malicious media rumors to close their stinky mouths."⁹⁵
 - [In 2004, China suffered a SARS outbreak due to a lab leak that killed one person and infected nine. PRC authorities blamed negligence and punished five senior officials at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.⁹⁶]
- Tsinghua University Professor Xu Zhangrun is placed under house arrest, barred from social media, and cut off from the Internet after publishing an essay declaring that "The coronavirus epidemic has revealed the rotten core of Chinese governance."⁹⁷
- A group of 12 WHO officials and 13 PRC officials begin a nine-day "WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019," led by Canadian Bruce Aylward of WHO and Wannian Liang of the PRC National Health Commission.⁹⁸

February 17

- PRC ambassador Cheng Jingye publicly pressures Australia to ease travel restrictions, saying: "We have expressed our strong wish and hope that the Australian government in their review will take a balanced approach and remove these harsh restrictions."⁹⁹

February 19

- Beijing revokes press credentials of three *Wall Street Journal* reporters who had widely covered the outbreak, including one that was reporting from Wuhan.¹⁰⁰

February 20

- At a meeting with ASEAN foreign ministers, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi pressures countries to ease travel restrictions, saying: "In light of the conditions on the ground, countries need to resume people-to-people ties and cooperation."¹⁰¹

February 23

⁹² Emily Feng, "Rights Activist Xu Zhiyong Arrested in China Amid Crackdown on Dissent," NPR, February 17, 2020.

⁹³ Lisa Beilfuss, "China's Coronavirus Figures Don't Add Up. 'This Never Happens With Real Data,'" Barron's, Feb. 15, 2020.

⁹⁴ Jun Mai, "Chinese research lab denies rumours of links to first coronavirus patient," South China Morning Post, February 16, 2020.

⁹⁵ James T. Areddy, "China Bat Expert Says Her Wuhan Lab Wasn't Source of New Coronavirus," The Wall Street Journal, April 21, 2020.

⁹⁶ Jun Mai, "Chinese research lab denies rumours of links to first coronavirus patient," South China Morning Post, February 16, 2020.

⁹⁷ Verna Yu and Emma Graham-Harrison, "'This may be the last piece I write': Prominent Xi critic has Internet cut after house arrest," The Guardian, February 16, 2020.

⁹⁸ "Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), 16-24 Feb 2020," Feb. 28, 2020.

⁹⁹ "Coronavirus: Beijing urges Australia to ease travel ban on China travelers," Reuters, February 17, 2020.

¹⁰⁰ "China Expels Three Wall Street Journal Reporters," *Wall Street Journal*, February 19, 2020.

¹⁰¹ Dewey Sim, "Coronavirus: China's top diplomat Wang Yi urges world to resume links with Beijing, says it's taken 'forceful action,'" South China Morning Post, Feb. 20, 2020.

- Xi Jinping delivers speech to PRC officials calling virus “a crisis for us and also a major test.” He stresses “social stability” and states that “the effectiveness of the prevention and control work has once again demonstrated the significant advantages of the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.”¹⁰²

February 26

- Citizen journalist Li Zehua, who quit his job at state broadcaster CCTV to report independently from Wuhan, is detained and disappears. With security officers at his door, Li records a video testament to free speech, truth, and the memory of the Tiananmen movement.¹⁰³

February 28

- The WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 publishes its report after a “huge back and forth” between PRC and non-PRC officials over wording. PRC officials refused to call the virus “dangerous” or include reference to a possible “second wave” of infections (preferring “resurgence” instead).¹⁰⁴

February 29

- WHO announces that it “continues to advise against the application of travel or trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks.”¹⁰⁵

March 3

- WHO chief Tedros plays down the risk of asymptomatic silent carriers, citing official PRC data: “COVID-19 does not transmit as efficiently as influenza, from the data we have so far. With influenza, people who are infected but not yet sick are major drivers of transmission, which does not appear to be the case for COVID-19. Evidence from China is that only 1% of reported cases do not have symptoms, and most of those cases develop symptoms within two days.”¹⁰⁶ Later reports cited classified PRC data showing up to 33% of cases were asymptomatic (see March 22).

March 6

- Wuhan residents shout from windows “It’s all lies!” as senior official Sun Chunlan visits. After this goes viral on Chinese social media, PRC state media doctor and re-distribute the footage to claim that only one person had yelled this.

March 11

- WHO declares the novel coronavirus a “pandemic,” after the official worldwide case count is 118,000 people in 114 countries.¹⁰⁷
- Researchers at the University of Southampton (UK) estimate that had Beijing owned up to the coronavirus outbreak and responded with significant measures just one week before it did, 66% of cases could have been avoided, and had Beijing responded three weeks sooner, 95% could have been avoided.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² William Zheng, “Coronavirus is China’s fastest-spreading public health crisis, President Xi Jinping says,” South China Morning Post, Feb. 23, 2020.

¹⁰³ “Opening the Door,” China Media Project, February 28, 2020. See also Lily Kuo, “‘They’re chasing me!’ The journalist who wouldn’t stay quiet on Covid-19,” The Guardian, March 1, 2020.

¹⁰⁴ “Taiwan says WHO failed to act on coronavirus transmission warning,” Financial Times, March 19, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ “Updated WHO recommendations for international traffic in relation to COVID-19 outbreak,” WHO, February 29, 2020.

¹⁰⁶ “WHO Director General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 3 March 2020,” WHO, March 3, 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Lanhee Chen, “Lost in Beijing: The Story of the WHO,” The Wall Street Journal, April 8, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Shengjie Lai, “Early and Combined Interventions Crucial in Talking Covid-19 Spread in China,” University of Southampton, March 11, 2020.

13

April 28, 2020, 11am ET

March 14

- Entrepreneur and activist Ren Zhiqiang disappears in Beijing after criticizing Xi Jinping's coronavirus response.¹⁰⁹ PRC officials announce a corruption investigation into Ren on April 7.¹¹⁰

March 22

- Reports emerge of classified PRC government data showing a far higher rate of asymptomatic illness in China than previously disclosed. Per South China Morning Post, the classified data show some 43,000 people in China tested positive without symptoms by the end of February, representing one-third of cases. But PRC officials excluded these cases from their public count. When epidemiologists from the Chinese CDC published a paper on Feb. 24, they cited only 889 asymptomatic patients out of 44,672 confirmed cases as of Feb. 11, a rate of only 2%.¹¹¹
- Experts worldwide call for expanded testing and greater transparency regarding asymptomatic "silent carriers," as evidence mounts from countries such as Iceland that as many as 50% of positive cases may be asymptomatic.¹¹²

March 26

- China bars entry of all foreigners in attempt to limit virus spread.¹¹³ This measure is harsher than the travel restrictions of other countries that Beijing had criticized just weeks before.

March 27

- Photographs and reports surface of many thousands of urns at Wuhan funeral homes, raising doubts about government claims that the virus caused only about 2,500 deaths in Wuhan and 3,200 in China.¹¹⁴ Local Wuhan social media users estimate, based on the daily capacity of incinerators, that more than 40,000 may have died there.¹¹⁵

March 31

- Chinese National Health Commission announces for the first time that it excluded from its national tally people who had the virus but without symptoms, and that as of April 1 it would begin including these in the tally "in order to respond to society's concern in a timely manner."¹¹⁶

April 3

- While lifting lockdown restrictions in Wuhan, officials limit funerals of those who died from the coronavirus, suppress online discussions of fatalities, scrub images of funeral homes from social media, assign minders to families in mourning, and face questions from families such as why it took the government weeks to inform the public that the virus could spread among humans.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ Javier C. Hernandez, "Chinese Tycoon Who Criticized Xi's Response to Coronavirus Has Vanished," New York Times, March 14, 2020.

¹¹⁰ Javier C. Hernandez, "China Investigates Critic of Xi's Coronavirus Response," New York Times, April 7, 2020.

¹¹¹ Josephine Ma et al., "A third of coronavirus cases may be 'silent carriers,' classified Chinese data suggests," South China Morning Post, March 22, 2020.

¹¹² Jason Gale, "Coronavirus Cases Without Symptoms Spur Call for Wider Tests," Bloomberg, March 22, 2020.

¹¹³ Doug Palmer, "China closes border to foreign travelers," Politico, March 26, 2020.

¹¹⁴ "Urn in Wuhan Prompt New Questions of Virus's Toll," Bloomberg News, March 27, 2020.

¹¹⁵ "Estimates Show Wuhan Death Toll Far Higher Than Official Figure," Radio Free Asia, March 27, 2020.

¹¹⁶ Chong Koh Ping, "China's Coronavirus Count Excluded Infected People With No Symptoms," The Wall Street Journal, March 31, 2020.

¹¹⁷ Amy Qin and Cao Li, "China Pushes for Quiet Burials as Coronavirus Death Toll is Questioned," New York Times, April 3, 2020.

14

April 28, 2020, 11am ET

- China's Ministry of Science and Technology announces that ongoing clinical research on the coronavirus must be reported to authorities within three days or be halted.¹¹⁸

April 7

- Human rights activists report, citing public records alone, that Chinese police punished nearly 900 people for online speech or information-sharing about the virus over three months.¹¹⁹

April 11

- Chinese universities publish online—and then apparently delete—new guidelines stating that academic papers on the origin of the novel coronavirus can be published only with the approval of the Ministry of Science and Technology.¹²⁰

April 17

- Wuhan raises its official tally of Covid-19 fatalities by 1,290, to nearly 3,900, blaming the initial undercount on cases unrecognized, untreated, or underreported by overstressed hospitals.¹²¹

April 18

- Yuan Zhiming, vice director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology and director of the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory, tells state broadcaster CGTN, "There is absolutely no way that the virus originated from our institute. . . . I hope such a conspiracy theory will not affect cooperation among scientists around the world."¹²²

April 21

- A study published in the Lancet by researchers from Hong Kong estimates that China might have had tens of thousands more coronavirus cases than officials have disclosed.¹²³

April 22

- Citizen journalist Li Zehua surfaces for the first time since February, saying that his detention included a quarantine in Wuhan and another in his hometown, after which he was reunited with his family. He says in a video: "During the whole process, the police enforced law in a civilised manner, ensured my rest time and food. They also cared about me very much. . . . I'm grateful to all the people who looked after me and cared about me. I wish all people suffering the epidemic can pull through. God bless China. I wish the world can unite together."¹²⁴

April 24

- Under pressure from Beijing, the European Union softens a published report on Covid-19 disinformation. The final text removed a draft reference to Beijing's "global disinformation" campaign and struck mention of the diplomatic dispute between China and France over Chinese PPE exports and the aggressive rhetoric of China's ambassador in Paris.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Stephanie Kirchgaessner et al, "China clamping down on coronavirus research, deleted pages suggest," The Guardian, April 11, 2020.

¹¹⁹ Sophia Yan, "Inside Wuhan as city at heart of coronavirus outbreak tries to return to normal," Daily Telegraph, April 7, 2020.

¹²⁰ Stephanie Kirchgaessner et al, "China clamping down on coronavirus research, deleted pages suggest," The Guardian, April 11, 2020.

¹²¹ "Chinese epicenter Wuhan raises number of virus cases by 1,290," Associated Press, April 17, 2020.

¹²² "Wuhan Lab Denies Any Link to First Coronavirus Outbreak," Bloomberg News, April 20, 2020.

¹²³ Tim K. Tsang et al., "Effect of changing case definitions for COVID-19 on the epidemic curve and transmission parameters in mainland China: a modelling study," Lancet, April 21, 2020.

¹²⁴ "Li Zehua: Journalist who 'disappeared' after Wuhan chase reappears," BBC, April 23, 2020.

¹²⁵ Matt Apuzzo, "Pressured by China, E.U. Softens Report on Covid-19 Disinformation," New York Times, April 24, 2020.

April 25

- SCMP reports Chinese police have detained three Beijing residents (Cai Wei, a woman surnamed Tang, and Chen Mei) who helped publish articles about Covid-19 on open-source website Github that were previously censored from mainstream PRC media and social media, including material about Wuhan doctor Ai Fen.¹²⁶

April 27

- PRC ambassador to Australia Cheng Jingye threatens economic harm if Australia continues pushing for an independent investigation into the coronavirus. "Maybe the ordinary [Chinese] people will say 'Why should we drink Australian wine? Eat Australian beef?'," Cheng said, also citing the tourism and higher-education sectors. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne answered: "We reject any suggestion that economic coercion is an appropriate response to a call for such an assessment, when what we need is global cooperation."¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Phoebe Zhang, "Chinese activists detained after sharing censored coronavirus articles on crowdsourcing site Github," South China Morning Post, April 25, 2020.

¹²⁷ Kirsty Needham, "Australia rejects Chinese 'economic coercion' threat amid planned coronavirus probe," Reuters, April 27, 2020.

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Subject: Fw: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 28)
Date: Tue, 28 Apr 2020 15:46:09 +0000

FYSA

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NSC Asia (b)(6); Matthew Pottinger <MPottinger (b)(6)>

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Zadrozny, John A. EOP/WHO (b)(6); (b)(6); (b)(6)

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(b)(6); Snyder, Nicholas JC (b)(6); Welch, Jennifer D

(b)(6)

Subject: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 28)

Attached includes an additional topline theme (the assault on international transparency), along with updates as of April 28.

Updated major themes:

--The silenced and the disappeared: E.g. Wuhan doctors Li Wenliang, Ai Fen and others; journalists Fang Bin, Chen Quishi, and Li Zehua; activist Xu Zhiyong; professor Xu Zhangrun; billionaire and Xi Jinping critic Ren Zhiqiang; online activists Cai Wei, Tang, and Chen Mei...

--The suppression and destruction of evidence: E.g. virus samples ordered destroyed at genomics labs, wildlife market stalls bleached, genome sequence not shared publicly, Shanghai lab closed for "rectification" after sharing genome on its own, academic articles subjected to prior review by the Ministry of Science and Technology, data on asymptomatic "silent carriers" kept secret...

--The deadly denial of human-to-human transmission: Despite evidence of human-human transmission from early December, PRC authorities deny it until Jan. 20. The World Health Organization does the same. Yet officials in Taiwan raised concerns as early as Dec. 31, as did experts in Hong Kong on Jan. 4...

--The endangerment of other countries: Millions of people leave Wuhan after the outbreak and before Beijing locks down the city on Jan. 23. Thousands fly overseas. Throughout February, Beijing presses the U.S., Italy, India, Australia, Southeast Asian neighbors and others not to protect themselves via travel restrictions, even as the PRC imposes severe restrictions at home...

--The assault on international transparency: As EU diplomats prepare a report on the pandemic, PRC successfully presses Brussels to strike language on PRC disinformation. As Australia calls for an independent inquiry into the pandemic, PRC threatens to cut off trade with Australia. (PRC has likewise responded furiously to US calls for transparency.)

New timeline elements in the attached:

— 2020 —

January 26: Major General Chen Wei, the Chinese military's top epidemiologist and virologist, assumes a senior position at the Wuhan Institute of Virology overseeing coronavirus vaccine research.

January 31: Acclaimed author and Wuhan resident Fang Fang writes online, "How many people have died in Wuhan and their families destroyed? . . . But so far not a single person has said sorry or taken responsibility. I've even seen a writer use the phrase 'complete victory'. What are they talking about?" Her "Wuhan Diary" writings become an increasing target of scorn online, backed by state media outlets, in a campaign she says recalls the Cultural Revolution.

February 6: The leaders of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine write to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on the importance of information-sharing and transparency "for managing the 2019-nCoV outbreak and for preventing future outbreaks." "Samples collected as early as possible in the outbreak in Wuhan and samples from wildlife would be particularly valuable," they write, adding that the president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences has indicated that the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory "is willing to share isolates of the 2019 nCov with the international community." This transfer

apparently never happened.

February 16: The Wuhan Institute of Virology issues a public denial that its former researcher Huang Yanling is “patient zero,” as speculated on Chinese social media based on the disappearance of Huang’s biographical information from the Institute’s website and Huang’s unknown whereabouts. Institute researcher Shi Zhengli writes on social media that she “guaranteed with her own life” that the outbreak was unrelated to the lab. She instructs “those who believe and spread malicious media rumors to close their stinky mouths. (In 2004, China suffered a SARS outbreak due to a lab leak that killed one person and infected nine. PRC authorities blamed negligence and punished five senior officials at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.)

April 18: Yuan Zhiming, vice director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology and director of the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory, tells state broadcaster CGTN, “There is absolutely no way that the virus originated from our institute. . . . I hope such a conspiracy theory will not affect cooperation among scientists around the world.”

April 21: A study published in the Lancet by researchers from Hong Kong estimates that China might have had tens of thousands more coronavirus cases than officials have disclosed.

April 22: Citizen journalist Li Zehua surfaces for the first time since February, saying that his detention included a quarantine in Wuhan and another in his hometown, after which he was reunited with his family. He says in a video: “During the whole process, the police enforced law in a civilised manner, ensured my rest time and food. They also cared about me very much. . . . I’m grateful to all the people who looked after me and cared about me. I wish all people suffering the epidemic can pull through. God bless China. I wish the world can unite together.”

April 24: Under pressure from Beijing, the European Union softens a published report on Covid-19 disinformation. The final text removed a draft reference to Beijing’s “global disinformation” campaign and struck mention of the diplomatic dispute between China and France over Chinese PPE exports and the aggressive rhetoric of China’s ambassador in Paris.

April 25: SCMP reports Chinese police have detained three Beijing residents (Cai Wei, a woman surnamed Tang, and Chen Mei) who helped publish articles about Covid-19 on open-source website Github that were previously censored from mainstream PRC media and social media, including material about Wuhan doctor Ai Fen.

April 27: PRC ambassador to Australia Cheng Jingye threatens economic harm if Australia continues pushing for an independent investigation into the coronavirus. “Maybe the ordinary [Chinese] people will say ‘Why should we drink Australian wine? Eat Australian beef?’,” Cheng said, also citing the tourism and higher-education sectors. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne answered: “We reject any suggestion that economic coercion is an appropriate response to a call for such an assessment, when what we need is global cooperation.”

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U.S. Department of State

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(c)

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On April 17, 2020 at 7:19:08 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated timeline attached, through April 17. New elements include:

— 2015 —

November 9: Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (including Shi Zhengli) and several U.S. labs (including the FDA's National Center for Toxicological Research) publish a study in *Nature Medicine* entitled "A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence." It stated: "To examine the emergence potential (that is, the potential to infect humans) of circulating bat CoVs, we built a chimeric virus encoding a novel, zoonotic CoV spike protein—from the RsSHC014-CoV sequence that was isolated from Chinese horseshoe bats—in the context of the SARS-CoV mouse-adapted backbone."

— 2019 —

March 2: Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology publish a study in the medical journal *Viruses* noting that "it is highly likely that future SARS- or MERS-like coronavirus outbreaks will originate from bats, and there is an increased probability that this will occur in China."

March 5: Gao Fu, director of the PRC's CDC, says in a speech: "Viruses like SARS could emerge anytime, but there'll never be another SARS incident. That's thanks to how well our national contagious disease surveillance system works."

— 2020 —

January 3: The Wuhan Health Commission sets narrow criteria for confirming that a case is officially part of the outbreak, saying patients can be counted only if they had ties to the Huanan seafood market, excluding the growing number of cases with no such ties. An official from a district disease control center in Wuhan also tells a hospital doctor handling infection reports that "this was a special contagious disease and we should report only after superiors had notified us."

January 6: The head of an expert team sent to Wuhan from Beijing, Xu Jianguo, reports that "China has many years of disease control, there's absolutely no chance that this will spread widely because of Spring Festival travel," and there is "no evidence of human-to-human transmission."

January 10: After leading a second expert team from Beijing to Wuhan, prominent PRC government expert Wang Guangfa tells state broadcaster CCTV that the Wuhan pneumonia was "under control" and mostly a "mild condition." His team reported no clear signs of human-to-human transmission, though more than half a dozen doctors already were well. [On March 15,

Wang wrote on social media that he “always suspected it was human-to-human transmissible.”]

January 14: In a confidential teleconference with provincial health officials, PRC National Health Commission chief Ma Xiaowei reportedly warns that the novel virus is “the most severe challenge since SARS in 2003, and is likely to develop into a major public health event,” adding that “clustered cases suggest that human-to-human transmission is possible.” Citing the case reported in Thailand the day prior, Ma warns of spread overseas and during China’s coming Lunar New Year festivities. It would be another six days before any of these official concerns are made public.

January 15: A day after the confidential teleconference, China’s CDC initiates the highest-level emergency response internally and the National Health Commission distributes 63 pages of instructions to provinces on identifying cases and equipping doctors with protective gear. These instructions are marked “internal,” “not to be spread on the internet,” and “not to be publicly disclosed.”

February 15: Finance magazine Barron’s finds that China’s official coronavirus data fit a near-perfect model that is almost impossible to naturally occur, as the number of cumulative deaths reported could be predicted by a simple mathematical formula to a 99.99% accuracy.

March 3: WHO chief Tedros plays down the risk of asymptomatic silent carriers, citing official PRC data: “COVID-19 does not transmit as efficiently as influenza, from the data we have so far. With influenza, people who are infected but not yet sick are major drivers of transmission, which does not appear to be the case for COVID-19. Evidence from China is that only 1% of reported cases do not have symptoms, and most of those cases develop symptoms within two days.” Later reports cited classified PRC data showing up to 33% of cases were asymptomatic (see March 22).

April 17: Wuhan raises its official tally of Covid-19 fatalities by 1,290, to nearly 3,900, blaming the initial undercount on cases unrecognized, untreated, or underreported by overstressed hospitals.

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On April 13, 2020 at 9:51:31 AM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated timeline attached. This version notes at the top that major themes include:

--The silenced and the disappeared: E.g. Wuhan doctors Li Wenliang, Ai Fen and others; journalists Fang Bin, Chen Quishi, and Li Zehua; activist Xu Zhiyong; professor Xu Zhangrun;

billionaire CCP member and Xi Jinping critic Ren Zhiqiang...

--The suppression and destruction of evidence: E.g. virus samples ordered destroyed at genomics labs, wildlife market stalls bleached, genome sequence not shared publicly, Shanghai lab closed for "rectification" after sharing genome on its own, academic articles subjected to prior review by the Ministry of Science and Technology...

--The deadly denial of human-to-human transmission: Despite evidence of human-human transmission from early December, PRC authorities deny it until Jan. 20. The World Health Organization does the same. Yet officials in Taiwan raised concerns about human-human transmission as early as Dec. 31, as did experts in Hong Kong on Jan. 4...

--The endangerment of other countries: Millions of people leave Wuhan after the outbreak and before Beijing locks down the city on Jan. 23. Thousands fly overseas. When Beijing cuts off travel from Hubei Province to the rest of China, it doesn't stop travel from Hubei to the rest of the world. Throughout February, Beijing presses the U.S., Italy, India, Australia, Southeast Asian neighbors and others not to protect themselves via travel restrictions...

New timeline elements in the attached:

--2013--

Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology collect a sample of horseshoe bat feces from a cave in Yunnan Province, China. The sample, labeled RaTG13, is later found to contain a virus 96.2% identical to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

--2019--

February 20: Researchers at Hong Kong University publish a study of bat coronaviruses, warning: "bat-animal and bat-human interactions, such as the presence of live bats in wildlife wet markets and restaurants in Southern China, are important for interspecies transmission of [coronaviruses] and may lead to devastating global outbreaks."

December 30: Wuhan Institute of Virology researcher Shi Zhengli (known as "bat-woman" for her research) is called by the Institute's director and summoned back to Wuhan from a conference in Shanghai to study samples of the novel coronavirus. "Could they have come from our lab?" Shi feared.

--2020--

January 7: Shi Zhengli of the Wuhan Institute of Virology recalled in a March 11 interview with Scientific American that by January 7 her team found that the novel coronavirus's sequence did not match any of the viruses her team had sampled from bat caves. "That really took a load off my mind," she said. But the novel sequence was 96% identical to one her team had sampled previously in Yunnan.

January 13: The first coronavirus case outside of China is reported in Bangkok when a 61-year-old woman from Wuhan tests positive four days after arriving from China with a fever at the airport. The patient had begun exhibiting symptoms (fever, chills, sore throat, headache) three days before leaving Wuhan.

January 15: The patient who becomes the first confirmed U.S. case leaves Wuhan and arrives in the U.S., carrying the coronavirus.

January 22: WHO holds emergency committee meeting, decides not to declare the novel coronavirus a “public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says afterward that declaring a PHEIC is a decision he takes “extremely seriously” and is “only prepared to make with appropriate consideration of all the evidence.” The emergency committee meeting excluded Taiwan from its deliberations.

January 23: Despite locking down Wuhan and cutting off travel from the surrounding Hubei Province to the rest of China, PRC officials did not cut off travel from Hubei Province to the rest of the world.

January 24: Officials in Beijing prevent the Wuhan Institute of Virology from sharing samples of the novel coronavirus with the University of Texas biocontainment lab, overruling an initial agreement by the Wuhan lab to share these samples.

January 30: WHO declares a public-health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), after nearly 10,000 cases of the virus are confirmed, including in at least 18 countries outside of China.

February 6: Researchers from South China University of Technology publish a study concluding that “the killer coronavirus probably originated from a laboratory in Wuhan. Safety level may need to be reinforced in high risk biohazardous laboratories.” The paper is soon withdrawn because it “was not supported by direct proofs,” according to author Botao Xiao. “No scientists have confirmed or refuted the paper’s findings,” scholar Yanzhong Huang wrote on March 5.

February 16: The Wuhan Institute of Virology issues a public denial that its former researcher Huang Yanling is “patient zero,” as speculated on Chinese social media based on changes to the Institute’s website and Huang’s unknown whereabouts. Institute researcher Shi Zhengli writes on social media that she “guaranteed with her own life” that the outbreak was unrelated to the lab. [In 2004, China suffered a SARS outbreak due to a lab leak that killed one person and infected nine. PRC authorities blamed negligence and punished five senior officials at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.]

February 23: Xi Jinping delivers speech to PRC officials calling virus “a crisis for us and also a major test.” He stresses “social stability” and states that “the effectiveness of the prevention and control work has once again demonstrated the significant advantages of the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system with

Chinese characteristics.”

March 11: WHO declares the novel coronavirus a “pandemic,” after the official worldwide case count is 118,000 people in 114 countries.

March 26: China bars entry of all foreigners in attempt to limit virus spread. This measure is harsher than the travel restrictions of other countries that Beijing had criticized just weeks before.

April 3: While lifting lockdown restrictions in Wuhan, officials limit funerals of those who died from the coronavirus, suppress online discussions of fatalities, scrub images of funeral homes from social media, assign minders to families in mourning, and face questions from families such as why it took the government weeks to inform the public that the virus could spread among humans.

April 3: China’s Ministry of Science and Technology announces that ongoing clinical research on the coronavirus must be reported to authorities within three days or be halted.

April 7: Human rights activists report, citing public records alone, that Chinese police punished nearly 900 people for online speech or information-sharing about the virus over three months.

April 11: Chinese universities publish online—and then apparently delete—new guidelines stating that academic papers on the origin of the novel coronavirus can be published only with the approval of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

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On April 2, 2020 at 4:58:00 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated here to include more on the WHO, and some other tweaks. Please use this document (stamped 5pm).

(b)(6)

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U.S. Department of State

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(b)(6)

On April 2, 2020 at 3:07:15 PM EDT, Stilwell, David R (b)(6) wrote:
Would like to include the timeline of WHO requesting access to the site (mid-January, I believe), WHO ADVON getting permission to travel to Beijing (10 Feb), and the investigative team actually heading out to investigate (around 20 Feb).

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2020 11:16 AM

To: EAP-FO-Principals-DL (b)(6) NSC Asia

(b)(6) (b)(6)

(b)(6) Ortagus, Morgan D (b)(6)

(b)(6) (Geneva)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Buangan, Richard L (b)(6)

(b)(6) Snyder, Nicholas

(b)(6) Storch,

Thomas (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) (Seoul) (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

<CulvahouseAB@state.gov>

Subject: Updated timeline of PRC coverup (April 2)

Some of the new items in the attached:

January 4: Amid PRC denials, another expert outside mainland China begins to sound alarms over human-to-human transmission. The head of the University of Hong Kong's Centre for Infection, Ho Pak-leung, warns that Hong Kong "should implement the strictest possible monitoring system for a mystery new viral pneumonia that has infected dozens of people on the mainland, as it is highly possible that the illness is spreading from human to human."

January 23: Chinese authorities lock down Wuhan, after letting some five million people leave the city without screening in the weeks prior, amid the growing outbreak. NYT estimates seven million people left between Jan. 1 and Jan 23. Before the lockdown, some 900 people flew from Wuhan to New York City per month on average, while some 2,200 flew to Sydney and 15,000 to Bangkok (site of the first overseas case of the novel coronavirus in mid-January). Some 85% of infected travelers went undetected.

January 30: WHO special committee on the novel coronavirus states that it "does not recommend

any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available.”

January 31: U.S. shuts down entry from China for non-Americans. By this time, outbreaks were already growing in 30 cities across 26 countries. PRC state media criticize the U.S. travel advisory urging citizens not to travel to China due to health concerns. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims the U.S. action is “certainly not a gesture of goodwill.”

February 1: Referring to travel restrictions, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi tells his Indian counterpart that China “opposes certain countries’ actions that are creating tension and causing panic.”

February 3: WHO chief Tedros calls on countries not to take measures that “unnecessarily interfere with international travel and trade.” He adds, “The chances of getting this going to anywhere outside China is very low, and even in China, when you go to other provinces, it's very low.” This statement was amplified in PRC state media.

February 6: Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang meets with Italy’s ambassador to China and “requires” Italy to suspend its decision cancelling direct flights between Italy and China. PRC press release states that Beijing “is strongly dissatisfied with the overreaction and restrictions of the Italian side” and claims that Italy agreed to resume some flights.

February 20: At a meeting with ASEAN foreign ministers, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi pressures countries to ease travel restrictions, saying: “In light³¹ of the conditions on the ground, countries need to resume people-to-people ties and cooperation.”

February 29: WHO announces that it “continues to advise against the application of travel or trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks.”

March 31: Chinese National Health Commission announces for the first time that it excluded from its national tally people who were infected with the virus but without symptoms, and that as of April 1 it would begin including these in the tally “in order to respond to society’s concern in a timely manner.”

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U.S. Department of State

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On March 22, 2020 at 4:58:25 PM EDT (b)(6) wrote:
Attached updates thru today, March 22. Thanks for suggestions.

(b)(6)

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U.S. Department of State

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(c)

(b)(6)

On March 18, 2020 at 7:53:15 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Updated coverup timeline attached, including publication of this study March 11.

(b)(6)

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at 3:52:25 PM EDT, (b)(6) wrote:
Shocking detail here from March 11 University of Southampton study. Estimates that if Beijing had owned up to the Wuhan virus and responded with significant measures just a week before it did, 66% of cases could have been avoided. And had Beijing responded three weeks sooner, 95% could have been avoided.

From <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/2020/03/covid-19-china.page>: "The research also found that if interventions in the country could have been conducted one week, two weeks, or three weeks earlier, cases could have been reduced by 66 percent, 86 percent and 95 percent respectively – significantly limiting the geographical spread of the disease."

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U.S. Department of State

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<Wuhan virus coverup timeline 2020 03 18.docx>

<Wuhan virus coverup timeline 2020 03 22.docx>

<Coronavirus coverup timeline 2020 04 02.docx>

<Coronavirus coverup timeline 2020 04 13.pdf>

<Coronavirus coverup timeline 2020 04 17.pdf>

Sender: (b)(6)

EAP-J-Office-DL (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Recipient:

From:	"Stilwell, David R" (b)(6)
To:	(b)(6)
Subject:	FW: State Department News Briefing (4-20-20 - 9 PM ET)
Date:	Tue, 21 Apr 2020 01:32:40 +0000

(b)(6) right?

[China] GOP lawmakers ask Barr, Pompeo to bring case against China to the International Court of Justice

FOX News [4/20/2020 2:00 PM, Andrew O'Reilly, Neutral] reports that Indiana GOP Rep. Jim Banks has sent a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Attorney General William Barr urging them to bring a case against China to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the country's actions during the coronavirus pandemic. The letter, obtained by Fox News on Monday, was co-signed by 22 other lawmakers in the lower house of Congress. It claims that China has violated the 2005 International Health Regulations by suppressing information about the COVID-19 outbreak in the city of Wuhan earlier this year and underreporting the number of infections and deaths caused by the contagion. "The Chinese state made intentional false claims to its own people and the world about the nature of the virus," Banks wrote in his letter. "China rejected repeated offers from the [World Health Organization] and [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] in late January and early February to study the new disease without explanation." Banks added: "If China fails to submit itself to a fair trial in the International Court of Justice, the Charter of the United Nations gives guidance to injured parties: Articles 49-51 explain how states could suspend their obligations to China as means to induce Beijing to fulfill its responsibility for the calamitous damages inflicted on the world." China in recent weeks has come under intense scrutiny for its handling of the virus' outbreak and how it allowed it to spread worldwide. "We know that there is the Wuhan Institute of Virology just a handful of miles away from where the wet market was," Pompeo said. U.S. officials say the American Embassy in Beijing flagged concerns about potential safety issues at the lab in Wuhan in 2018, but stressed there's no evidence the virus originated there nearly two years later.

From: TechMIS - DOS Daily <dos@techmis.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2020 8:42 PM
To: noreply@techmis.com
Subject: State Department News Briefing (4-20-20 - 9 PM ET)

**STATE DEPARTMENT
NEWS BRIEFING**

Prepared for the U.S. Department of State
By TechMIS
www.TechMIS.com

Mobile User Copy

TO: State Department & Staff
DATE: Monday, April 20, 2020 9:00 PM ET

State Department News

With Trump Facing Virus Crisis, U.S. Warns Rivals Not to Seek Advantage

The Wall Street Journal [4/20/2020 8:27 AM, Gordon Lubold and Dion Nissenbaum, Neutral] reports that while President Donald Trump is absorbed with confronting the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic at home, administration officials and their allies are seeking to head off any attempt by adversaries around the world to test U.S. resolve. In a succession of public warnings, Trump, his key aides, military officials and allies in recent weeks have voiced concern that attention to the health crisis by the White House and military could give rise to challenges. "I think some of this stuff is profoundly and clearly taking advantage of a bad situation," said an administration official, who pointed to China's actions in the South China Sea as particularly troubling. In recent weeks, Beijing has conducted operations to gain more of a foothold in the Spratly and Paracel island chains in the South China Sea, emblematic of China's attempts to assert its influence around the world. Since the outbreak of the global health crisis, China has begun operating various military aircraft from Fiery Cross Reef in the South China Sea, including an airborne early warning and control aircraft that has begun to use an airstrip on the reef as a "forward operating base" to conduct reconnaissance flights, military and State Department officials said. While some of the operations might have been planned before the pandemic swept the globe, U.S. officials said American rivals like China are capitalizing on the Trump administration's diverted attention and the strains on its military. Chinese forces were accused earlier this month of sinking a Vietnamese fishing vessel in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands, prompting a protest from the State Department. "We call on [China] to remain focused on supporting international efforts to combat the global pandemic, and to stop exploiting the distraction or vulnerability of other states to expand its unlawful claims in the South China Sea," spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said.

Wearing face masks, Syria's Assad and Iran's Zarif condemn West at Damascus meeting

Reuters [4/20/2020 1:48 PM, Suleiman Al-Khalidi, Neutral] reports that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javid Zarif wore face masks on Monday for their meeting in Damascus where they said the West was exploiting the coronavirus pandemic for political ends, state media said. State media said Assad conveyed condolences to Iran, where more than 5,200 people have died from the disease. Echoing comments by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Zarif, who was also wearing gloves, was quoted as saying the U.S. administration showed its "inhumane reality" by its refusal to lift sanctions on Syria and Iran when coronavirus was spreading around the world. Assad said the handling of the crisis showed the West's moral failure. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has held out the possibility that the United States may consider easing sanctions on Iran and other nations to help fight the epidemic but given no concrete sign it plans to do so. Speaking last month, Pompeo said humanitarian supplies were exempt from sanctions Washington reimposed on Tehran after President Donald Trump abandoned Iran's 2015 multilateral deal to limit its nuclear programme. The United States has also ratcheted up sanctions on Syria since the uprising against Assad began in March 2011. The

State Department says it is "trying to deprive the regime of the resources it needs to continue violence against civilians."

IMF may need 'exceptional measures' to facilitate pandemic response: Georgieva

Reuters [4/20/2020 12:35 PM, Andrea Shalal, Neutral] reports that the IMF may need to step outside its comfort zone and consider "exceptional measures" to help countries deal with the coronavirus pandemic and mitigate its economic impact, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Monday. Georgieva, in a blog published on the International Monetary Fund's website, said the Fund had already taken extraordinary steps to free up resources, especially for emerging markets and developing economies that have seen an outflow of \$100 billion in recent months – the highest on record. But more resources might be needed if market pressures continued to mount, and lending – even on easy terms – was not always the best solution, given already high debt burdens faced by many countries, she said. "The IMF, like our member countries, may need to venture even further outside our comfort zone to consider whether exceptional measures might be needed in this exceptional crisis," she said, suggesting solutions could include increased collaboration with other international institutions and the private sector.

Nations credited with fast response to coronavirus moving to gradually reopen businesses

The Washington Post [4/20/2020 12:07 PM, Rick Noack and Loveday Morris, Neutral] reports that several countries moved ahead with plans for the gradual reopening of their economies this week, signaling cautious optimism among their governments that measures to combat the coronavirus are working. Germany and South Korea – role models in handling the outbreak in their regions – are slowly reversing some of the restrictions put in place weeks ago, embarking on a careful and long path back to normality that could serve as a template for other nations. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, however, extended a lockdown on Monday but did so amid mounting hopes that her country can eliminate the coronavirus by tracing transmissions and preventing new infections. Her move underscores the uncertainty over the best path forward as countries emerge from lockdown. In Germany, some scientists have argued that the country should ramp up restrictions until new infections reach a rate that makes tracking and contact tracing more easy, a strategy they say will allow for a greater degree of freedom in the long run. The number of coronavirus deaths in Europe surpassed 100,000 this weekend. Many European nations, including Britain and France, remain under tight lockdowns and are expected to stay under heavy restrictions for weeks.

Coronavirus Sparks Rise in Anti-Semitic Sentiment, Researchers Say

The Wall Street Journal [4/20/2020 2:03 PM, Felicia Schwartz, Negative] reports that the new coronavirus pandemic is fueling anti-Semitic sentiment, Israeli researchers said Monday, as messages online and elsewhere falsely blame Jews for the spread of the disease and the ensuing economic impact. Researchers from the Kantor Center at Tel Aviv University, which released its annual assessment of global anti-Semitism Monday, said the virus that causes the Covid-19 illness had revived centuries-old habits of faulting Jews for things that go wrong, such as natural disasters, plagues, world wars and economic crises. Far-right groups, ultraconservative Christian circles, Islamists and the far left are seen as common sources of such accusations, the report found. "Since the beginning of the Covid-

19 pandemic, there has been a significant rise in accusations that Jews, as individuals and as a collective, are behind the spread of the virus or are directly profiting from it," Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, said in connection with the report's unveiling. "The language and imagery used clearly identifies a revival of the medieval 'blood libels' when Jews were accused of spreading disease, poisoning wells or controlling economies."

Oil Prices Skid, With May Contract in Negative Territory

The Wall Street Journal [4/20/2020 3:58 PM, David Hodari and Joe Wallace, Neutral] reports that an oil-price futures contract tumbled into negative territory for the first time ever Monday, illustrating the overwhelming glut of crude that is decimating the global energy industry. The June contract for West Texas Intermediate futures, considered the benchmark for U.S. crude prices, dropped 18% to \$20.43 a barrel. Brent crude oil, the global benchmark, fell 8.9% to \$25.57 a barrel. But the fall was more severe for the front-month May contract, which made history by plunging into negative territory in the afternoon, a first in oil-futures-market data going back to 1983. It ended the day at minus-\$37.63 a barrel, highlighting the dilemma facing energy companies. Producers in some parts of the world have to pay buyers to take oil away or store it. Still, with the May contract expiring Tuesday and no longer the most actively traded, oil watchers don't consider it the most accurate reflection of price action. When futures contracts come close to expiration, their price typically converges with the underlying price of physical barrels of oil. Otherwise, traders could profit from the difference between oil futures and oil barrels. Physical oil prices have been hit hard by the collapse in demand and surge in supply. The price of some regional crudes in the U.S. recently fell below \$10 a barrel and on Monday also sank below zero. The drop in oil prices comes despite output reductions agreed on between countries of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the Group of 20 nations.

Saudi Arabia gets physical with Russia in underground oil bout

Reuters [4/20/2020 10:52 AM, Olga Yagova, Neutral] reports that behind a Saudi-Russian truce to stabilize oil markets with a record output cut, market players are seeing the two production heavyweights still trading blows in the physical market. It is here, rather than in the world of futures prices, that a long-standing battle for market share carries on, particularly in Asia, shipping data analyzed on Monday by Reuters shows. The rivals said last week they were ready to take measures if necessary to balance the market by cutting combined output with other OPEC+ members from May. "Beyond the cooperative statements the fight is still going on," a source at a trading firm told Reuters, adding that Saudi Arabia's official selling prices (OSPs) signalled that the kingdom was targeting the Asian market, where demand remains relatively resilient during a global slowdown.

Turkey's Erdogan accuses Syrian government of violating Idlib ceasefire

Reuters [4/20/2020 1:12 PM, Staff, Neutral] reports that Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that the Syrian government was violating a ceasefire in the northwestern Idlib region, warning that Damascus would suffer "heavy losses" if it persisted. Turkey and Russia, which back opposing sides in Syria's war, agreed on March 5 to halt hostilities in northwestern Syria after an escalation of clashes there displaced nearly a million people and brought the two sides close to confrontation. Speaking in Istanbul after a cabinet meeting, Erdogan said the Syrian government was using the coronavirus outbreak

as an opportunity to ramp up violence in Idlib, and added that Turkey would not allow any "dark groups" in the region to violate the ceasefire either.

FCC approves Ligado plan to deploy mobile broadband network

Reuters [4/20/2020 10:49 AM, David Shepardson, Neutral] reports that the five-member Federal Communications Commission voted unanimously to approve an order to allow Ligado Networks to deploy a low-power nationwide 5G network despite objections from the U.S. Defense Department, other federal agencies and major U.S. airlines. The telecommunications regulator said on Monday the approval order included stringent conditions aimed at ensuring global positioning systems would not experience harmful interference. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said via Twitter on Friday that the "Ligado proposal would needlessly imperil GPS-dependent national security capabilities." Ligado will be able to use the L-Band spectrum, for which it holds some licenses. The L-Band is also used for GPS and other navigation systems because the signals can penetrate cloud cover. Last Wednesday, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe and the panel's top Democrat, Jack Reed, asked President Donald Trump to bar Ligado from moving forward, citing interference with GPS reception. U.S. Attorney General William Barr said last week the approval "would greatly reduce the cost and time it will take to deploy 5G throughout the country and would be a major step toward preserving our economic future." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also backed the plan.

Federal, New York Authorities Fine South Korean Bank Used for Iran Payments

The Wall Street Journal [4/20/2020 1:36 PM, Andrew Jeong, Neutral] reports that federal and New York authorities fined a South Korean bank over long-running gaps in its defenses against money laundering, after the lender's Manhattan branch was used to launder cash for Iran. The state-backed Industrial Bank of Korea must pay a combined \$86 million for lapses dating back to 2010, which centered on failing to install and maintain an adequate transaction-monitoring system. The New York State Department of Financial Services is fining the bank \$35 million. Separately, federal investigators and the New York State Attorney General's office have required the bank to pay \$51 million. Senior Trump administration officials have recently brushed aside calls to ease economic sanctions on Tehran due to concern that Iran would use cash for military investments. However, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said the U.S. has offered to provide food and other humanitarian aid to Iran, amid the coronavirus pandemic.

[Iran] Iran Begins Soft Reopening After Coronavirus Shutdowns

The Wall Street Journal [4/20/2020 3:25 PM, Sune Engel Rasmussen and Aresu Egbali, Neutral] reports that Iran's government allowed local bazaars and shopping malls to reopen on Monday, a potential milestone for a country that was one of the first outside of China to be hit by the new coronavirus and that has suffered extensive economic damage from the pandemic. Tehran's main bazaar reopened after more than a month and restrictions on travel between provinces were eased. But the tentative reopening of Iran's economy drew warnings from some health officials, who said they feared a premature return to normalcy would jeopardize hard-won gains against the virus. Authorities continue to fight the spread of the virus and worry about fresh outbreaks, and Iranian officials urged people to continue to stay home and practice social distancing. The virus had spread into Iran's leadership, sickening senior officials and ministers, and has dealt a heavy blow to an economy already

struggling from damaging U.S. sanctions. In the past week, Iran's health ministry reported its lowest daily death toll and infections in a month. It logged 91 deaths on Monday, down from a peak in late March of over 150 daily deaths from Covid-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. The number of new infections decreased from more than 3,000 daily in late March to about half that in recent days. Iran has reported a total of 5,209 deaths and 83,505 cases.

[Iran] U.S. pressure on Iran during coronavirus outbreak is 'inhumane': Rouhani

Reuters [4/20/2020 1:38 PM, Staff, Neutral] reports that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that American pressure on Iran in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic was "inhumane," according to a statement on the official presidency website. Iran is the Middle Eastern country hardest hit by the virus and Iranian officials say U.S. sanctions have hampered its response. U.S. President Donald Trump reimposed economic sanctions on Iran in 2018 after withdrawing from a multilateral nuclear deal struck three years earlier. "In these difficult conditions, American pressure on the people of Iran is more inhumane than at any other time and the continuation of it is a barbaric crime against a great people and against all human principles and international regulations," Rouhani said during a phone call with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. Rouhani expressed sympathy for the people of Italy, who have also been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak. Trump says the multilateral deal was not strong enough to ensure that Iran would not be able to develop and build nuclear weapons. He wants to apply "maximum pressure" on Iran to accept tougher curbs to its nuclear programme, halt its ballistic missile work and end its support for proxy forces in the Middle East. Iran says it will not negotiate unless Washington lifts sanctions.

[Iran] Iran's Guard Says It Has Higher Range Anti-Warship Missiles

The AP [4/20/2020 3:16 PM, Nasser Karimi, Neutral] reports that Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard announced on Monday that it has significantly upgraded the range of its anti-warship missiles, the state-run news agency reported. The Guard says it now possesses surface-to-surface and subsurface anti-warship missiles with a range as high as 700 kilometers (430 miles), according to its top naval officer, Adm. Ali Reza Tangsiri. In September, Iranian officials said the country's most advanced anti-warship missiles had a range of about 300 kilometers, some 180 miles. Iran periodically announces major advances in its weapons capabilities that cannot be verified independently. Its armed forces are believed to have surface-to-surface missiles with a range of 2,000 kilometers, or 1,250 miles, that can reach Israel and U.S. bases in the Mideast. Tangsiri's remarks came a day after the Guard acknowledged its naval forces had a tense encounter with U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf last week. Tensions between Iran and the U.S. remain high in the Gulf, following a year of escalating clashes between the two countries.

[Israel] Deal Extends Netanyahu's Rule as Rival Accepts Israeli Unity Government

The New York Times [4/20/2020 1:45 PM, Isabel Kershner and David M. Halbfinger, Neutral] reports that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and his former challenger, Benny Gantz, agreed Monday night to establish a unity government, a deal that finally breaks a yearlong political impasse and keeps Netanyahu in office as he faces trial on corruption charges. After three inconclusive elections in the past year, the creation of the new government forestalls what had appeared to be an inevitable fourth election and offers a deeply divided Israel a chance for national healing and unity as it battles the coronavirus

pandemic. The deal, announced by the two men's political parties at 7:15 p.m., extends Netanyahu's tenure as Israel's longest-serving leader and, coming after his conservative coalition failed to win a majority, cements his reputation as a canny political survivor who can never be counted out. For Gantz, a former army chief and relative political novice, however, the agreement may end up having the opposite effect. The move was a stunning turnabout after his repeated campaign vows that he would never serve with a prime minister under criminal indictment, and a disappointment to many of his supporters who see it as a capitulation to a leader they had wanted to oust. Under the deal, which the two leaders cast as an emergency government to fight the coronavirus, Gantz will be named deputy prime minister and is to get a turn as prime minister halfway through their three-year term, in October 2021.

[Czech Republic] What's behind State's warning on Czech hospital attacks

Politico [4/20/2020 10:00 AM, Tim Starks, Neutral] reports that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has warned cyber criminals that they should "expect consequences" if they target the health care sector as it battles the coronavirus pandemic. The warning came as part of the State Department's public support of the Czech Republic on Friday after a Czech government agency predicted a wave of cyberattacks on its critical infrastructure. Some Czech hospitals said they deflected attacks the same day, and Prague's airport over the weekend said it recently endured some hacking attempts. The statements come one month after a cyberattack hit a Czech hospital involved in coronavirus testing. It was a smart move from Pompeo designed to indicate that the U.S. is prepared to take collective action with allies against the kind of attacks that might cause deaths, said Christopher Painter, who served as the top cyber diplomat from 2011 through 2017. With threats of consequences, "it's always better if we do that collectively," Painter told MC. "It's not just about us, it's about our allies and our partners." While Pompeo didn't specify the kind of consequences he had in mind, Painter suggested they should be catered to the responsible party. A Czech official told Reuters that the expected attacks were by a "serious and advanced adversary." Painter said those responses could be diplomatic, economic or even military, but shouldn't be excessively escalatory.

[France] France Virus Fatalities Surpass 20,000 Since Start of Outbreak

Bloomberg [4/20/2020 1:49 PM, Rudy Rutenberg and Ania Nussbaum, Negative] reports that France reported 547 new deaths linked to the coronavirus on Monday, becoming the fourth country to report more than 20,000 fatalities from the pandemic, behind Italy, Spain and the U.S. The virus toll climbed to 20,265 deaths, Director General for Health Jerome Salomon said in a briefing in Paris. New cases rose by 2,832 infections to 178,774, increasing from Sunday but still lower than other days in the recent weeks. The number of hospitalized patients fell for a sixth day. Even as deaths rise, France will unveil plans within two weeks to progressively lift the restrictions aimed at curbing the epidemic, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said on Sunday. Falling numbers for patients in hospitals and in intensive care are signs lockdown measures are working, Salomon has said. France has been on lockdown since March 17, and President Emmanuel Macron announced a week ago that confinement measures would be extended to May 11. Less than 10% of the French population has been exposed to the virus, Salomon said.

[Russia] Putin warns Russia's coronavirus crisis yet to peak as cases surpass 47,000

Reuters [4/20/2020 7:27 AM, Staff, Neutral] reports that President Vladimir Putin said Russia had managed to slow the spread of the new coronavirus but warned the peak of the outbreak still lay ahead after the number of confirmed infections surged past 47,000 nationwide on Monday. Russia reported 4,268 new confirmed coronavirus cases on Monday, down from more than 6,000 the day before. Forty-four people died overnight, bringing the death toll to 405, Russia's coronavirus task force said. Russia's new coronavirus infections have risen quickly in April even as Moscow and an array of Russian regions have imposed lockdown restrictions now already three weeks old. But despite the clampdown, infections have spread from Russia's worst-hit area in Moscow and penetrated all of its more than 80 regions, Putin said at a televised meeting with officials and health experts on Monday. "We have nonetheless managed to slow down this process and hold it back," he said, but added, "...The peak of the incidence rate is yet to come." Reuters [4/20/2020 11:19 AM, Alexander Marrow and Maria Tsvetkova, Neutral] also reports that hundreds of people protested against regional authorities in southern Russia on Monday over what they said were restrictive and unnecessary coronavirus measures, state-owned TV and demonstrators said. The forced closure of businesses across Russia and the imposition of strict self-isolation measures has caused economic pain to many households, particularly in Russia's regions, where salaries are lower and the virus less entrenched.

[Russia] U.S. envoy blasts Moscow's 'secret' trial of ex-marine charged with spying
Reuters [4/20/2020 1:06 PM, Tom Balmforth, Neutral] reports that the U.S. ambassador in Moscow accused Russian authorities on Monday of making a mockery of justice after he was turned away for a second time from what he called a "secret" trial behind closed doors of an ex-U.S. Marine charged with espionage. Russia last month began the trial of U.S. national Paul Whelan on charges of spying after his arrest by Russian security agents in a hotel room sting operation in December 2018. He denies the charge. The case, as well as that of Michael Calvey, a U.S. investor charged with embezzlement in Russia, has complicated already strained relations between Moscow and Washington. Whelan, who also holds British, Canadian and Irish citizenship, faces up to 20 years if found guilty. The Moscow court had said the trial would involve classified information and would therefore not be open to the public, but U.S. Ambassador John Sullivan said he had tried to attend the hearing in Moscow on Monday and had been turned away. "The fact that it is a closed hearing, that it is a secret trial – Paul hasn't seen the evidence against him – it makes a mockery of justice," Sullivan said in remarks carried on the U.S. Embassy's website. He urged Russia's authorities to ensure Whelan would receive a fair and impartial trial, to grant him a phone call to his family and to allow him medical treatment. "He hasn't been allowed to make a phone call, to speak to anyone in his family in 16 months," Sullivan said.

[Russia] Russia intercepts U.S. Navy aircraft over Mediterranean Sea

CNN [4/20/2020 8:39 AM, Ryan Browne and Chandelis Duster, 5551K, Neutral] reports that a Russian fighter aircraft approached a U.S. Navy aircraft over the Mediterranean Sea Sunday, both governments confirmed while offering different accounts of the incident. U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement Sunday the Russian aircraft, a SU-35 jet, "flew in an unsafe and unprofessional manner" while intercepting the U.S. Navy P-8A Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft. The U.S. Navy it said was the second time in four days that Russian pilots made unsafe maneuvers while intercepting US aircraft. "The unnecessary actions of the Russian SU-35 pilot were inconsistent with good

airmanship and international flight rules, seriously jeopardizing the safety of flight of both aircraft," the U.S. Navy said. "While the Russian aircraft was operating in international airspace, this interaction was irresponsible. We expect them to behave within international standards set to ensure safety and to prevent incidents."

[Spain] Spain coronavirus cases top 200,000 but infection rate falling 'a lot'

Reuters [4/20/2020 5:00 PM, Vincent West and Nathan Allen, Neutral] reports that the new coronavirus has infected more than 200,000 people in Spain, although the spread of the disease is slowing, officials said on Monday, as the Supreme Court ordered the government to guarantee that medical workers receive adequate protective equipment. With 200,210 recorded infections, Spain is second only to the United States in terms of confirmed cases, according to Reuters data. The cumulative death toll from the virus rose to 20,852 after 399 fatalities were recorded in the previous 24 hours. But Health Emergency Chief Fernando Simon told a news conference that the rate of new infections continues to fall despite an increase in testing, suggesting the overall prevalence of the disease could be lower than expected in the population. "Fortunately occurrence is falling a lot, even more than we had thought," he said.

[Turkey] Coronavirus puts missile showdown between Turkey and U.S. on hold

Reuters [4/20/2020 11:15 AM, Dominic Evans and Orhan Coskun, Neutral] reports that Turkey's plans to switch on its new Russian missile defense systems have been delayed by the coronavirus outbreak but it does not intend to reverse a decision which has raised the threat of U.S. sanctions, a senior Turkish official said. Tensions between NATO allies Turkey and the United States over the S-400 air defense systems had looked set to reach a showdown in April, when President Tayyip Erdogan and the government had said they would be activated. But the coronavirus outbreak has focused Turkish efforts on combatting the pandemic and ring-fencing an economy which only just pulled out of recession last year. In recent weeks Erdogan and his government have not raised the S-400 issue publicly. "There is no going back on the decision to activate the S-400s (but) due to COVID-19 ... the plan for them to be ready in April will be delayed," the senior official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. It could be several months before the Russian system is activated, the official said, adding some technical issues remained to be overcome. The United States says the S-400s, which Moscow delivered to Turkey last July, are incompatible with NATO defences and would jeopardise U.S. F35 stealth jets which Turkey planned to buy. Their acquisition by Turkey means Ankara could face U.S. sanctions under legislation designed to punish countries which buy defence equipment from Russia. Deploying the S-400s in the same airspace as U.S. planes would be a "massive problem" which would create a new crisis between the two countries, Richard Outzen, a senior adviser at the State Department, told an online discussion last week.

[Turkey] Istanbul Death Toll Hints Turkey Is Hiding a Wider Coronavirus Calamity

The New York Times [4/20/2020 4:43 PM, Carlotta Gall, Neutral] reports that for weeks President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has presented Turkey's performance in handling the coronavirus as one of the world's most successful, as he maintained strict control over information about the outbreak. The presidential palace rolled out a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign, ensuring reports from hospitals, grave sites and mourning relatives remained virtually absent. Doctors who spoke out on social media were reprimanded, and

410 people were detained in March for "provocative and abusive" posts. But data compiled by The New York Times from records of deaths in Istanbul indicate that Turkey is grappling with a far bigger calamity from the coronavirus than official figures and statements would suggest. The city recorded about 2,100 more deaths than expected from March 9 to April 12, based on weekly averages from the last two years, far more than officials reported for the whole of Turkey during that time. While not all those deaths are necessarily directly attributable to the coronavirus, the numbers indicate a striking jump in fatalities that has coincided with the onset of the outbreak, a preliminary indicator that is being used by researchers to cut through the fog of the pandemic and assess its full toll in real time. Even by the official count, confirmed cases in Turkey rose to more than 90,000 by Monday, lifting Turkey above China to become the seventh most affected country in the world. Deaths have reached 2,140. Bloomberg [4/20/2020 2:31 AM, Kerim Karakaya, 6400K, Neutral] reports that Turkey said it will keep working with the U.S. to parry the coronavirus's danger to their economies, as the central bank in Ankara seeks to exchange currencies with peers. In a phone call, Erdogan and U.S. President Donald Trump "agreed to maintain close cooperation against the threat from the coronavirus pandemic on public health and our economies," Erdogan's office said in a statement late Sunday, without elaborating. In a March 31 call with Trump, Erdogan suggested that the U.S. Federal Reserve include Turkey's monetary authority in its currency-swap arrangements with other central banks. Ankara also asked to be included in other developed nations' swap lines, people familiar with the efforts said earlier this month, and on Sunday, central bank Governor Murat Uysal confirmed that Turkey is holding such talks.

[United Kingdom] Tech rivals urge U.K. to find 5G alternative to Huawei

Axios [4/20/2020 9:43 AM, Ina Fried, Neutral] reports that a group of tech firms are urging the U.K. to find alternatives to using Huawei gear in 5G networks. The approach they propose has also been pursued by some in the White House, though many have cast doubt on its viability, especially in the short term. A letter, addressed to House of Commons Defense Committee chair Tobias Ellwood, calls on Britain to scrap its current plan, which would allow "high-risk" vendors like Huawei to build up to 35% of its 5G network, as long as they don't supply gear for the network core. The letter is signed by nine less well-known tech companies who have been pursuing what's known as "ORAN," an alternative to traditional radio access network gear using standard servers and open source software. The best-known company is Japan's NEC, along with Airspan, Mavenir, Parallel Wireless, Microelectronics Technology, Super Micro Computer, AltioStar, GigaTera Communications and World Wide Technology.

[China] GOP lawmakers ask Barr, Pompeo to bring case against China to the International Court of Justice

FOX News [4/20/2020 2:00 PM, Andrew O'Reilly, Neutral] reports that Indiana GOP Rep. Jim Banks has sent a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Attorney General William Barr urging them to bring a case against China to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the country's actions during the coronavirus pandemic. The letter, obtained by Fox News on Monday, was co-signed by 22 other lawmakers in the lower house of Congress. It claims that China has violated the 2005 International Health Regulations by suppressing information about the COVID-19 outbreak in the city of Wuhan earlier this year and underreporting the number of infections and deaths caused by the contagion. "The Chinese state made intentional false claims to its own people and the world about the nature of the

virus," Banks wrote in his letter. "China rejected repeated offers from the [World Health Organization] and [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] in late January and early February to study the new disease without explanation." Banks added: "If China fails to submit itself to a fair trial in the International Court of Justice, the Charter of the United Nations gives guidance to injured parties: Articles 49-51 explain how states could suspend their obligations to China as means to induce Beijing to fulfill its responsibility for the calamitous damages inflicted on the world." China in recent weeks has come under intense scrutiny for its handling of the virus' outbreak and how it allowed it to spread worldwide. "We know that there is the Wuhan Institute of Virology just a handful of miles away from where the wet market was," Pompeo said. U.S. officials say the American Embassy in Beijing flagged concerns about potential safety issues at the lab in Wuhan in 2018, but stressed there's no evidence the virus originated there nearly two years later.

[China] U.S. calls on Beijing to grant freedom of movement to Chinese rights lawyer
Reuters [4/20/2020 9:41 AM, Humeysra Pamuk, Neutral] reports that the United States on Monday called on China to allow freedom of movement to prominent rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang, whom it said has been released after five years of unjust detention, the U.S. State Department said in a statement. "We remain very concerned about reports of his declining physical and mental health, and of his mistreatment in prison," the State Department said, adding that it continued to call on Beijing for the release of "all those unjustly detained," saying Washington remained concerned by China's "weak rule of law, arbitrary detentions and torture in custody." A Chinese court in January 2019 had imprisoned the prominent rights lawyer for 4-1/2 years for subversion of state power, after he was tried a month before that in a hearing that rights groups had called a sham. Wang, who had taken on cases deemed sensitive by Chinese authorities, such as accusations of police torture, had gone missing in August 2015 amid a sweeping crackdown on rights activists and lawyers. Tensions between Washington and Beijing have escalated over the past month over the coronavirus outbreak, which originated in China late last year and since then has infected more than 2.3 million people across the globe. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has repeatedly accused China of attempting to cover up the spread of the outbreak in its early days and failing to share accurate data about the scale of the cases.

[China] Wuhan Lab Denies Any Link to First Coronavirus Outbreak
Bloomberg [4/20/2020 6:10 AM, Staff, 6400K, Neutral] reports that a top Wuhan laboratory official has denied any role in spreading the new coronavirus, in the most high profile response from a facility at the center of months of speculation about how the previously unknown animal disease made the leap to humans. Yuan Zhiming, director of the Wuhan National Biosafety Laboratory, hit back at those promoting theories that the virus had escaped from the facility and caused the outbreak in the central Chinese city. "There is absolutely no way that the virus originated from our institute," Yuan said in an interview Saturday with the state-run China Global Television Network. Yuan rejected theories that the yet-to-be identified "Patient Zero" for Covid-19 had contact with the institute, saying none of its employees, retirees or student researchers were known to be infected. He said U.S. Senator Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, and Washington Post journalists were among those "deliberately leading people" to mistrust the facility and its "P4" top-level-security pathogen lab.

[China] China Raises Easing Coronavirus Border Controls With Other Countries

The Wall Street Journal [4/20/2020 11:58 AM, Chun Han Wong, Neutral] reports that China has approached a number of countries to discuss the possibility of easing border controls to allow some business travel to resume, part of broader efforts to restart economic activity stalled by the coronavirus pandemic. With China signaling initial success in containing its domestic contagion, its officials have in recent weeks proposed efforts to facilitate essential travel with foreign counterparts from more than a dozen countries across the Asia-Pacific region, diplomats familiar with the matter said. Chinese officials have raised the idea – in formal and informal settings – with counterparts from Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia, among other governments, the diplomats said. South Korea and Singapore have formally agreed to discuss ways to facilitate essential travel with China, according to government statements. Beijing has also reached out to some European countries about allowing some travel necessary for sustaining supply chains, some diplomats said. The identity of those countries couldn't be confirmed.

[Hong Kong] Under cover of coronavirus pandemic, Hong Kong arrests pro-democracy protest leaders

CBS News [4/20/2020 11:50 AM, Ramy Inocencio, Neutral] reports that with much of the world focused on battling the coronavirus pandemic, Hong Kong police over the weekend arrested 15 of the city's highest-profile political, legal and media opposition figures linked to the 2019 pro-democracy protests. The surprise crackdown included 81-year-old lawyer Martin Lee, dubbed the "father" of Hong Kong democracy; media tycoon and long-time critic of China's Communist party Jimmy Lai; and leading social activist and former legislator Lee Cheuk-yan. Police allege the 15 coordinated and joined three unapproved protests: the first on August 18 in which organizers estimated 1.7 million attended, the second on the October 1 anniversary of the founding of modern-day China and the third on October 20. A Hong Kong government spokesperson said their cases would be handled in a "fair, just and impartial manner." Critics are accusing authorities of intimidation. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the arrests "inconsistent with commitments made under the Sino-British joint declaration that include transparency (and) the rule of law."

[Hong Kong] China says condemns some western politicians' interference in Hong Kong affairs

Reuters [4/20/2020 3:49 AM, Gabriel Crossley, 5304K, Neutral] reports that China's foreign ministry said on Monday it condemns certain western politicians' interference in China's internal affairs, responding to criticism by foreign governments of the arrests of 15 Hong Kong democracy activists. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters during a daily briefing that Hong Kong is a society ruled by rule of law and said that the relevant parties must respect this.

[Afghanistan] Afghan Officials: Taliban Attacks on Checkpoints Kill 29

The AP [4/20/2020 6:15 AM, Rahim Faiez, Negative] reports that a wave of Taliban attacks on checkpoints across Afghanistan has killed 29 members of the security forces, officials said Monday. In northern Takhar province, 19 security personnel were killed in a battle Sunday night in the district of Khwaja Ghor, according to Jawad Hajri, spokesman for the provincial governor. The Taliban fled the scene after reinforcement arrived, Hajri added. Meanwhile, in northern Balkh province, a Taliban attack on Sunday morning in

the Sholgara district killed seven, according to Adil Shah Adil, spokesman for the provincial police chief. A child was caught in the crossfire and wounded during the attack, which also killed five Taliban, he added. And in western Badghis province, the Taliban struck an army checkpoint early on Sunday morning, killing three soldiers and wounding 10, said Tahsel Haideri, spokesman for the provincial police chief. The Taliban, who have not claimed responsibility for the attacks, and President Ashraf Ghani's government in Kabul are in the process of exchanging prisoners as part of a peace deal signed by the U.S. and the Taliban at the end of February in Doha, Qatar.

[Afghanistan] More than a dozen staff members in Afghanistan's presidential palace test positive for coronavirus

The Washington Post [4/20/2020 4:19 PM, Sharif Hassan and Susannah George, Negative] reports that more than a dozen staff members at the Afghan presidential palace have tested positive for coronavirus, and the country's 70-year-old president, Ashraf Ghani, has mostly isolated himself, according to two Afghan officials. Ghani remains in good health, has tested negative for the virus and continues to run the country by conducting most meetings with video teleconferencing, one official said. Both officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. The outbreak at the heart of Afghan political power comes as transmission of the virus is escalating in the country. Testing in Afghanistan remains low, but health officials say they expect to see a spike in confirmed cases in the next two weeks. Following the coronavirus outbreak, the United Nations called for a humanitarian cease-fire in Afghanistan to facilitate the delivery of medical aid. The Taliban said it is willing to cease attacks if there are large outbreaks in territory it controls, but violence in Afghanistan has spiked in recent weeks as the start of talks between the Taliban and the government are repeatedly delayed.

[India] India reports biggest one-day virus spike as lockdown eased

The AP [4/20/2020 3:30 AM, Emily Schmall, Negative] reports that India recorded its biggest single-day spike in coronavirus cases on Monday as the government eased one of the world's strictest lockdowns to allow some manufacturing and agricultural activity to resume. An additional 1,553 cases were reported over 24 hours, raising the national total past 17,000. At least 543 people have died from COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the virus, and epidemiologists forecast the peak may not be reached before June. The shelter-in-place orders imposed in India on March 24 halted all but essential services, sparking an exodus of migrant workers and people who survive on daily wages out of India's cities and toward villages in rural areas. Authorities picked up travelers in a fleet of buses and quarantined many of them in empty schools and other public buildings for 14 days. Starting Monday, limited industry and farming were allowed to resume where employers could meet social distancing and hygiene norms, and migrant workers were allowed to travel within states to factories, farms and other work sites.

[Canada] Trudeau promises gun control legislation after deadliest shooting in Canadian history

The Washington Post [4/20/2020 4:20 PM, Amanda Coletta, Neutral] reports that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday his government would move ahead on the gun control legislation he promised during last year's election campaign after the deadliest shooting in his country's history, though it was not clear how soon he would do so. "I can

say that we were on the verge of introducing legislation to ban assault-style weapons across this country," he told reporters. "It was interrupted when the pandemic caused Parliament to be suspended, but we have every intention of moving forward on that measure, and potentially other measures, when Parliament returns." Authorities say a single gunman shot and killed at least 18 people in rural Nova Scotia during a rampage Saturday and Sunday before he himself died. On Monday, a coalition of gun control groups implored Public Safety Minister Bill Blair to ban the new sale of military-style assault weapons. Authorities have not said what firearms suspect Gabriel Wortman used in the shootings, or how he obtained them. Blair said he intended to introduce gun control legislation "as quickly as possible."

[Burkina Faso] Rights group accuses Burkina security forces of killing 31 unarmed detainees

Reuters [4/20/2020 2:41 PM, Henry Wilkins, Negative] reports that international advocacy group Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Monday that it believed security forces in Burkina Faso had summarily executed 31 unarmed detainees earlier this month during operations against Islamist militants. The bullet-riddled bodies of the men from the Fulani ethnic group were discovered in the northern town of Djibo on April 9, shortly after they had been arrested by security forces and taken away in a convoy, 17 witnesses and people with knowledge of the situation told HRW. The defence ministry said in a statement that the minister had ordered an investigation on April 10 and that perpetrators would be sanctioned if the allegations proved to be true. The government is struggling to contain jihadist groups in northern Burkina Faso, who have stoked ethnic conflict by closely associating themselves with Fulani herders. As a result, Fulani civilians have borne the brunt of reprisals by soldiers and vigilantes, rights groups say. Since 2017, armed Islamist groups, some with ties to al Qaeda and Islamic State, have killed more than 300 civilians in Burkina Faso, while the government has killed several hundred men for their alleged support of these groups, according to HRW. Burkinabe officials have promised to investigate similar allegations in the past but rights group say the government has not done enough to hold perpetrators accountable.

[South Africa] South Africa Gangs Call Truce as Lockdown Stifles Drug Trade

Bloomberg [4/20/2020 2:49 AM, Loni Prinsloo and Pauline Bax, 6400K, Neutral] reports that gangs in South Africa, which has one of the world's highest homicide rates, have agreed to a cease-fire during a nationwide lockdown that's caused a slump in narcotics supply and demand – with an unprecedented drop in murders as a result. A network of gang leaders across the country's nine provinces, known as the Council, have made funds available to members of the groups until June so they can feed their families during the shutdown, which aims to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, said Welcome Witbooi, a former gang member who mediates between gangs, local communities and the police in the Western Cape province. "When our government announced the lockdown regulations, everyone started panicking about health but also about business prospects," Witbooi said in an interview. "We had a meeting with the Council and with them we decided to put out a national call to all gangs to cease fire." Some gangs are even trying to "rebuild the relationship with the community" and are handing out food parcels to residents, he said.

{End of Report}

Sender: "Stilwell, David R" (b)(6)
Recipient: (b)(6)

From:	(b)(6)
To:	(b)(6) (Beijing) (b)(6)
Subject:	FW: Some information for your cable write-up
Date:	Thu, 7 Sep 2017 02:34:45 -0400

For the GVP cable.

Official

UNCLASSIFIED

From: Peter Daszak [mailto:(b)(6)@ecohealthalliance.org]
Sent: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 7:05 PM
To: (b)(6) (Rick) (Beijing)
Cc: (b)(6) (Beijing); (b)(6) (CDC/CGH/DGHP); (b)(6) (Beijing); (b)(6) (b)(6) GH/HIDN; (b)(6) (Beijing); (b)(6) (Beijing); (b)(6)@nsf.gov
Subject: Some information for your cable write-up
Importance: High

Hi (b)(6)

I'm just sending a couple of background docs that might be of interest for you and the group from the smaller meeting yesterday, as well as a summary below that you may want to pick out some information from for your cable write-up.

- 1) Attached summary of the meetings we had at CAS-Institute of Microbiology just prior to meeting at the embassy: Who was present and what the key take homes are.
- 2) Attached GVP manuscript currently in review at *Science* as a *Policy Forum*. The paper outlines the scientific rationale for the GVP, the basis for our estimates of global viral diversity in mammals and water birds, and the basis for cost estimates. It also lays out information on the goals of the GVP, and details of the proposed approach to governance and financing. I'll let you know when we get final word on its likely publication date, but please feel free to lift sections from this word doc and communicate these internally
- 3) Attached manuscript on the new coronavirus causing mass die-offs in pig farms in Guangdong Province, led by Zhengli Shi at the CAS Wuhan Institute of Virology, in collaboration with a group of Chinese institutions, Duke NUS Singapore and EcoHealth Alliance in NY. The paper is under review at *Nature* and describes how we used a GVP-like approach (part of the USAID EPT/PREDICT program of work, combined with funding from NIAID) to identify and characterize novel viruses in wildlife that we thought might be likely to emerge. To sum up, we got news of largescale die-offs of pigs in commercial farms in Guangdong province starting in January, with substantial losses (over 25,000 in 3 months). We identified a novel virus (a coronavirus – same viral family as SARS) and then used our GVP approach to show that this virus originated in bats that are common in Guangdong. The scenario is very similar to SARS in the timing, geography and host species origin (SARS originated in bats). Fortunately the virus does not seem able to

Hi all,

We would like to host a small working lunch to focus on the global health security portion of our development assistance to discuss how we might wrap Global Virome Project (GVP) and our USAID PREDICT 2 Project into the portfolio with MOFCOM.

See you there!

Visitors:

(b)(6) Global Health Security and Development, Bureau for Global Health,
USAID/Washington
Peter Daszak, President, EcoHealth Alliance
For more information about GVP, please look at: <http://www.globalviromeproject.org/about/>.

(b)(6)

USAID/Beijing

Tel: (b)(6) Cell: (b)(6) E-mail: (b)(6)

Sender: (b)(6) (Beijing) (b)(6)

Recipient: (b)(6) (Beijing) (b)(6)

The Global Virome Project

Authors: Dennis Carroll¹, Peter Daszak^{2*}, Nathan D. Wolfe³, George F. Gao^{4,5}, Carlos Morel⁶, Subhash Morzaria⁷, Ariel Pablos-Méndez⁸, Oyewale Tomori⁹, Jonna A.K. Mazet¹⁰

Affiliations:

¹Emerging Threats Division, Bureau for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development, Washington, District of Columbia, U.S.A.

²EcoHealth Alliance, 460 West 34th Street – 17th Floor, New York, New York, U.S.A.

³Metabiota, 425 California Street – 2nd Floor, San Francisco, California, USA.

⁴CAS Key Laboratory of Pathogenic Microbiology and Immunology, Institute of Microbiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 1 Beichen West Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100101, People's Republic of China.

⁵Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC), 155 Changbai Road, Changping District, Beijing 102206, People's Republic of China

⁶National Institute of Science and Technology for Innovation in Neglected Diseases (INCT-IDN), Centre for Technological Development in Health (CDT5), Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), Av. Brasil 4365, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 21040-900, Brazil.

⁷Animal Health Service, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy.

⁸Bureau for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development, Washington, District of Columbia, U.S.A.

⁹The World Academy of Sciences & Nigerian Academy of Sciences, Academy House, 8A Ransome Kuti Road, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.

¹⁰One Health Institute, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California, Davis, California, USA.

*Correspondence to: daszak@ecohealthalliance.org

Abstract: The frequency of pandemics is increasing, driven by demographic and environmental change, globalized trade and travel. Viruses of animal origin in particular have caused significant recent outbreaks (e.g. SARS, pandemic influenza, MERS, Ebola and Zika), yet we estimate that only around 1% of potential viral threats have been identified and fewer have had vaccines or countermeasures developed. We estimate that a pool of a few hundred thousand currently unknown viruses with potential to infect people exist in wildlife populations. Here, we discuss the scientific and economic rationale, and the governance and technical framework of a global initiative to identify and characterize the majority of these viral threats from animal reservoirs. We argue that this is achievable over the next ten years and would cost substantially less than many recent outbreaks. We discuss how this global virome project could improve pandemic preparedness, reduce response times and costs, and may hasten our capacity to proactively deal with pandemics.

One Sentence Summary: We present the scientific, economic, and public health rationale, governance and technical framework for the Global Virome Project, which aims to pre-empt emerging pandemic threats by identifying, in animal reservoirs, the majority of unknown viruses likely to infect humans.

Main Text:

Recent outbreaks of novel and deadly viruses, including Nipah, influenzas, SARS, MERS, Ebola and Zika virus, have highlighted our global vulnerability to emerging diseases. Their potential devastation is highlighted by the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19, during which approximately 50 million people died (5% of the human population) and the HIV-AIDS pandemic which has caused 39 million deaths. Even in the absence of significant mortality, the SARS epidemic in 2003, which killed less than 800 people, cost the economies of Asia at least \$16 billion (adjusting for inflation) (1). Estimates of the global economic cost of an influenza pandemic range from \$374 billion for a mild pandemic to \$7.3 trillion for a severe pandemic (1).

Policies to address pandemic threats include adaptive measures that reduce disease impacts after emergence, and mitigation measures that reduce the underlying drivers of emergence and risk of initial spillover. Our adaptive toolkit – based largely on vaccines and therapeutics – is often ineffective against novel threats because biomedical countermeasure development is often outpaced by the speed of viral emergence and spread. Our ability to mitigate disease emergence is undermined by our poor understanding of the diversity and ecology of viral threats, and drivers of their emergence. Following each outbreak, the public health community bemoans a lack of prescience, but after decades of reacting to each event with only a tangential focus on mitigation, we remain only marginally better protected against the next epidemic.

Knowing the Enemy

Nearly all recent pandemics have a viral etiology with animal origins (2). Driven by intrinsic factors that enhance their capacity for interspecies transmission, viral zoonoses are prime candidates for causing the next great pandemic (3, 4). However, if these viruses are our enemy, we do yet not know our enemy very well. Around 385 viruses from 23 viral families are known to infect humans (5) (Figure 1). The shape of the discovery curve since the identification of the first human virus (yellow fever virus in 1901) suggests many more will emerge in the future (6). We estimate, from analysis of recent viral discovery data (7), that approximately 1.6 million yet-to-be-discovered viral species exist in mammal and bird hosts – the most important reservoirs for viral zoonoses (Supplementary Online Material; SOM). By analyzing all known viral-host relationships (5, 8), the history of viral zoonoses (9), and patterns of their recent emergence (2), we can reasonably expect that between 650,000 and 840,000 of these unknown viruses have zoonotic potential (SOM). We have no readily available technological countermeasures to these as-yet-undiscovered viruses should they emerge and threaten public health. Furthermore, the rate at which animal viruses are spilling over into people is accelerating, mirroring the explosive expansion of our global footprint and travel networks (1, 2), leading to a nonlinear rise in pandemic risk and an exponential growth in their economic impacts (1). Thus, a program that identifies the bulk of this viral threat may provide timely data for public health interventions, which will become increasingly important in the future, as pandemic risk increases.

Cost, governance and technical framework of the Global Virome Project

Since 2009, USAID has conducted a comprehensive large scale pilot project, spanning more than 35 countries over 8 years at a cost around \$170 million, to evaluate the feasibility of pre-

emptively mitigating pandemic threats. The Emerging Pandemic Threats/Predict project (USAID EPT/PREDICT) has demonstrated that, using existing technologies, it is possible to discover numerous new viruses from high-risk wildlife reservoir hosts, and characterize the ecological and socio-economic drivers that underpin their risk of emerging (10). Working with local partners and governments, wildlife and domestic animals and at-risk human populations in geographic hotspots of disease emergence (2) are sampled, and viral discovery conducted. A strategy to triage those viruses considered most at-risk of spillover has been developed (11), and characterization is conducted on these to further identify potential zoonoses prior to, or in the early stages of, spillover. Metadata from wildlife-livestock-human interfaces and human behavioral patterns in communities are concurrently analyzed so that risk mitigation strategies to reduce spillover can be developed (SOM). To date, EPT/PREDICT has discovered more than 1,000 viruses from viral families that contain zoonoses (data.predict.global). These include viruses involved in recent outbreaks (12), and others of ongoing public health concern (13). However, to discover the bulk of the remaining 1.6 million unknown viruses in animal reservoirs and characterize the majority of 650-840,000 viruses of highest zoonotic potential requires a challenging scale of operations.

The first challenge to feasibility is cost. To estimate this, we analyzed data on field sampling and laboratory expenditures for viral discovery from (7), and estimates of unknown viral diversity in mammalian hosts (SOM). We estimate that discovery of all viral threats and characterization of their risk for spillover, using currently available technologies and protocols, would be extremely costly at over \$7 billion (SOM). However, because of the asymptotic nature of discovery curves,

these costs reduce exponentially in relation to the percent of the global virome discovered ((7), SOM). For example, we estimate that 85% (i.e. the substantial majority) of the viral diversity from our target zoonotic reservoirs could be discovered, characterized and viral ecology assessed for approximately \$1.69 billion (23% of the global costs), annualized at \$169 million per year over 10 years (Supplementary Figure 1). There will be fixed costs that mean further reduction in coverage may not produce as significant a return-on-investment, for example we estimate that to cover 70% of the viral diversity from mammals and water birds would cost around \$1.2 billion, or \$120 million per year over 10 years. Logically, for any discovery effort that identifies a significant proportion of the virome, those viruses remaining undiscovered will, by the nature of sampling bias, represent rarer viral species with reduced opportunity for spillover, and reduced public health risk. Their discovery would require exponentially greater sampling effort and significant funds that could be better spent on countermeasures for the more likely threats (SOM).

Launching a project of this scale requires international cooperation to overcome complex governance, technical and logistical challenges. To begin this process, key international stakeholders from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe met at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center and declared their unanimous support for a Global Virome Project (GVP) Initiative (<http://www.globalviromeproject.org/about/>). They designed a framework for the governance, management, technical operation and scope of the GVP, and formed a steering committee that includes international stakeholders from industry, academia, intergovernmental agencies, the private sector, and NGOs. They convened working groups in

three thematic areas: Governance, Science/Technology, and Operations, each of these co-led by scientists who represent geographic and disciplinary diversity. These working groups are tackling diverse challenges: developing finance streams; establishing a transparent, equitable implementation strategy; addressing data and sample sharing challenges; developing laboratory platforms; determining the targeting of host taxa and the choosing of sampling sites; forming collaborative field and laboratory networks; developing risk characterization frameworks for viruses discovered; designing a strategy to assess and mitigate risk behaviors that promote viral emergence; and planning in-country capacity building for sustainable threat mitigation. Funding has been identified to begin work in the first two countries, China and Thailand, and a project launch has been set for early 2018.

The GVP's outputs are intended to serve the global public good, and working groups are developing a transparent and equitable strategy to share data, viral samples and their likely products, including benefits derived from future development of medical countermeasures. These build on the Convention on Biological Diversity Nagoya Protocol and The Pandemic Influenza Products Framework, negotiated by the World Health Organization (WHO). The international collaborative nature and global ownership of the project should help leverage funding from a wider range of sources, including private sector philanthropic donors that are increasingly funding 'big science'. The diversity of tasks within the GVP means that it won't necessarily divert significant funds from current public health programs. For example, discrete work streams have begun on targeted sampling of wildlife, on bioinformatics, and on behavioral risk analysis, and funding streams are being developed for each. Governments and

corporations with specific remits and geographic responsibilities have been approached to finance subprojects relevant to their sectors (e.g. capacity development, surveillance of specific taxa, geographically-focused activities, medical countermeasure development, training, surveillance, technological platforms). In addition, leaders in China and a number of countries have begun the process of developing national virome projects as part of the GVP.

Technological challenges include safe field sampling in remote locations and cost-effective laboratory platforms that can be standardized in low-income settings. To achieve these goals, existing national, regional and international networks will be enhanced and expanded within standardized sampling and testing frameworks. Existing networks of field biologists from environment ministries, academic institutions, and conservation NGOs have been approached to assist in targeting surveillance. National science and technology agencies, regional One Health platforms, transboundary disease surveillance networks, Institut Pasteur laboratories, WHO, FAO and OIE collaborating and reference centers, and viral discovery laboratories, including USAID EPT/PREDICT are involved in working groups to plan surveillance and capacity building. Laboratory platforms developed by USAID EPT/PREDICT have proven capacity to identify novel viruses and are relatively inexpensive and reliable, being based on PCR using degenerate primers that target a range of viral families of known zoonotic potential. Scaling up to a full global virome project provides an opportunity to incorporate advanced platforms including Next Generation Sequencing and other unbiased approaches to assess for evolutionarily-distinct viral clades (14). Assessing the likelihood of novel viruses to infect people or become pandemic remains a significant challenge. The EPT/PREDICT project (11) and others

(3, 4, 8) have developed zoonotic risk characterization frameworks based on viral and host traits and the ecological and demographic characteristics of the sampling site. These approaches will be used in the GVP to identify a predicted high-risk subsample of novel viruses for further characterization to assess their zoonotic capacity. *In vitro* receptor binding site analyses coupled with *in vivo* models have proven useful in this capacity for some viral families (e.g. coronaviruses (13)). While this is not yet feasible for all potentially zoonotic viral clades, applying these techniques to a significantly larger viral dataset as the GVP progresses may increase our capacity to predict zoonotic potential.

The cost of a decade-long GVP represents a significant investment and, even if a large number of potential zoonoses are discovered, only a minority of these is likely to have the potential to cause largescale outbreaks and mortality in people (2-4, 9). However, given the high cost of single epidemic events, this approach may still provide substantial return-on-investment. The cost of the GVP is dwarfed by estimates of the likely costs of an influenza pandemic (\$570 billion (15)) or of the SARS epidemic (\$10-30 billion; (1)), and is put into perspective by the \$5.4 billion Ebola virus response by the U.S. Government, and the around \$3.5 billion projected costs of Ebola recovery plans for West Africa in 2015-17 (16). The GVP should not be considered an alternative to current pandemic surveillance, prevention or control strategies, but rather a way to improve our efficiency in the face of increasing rates of novel zoonotic viral spillover (1, 2). If we were to invest funds only in surveillance for known pathogens (our current business-as-usual strategy), our calculations suggest we would only be protecting ourselves from less than 0.1% of the pool of viruses that could conceivably infect people, even using the lower bounds of

our uncertainty of viral estimates (i.e. 263 viruses known from humans out of 351,735 unknown potential zoonoses, 50M). More directly, recent economic analysis of the increasing rate of disease emergence, and their exponentially rising economic damages, suggests that large scale global strategies for pre-emptively dealing with the pandemic threat are urgently needed, and would provide a 10:1 return on investment, using prior World Bank analyses (1). To increase return-on-investment from the GVP, we propose further strategic targeting approaches to more rapidly produce public health benefits (50M): First, by optimizing sampling to target species and regions that are most likely to harbor the highest proportion of ‘missing zoonoses’ (8), or to target species otherwise more likely to become involved in spillover events due to ecological or sociological factors; Secondly, by initially sampling in emerging disease hotspot regions that are most likely to produce disease outbreaks of significance (2), or most likely to lead to spillover of emerging viruses from wildlife (17); Thirdly, by using syndromic surveillance in people to help identify regions for wildlife sampling that are proximal to sites where repeated outbreaks of severe influenza-like-illnesses and other unusual fevers-of-unknown origin, encephalitides, livestock abortion storms and other potential emerging disease events have been reported; Fourthly, by initially streamlining viral testing to target RNA viruses, which caused 94% of the zoonoses documented from 1990 to 2010 (3); and finally, economies of scale and technological innovation may further reduce costs as the GVP ramps up. These will include use of laboratories that can facilitate regional sample processing, development of centralized bioinformatics platforms, and improved logistics for sample collection and transport. We also expect the cost of testing and sequencing to reduce as technology is enhanced, much as the development of Next Generation Sequencing reduced sequencing costs by up to 4 orders of

magnitude in less than a decade. By this strategic targeting approach, and by routinely analyzing viral discovery curves to monitor progress, validate global viral estimates and halt sampling when discovery targets are reached (SOM), it may be possible to reduce the cost of the GVP substantially while covering an even higher proportion of global zoonotic risk.

The accelerated pace of viral discovery under the GVP could help transform the virological, phylogenetic and modeling approaches currently used in pandemic preparedness into a data-rich science, enabling a disruptive approach to developing risk analysis, interventions, and countermeasures to future threats. For example, having the sequence data for thousands, rather than a few, viruses from a single family could extend vaccine, therapeutic or drug efficacy to a wider range of targets and ultimately assist in the development of broad spectrum vaccines and other countermeasures. Proof-of-concept comes from USAID EPT/PREDICT fieldwork that discovered a large number of novel SARS-like coronaviruses in bats (13) . These were identified as potentially high risk for zoonotic emergence, and further characterization showed that some could bind to human cells using the same receptor as SARS, and that one produced SARS-like disease in humanized mice. However, a monoclonal therapeutic and a vaccine candidate effective against SARS-CoV was ineffective against this new coronavirus (SOM). Thus, identification of novel viruses may be useful to programs like the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI, cepi.net) in assessing the breadth of action of candidate vaccines and therapeutics, and in helping expand their efficacy. Big data will also enhance phylogenetic analysis of deep viral evolution and revision of viral taxonomy, as has recently been shown for insect viruses (14). These data may expand our capacity to assess the

zoonotic potential of novel viruses and advance our understanding of viral biology, such as what drives competition or cooperation among viruses within hosts, genomic underpinnings of host-virus coevolution, or processes underlying deep evolution of viral families and genera. The GVP will provide metadata on host identity, geography, seasonality, proximity to people, risk behaviors etc. to empirically test and ground truth theoretical models of viral spillover, emergence and spread that are currently based on analysis of published literature (2-4, 8). These ecological and human behavioral risk data will refine our mechanistic understanding of spillover and lead to novel mitigation strategies. For example, identification of novel potential zoonoses in hunted, traded, or farmed wildlife species could help enhance biosecurity in markets and farming systems, reducing public health risk and increasing food security. In other cases, data on populations with enhanced exposure to hosts harboring high-risk novel viruses may allow targeted follow-up to examine evidence of spillover (SOM). This may also provide benefits to conservation programs, as well as reducing the risk of spillover of known and unknown viruses. These broad-scale prevention approaches could provide return-on-investment prior to the process of developing vaccines or countermeasures, which would likely require a much longer time.

Finally, if the GVP is managed equitably and capacity built in the regions where diseases tend to emerge (highly biodiverse, rapidly developing countries around the tropics (2)), it will improve capacity to detect, diagnose and discover viruses in those regions most critical to preventing future pandemics. At the end of a GVP decade, the most vulnerable countries would have laboratories and trained personnel capable of early detection and characterization of viruses –

improving disease diagnosis and control for novel and endemic diseases, even for the portion of the virome that remains undiscovered.

The launch of the Human Genome Project in the 1980s catalyzed the development of new technologies that dramatically shortened the time and cost required for its completion, ultimately ushering in the era of personalized genomics and precision medicine. It is estimated that every U.S. federal dollar put into the human genome project resulted in a \$178 return on investment (18). The GVP will likely accelerate development of pathogen discovery technology, diagnostic tests, and science-based mitigation strategies with potentially higher returns-on-investment, given their more direct relevance to human health, and the accelerating costs of disease emergence. Like the Human Genome Project, this initiative will provide a wealth of publicly accessible data, leading to advances in global health that are currently hard to anticipate, such as the discovery of viruses that cause cancers and chronic physiological, mental health or behavioral disorders. It will also provide us with orders of magnitude more information about future key threats to global health and biosecurity, make us better able to identify populations with the greatest vulnerability to these threats, and allow us to target mitigation and control measures with unparalleled accuracy.

Acknowledgments: PD, NDW & JAKM are funded by USAID EPT/PREDICT. We acknowledge Simon J. Anthony, Cara J. Chrisman, Yasha Feferholtz, Tracey Goldstein, Christine K. Johnson, David Nabarro, Kevin J. Olival, Noam Ross, Ronald Waldman, Brooke Watson, Carlos Zambrana-Torrel, attendees of the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Bellagio Center Global Virome Project

Workshop August 2016 (<http://www.globalviromeproject.org/about/>), members of the GVP Core Group and Steering Committee, and co-leads of the GVP Working Groups for their help refining the concept and this manuscript.

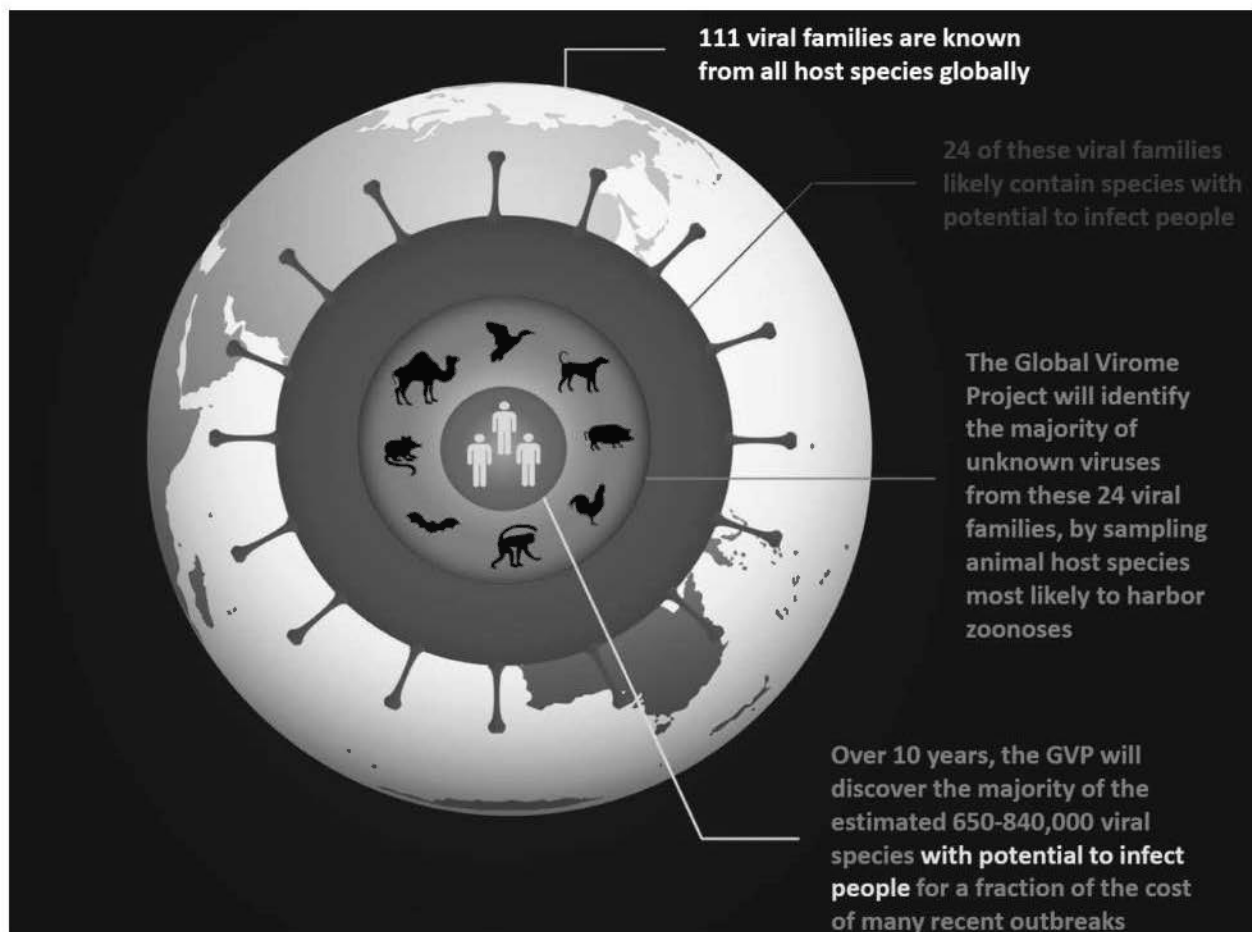


Fig. 1 (version 1). The Global Virome Project is a targeted program of viral discovery to identify the majority of currently-unknown viruses in wildlife with the potential to infect people. Of 111 known viral families, only 24 contain viruses known to infect (or to have substantial risk of infecting) people. We analyzed viral discovery curves in two repeatedly and intensively sampled

mammalian host species to estimate that there are around 1.6 million unknown viruses of these 24 viral families in mammals and birds (hosts that represent 99% of the risk for viral emergence). Based on ICTV data, we estimate that between 650,000 and 840,000 of these viruses would have the capacity to infect people. Targeting these wildlife host species and 24 viral families, and using field and laboratory expenditures for largescale novel viral detection, we estimate that the cost of a Global Virome Project to identify the substantial majority (70%) of these viruses would be around \$1.2 billion. A 10-year Global Virome Project would thus identify the vast majority of currently-unknown viruses of high potential consequence at a cost of around \$120 million per year. See Supplementary Online Material for calculations. Artwork by N. Randhawa.

GVP Targeting Strategy

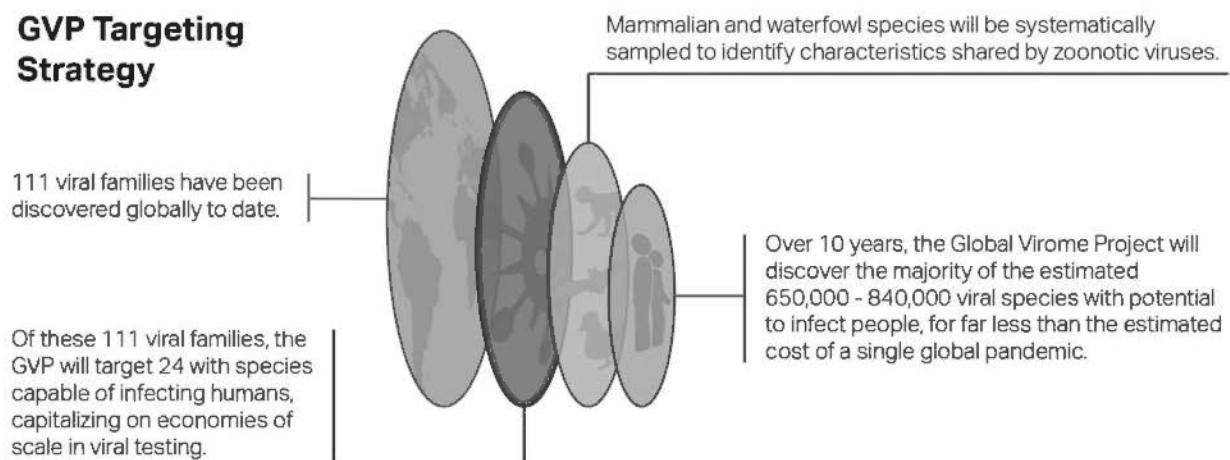


Fig. 1 (version 2). The Global Virome Project is a targeted program of viral discovery to identify the majority of currently-unknown viruses in wildlife with the potential to infect people. Of 111 known viral families (blue circle, left), only 24 contain viruses known to infect (or to have substantial risk of infecting) people (red circle). We analyzed viral discovery curves in two repeatedly and intensively sampled mammalian host species to estimate that there are around 1.6 million unknown viruses of these 24 viral families in mammals and birds - hosts that represent 99% of the risk for viral emergence (yellow circle). Based on ICTV data, we estimate that between 650,000 and 840,000 of these viruses would have the capacity to infect people (green circle, right). Targeting these wildlife host species and 24 viral families, and using field and laboratory expenditures for largescale novel viral detection, we estimate that the cost of a Global Virome Project to identify the substantial majority (70%) of all potentially zoonotic viruses, would be around \$1.2 billion. A 10-year Global Virome Project would thus identify the majority of currently-unknown viruses of high potential consequence at a cost of around \$120 million per year. See Supplementary Online Material for calculations. Artwork by J. Goley.

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From:	"Keshap, Atul" (b)(6)
To:	Fritz, Jonathan D (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)
Subject:	FW: REMARKS TO THE PRESS: Secretary Michael R. Pompeo-April 22, 2020
Date:	Wed, 22 Apr 2020 21:40:31 +0000

FYI (b)(5)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2020 5:36 PM
To: Keshap, Atul (b)(6)
Subject: RE: REMARKS TO THE PRESS: Secretary Michael R. Pompeo-April 22, 2020

(b)(6)

The Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

From: Keshap, Atul (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2020 5:29 PM
To: (b)(6) Fritz, Jonathan D (b)(6) (b)(6)
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Wow, the Boss came out swinging today! (b)(5)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

April 22, 2020

REMARKS TO THE PRESS

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo

**April 22, 2020
Press Briefing Room
Washington, D.C.**

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, good morning, everyone. Happy Ramadan to those of you in time zones where it's Thursday already.

I want to lead off with three commemorations.

First, we remember those slain in terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. That was one year ago yesterday.

Second, this week the administration honors the annual Holocaust Days of Remembrance. This is the 75th anniversary year of the liberation of many Nazi concentration camps where so many innocent people were murdered, including 6 million Jews. We bear witness to their stories so that such repugnant acts of evil will never happen again.

Third, it's Earth Day, and especially in light of Secretary-General Guterres' message released this morning to turn our recovery into a real opportunity to do the right thing, I want to remind everyone that the right way to achieve a greener, cleaner, brighter future for the world is to unleash private innovation and free market competition. It's what we've done here in the United States but continue to be our model, and we are a world leader in reducing all types of emission.

One simple data point: From 2005 to 2018, the most recent year we have data, U.S. emissions decreased by more than 10 percent even as our economy grew by 25 percent. China, conversely, has been the largest annual emitter since 2006 and it expects that its emissions will continue to grow until around 2030, thus offsetting the progress of countries all around the world in reducing global emissions. I would urge Secretary Guterres to make sure we have the data right, the facts right about who is actually delivering on the things that we all value. And on Earth Day, the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, I think that's especially important.

Turning to the World Health Organization, I want to spend a few minutes telling the American people a little bit more about the problems that we're trying to work our way through.

The WHO has two primary functions. First, it's a regulator and an advisory role, and a health emergency and humanitarian aid operation on top of that.

After the first SARS outbreak in 2003, the United States led the reform of the WHO, the WHO rules that govern how countries report on public health threats. So a major reform effort at 2003.

Those rules – they're called the International Health Regulations – went into effect in 2007.

We set very clear expectations. We – the world – set very clear expectations for how every country must disclose data to protect global health.

For example, Article 6 of the IHR says that “each State Party shall notify the World Health Organization...within 24 hours...of all events which may constitute a public health emergency of international concern within its territory...”

Annex 2 of those same rules provides that countries must notify the World Health Organization of any unusual or unexpected public health events such as SARS, a close genetic cousin of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Those rules also said how countries should evaluate when to notify the WHO of diseases of unknown causes or sources.

We strongly believe that the Chinese Communist Party did not report the outbreak of the new coronavirus in a timely fashion to the World Health Organization.

Article 6 of the IHRs, which was a part of this reform, further mandates that a State Party – that would include China – “shall continue to communicate to WHO timely, accurate and sufficiently detailed public health information...” That is, there’s an ongoing obligation.

Even after the CCP did notify the WHO of the coronavirus outbreak, China didn’t share all of the information it had.

Instead, it covered up how dangerous the disease is. It didn’t report sustained human-to-human transmission for a month until it was in every province inside of China. It censored those who tried to warn the world, it ordered a halt to testing of new samples, and it destroyed existing samples.

The CCP still has not shared the virus sample from inside of China with the outside world, making it impossible to track the disease’s evolution.

Not making a legal determination here today on China’s adherence to the IHRs, but the World Health Organization’s regulatory arm clearly failed during this pandemic.

I’d also note that when countries adopted these new rules in 2007, we also gave the director-general of the WHO encouragement and the ability to go public when a member-country wasn’t following those rules, and that didn’t happen in this case either.

It’s why we continue to insist this is an ongoing requirement for transparency and openness according to the WHO rules, and the WHO has responsibility to continue to enforce them today. This transparency and getting it right is critical to saving lives today and in the future.

I’ll talk for just a minute about humanitarian aid. The United States is the most generous nation on the planet, has been for the past three years, will continue to be this year.

Thanks to the American taxpayers, we’ve dedicated more than \$140 billion in global funding for global health purposes in the past two decades.

Today I can confirm the United States is making an additional commitment of about 270 million to assist the most at-risk countries in fighting the virus, bringing our total to more than \$775 million to date.

We do this in lots of ways. We do this through multilateral organizations. We help our partners by sharing expertise. Today the CDC has officers stationed in 59 countries and has helped train thousands of epidemiologists worldwide over the years whose knowledge is providing incredibly valuable.

You should know it helps those countries, it saves lives in those countries, but this is a global pandemic and that work protects us right here at home in America as well.

Weeks before the first reported COVID case arrived in Guatemala, USAID helped the Ministry of Health there equip a key hospital to start caring for its first patients.

And the United States is training more than 70,000 pharmacists across Indonesia today so they can provide good advice and referrals.

American generosity isn't limited to our assistance that comes directly from the United States Government. Our businesses, our NGOs, charities, all faith groups – this is an all-of-America approach to saving lives all across the world and protecting us right here at home as well.

We estimate that the American people, in cume, have given nearly \$3 billion in donations and assistance just to fight this particular virus.

America's global health commitments remain as steady as ever.

Move on to a couple final points. I want to highlight two ways in which the Chinese Communist Party is exploiting the world's focus on COVID-19 crisis by continuing its provocative behavior.

First, we commented on what's taking place in Hong Kong, where amidst increased efforts by Beijing to erode autonomy, law enforcement authorities have arrested pro-democracy activists, including 81-year-old Martin Lee. We've always said that China has an obligation to live up to its promises, its obligation – as I was speaking about the virus earlier – to live up to the rules that it put in place and it signed off on. We'd ask them to continue to do that here.

You've also seen that the Chinese Communist Party is exerting military pressure on Taiwan and coercing its neighbors in the South China Sea, even going so far as to have – so far as to sink a Vietnamese fishing vessel.

The United States strongly opposes China's bullying; we hope other nations will hold them to account, too. Tonight I'll be on a phone call cochaired by myself and my Laotian counterpart with every ASEAN member.

I want to note, too, that we are now well along in developing the implementing policies required by the law in the NDAA of 2019 prohibiting use of Huawei and other untrusted vendors in U.S. facilities.

Data that come into U.S. facilities will have to follow a Clean Path and reside and transit only through trusted systems. And we'll provide full details on that before too long.

On Venezuela, as I've commented frequently from this podium, we're continuing to apply pressure on the Maduro regime, all the while seeking to provide humanitarian assistance for the Venezuelan people.

As announced by the Department of Treasury yesterday, the general license which allowed certain companies to maintain operations – Venezuela, PDVSA – expires today.

The Treasury Department has announced a new, narrowly limited license for seven months which will allow companies that are operating there to begin their wind-down process.

And with that, I'm happy to take questions.

MS ORTAGUS: Okay, great. Nick.

QUESTION: Thank you, Morgan. Thanks, Mr. Secretary, for doing this. Let me try Iran and China, if you don't mind. The IRGC today said that it launched a military satellite into orbit for the first time. Could that technology be used for ICBMs? And we've seen from Iran expanded nuclear capacity, Iraqi militia rocket attacks, harassing of a Navy ship in recent days. After the Soleimani strike, there was talk of reestablishing deterrence. Do you fear the deterrence has slipped?

And on China, there are millions of PPE items stuck in China despite the fact they've been bought by U.S. companies. Do you believe the PPE is stuck because of red tape, China trying to make sure the quality is high, or because China is actually hoarding them and keeping them from the U.S.? Thanks.

SECRETARY POMPEO: As for your second question, I'll leave to the Vice President's task force to talk about those goods and their transit. The good news is we have seen China provide those resources. Sometimes they're from U.S. companies that are there in China, but we've had success. The Vice President and his team have talked about the air bridge that has delivered products to the American people from China, and we appreciate that. We are counting on China to continue to live up to its contractual obligations and international obligations to provide that assistance to us and to sell us those goods – often these are commercial transactions – in a way consistent with all of the international trade rules.

As for Iran, you noted the launch last night. The Iranians have consistently said that these missile programs were disconnected from their military, that these were purely commercial enterprises. I think today's launch proves what we've been saying all along here in the United States: The IRGC, a designated terrorist organization, launched a missile today. And I'll leave to the Department of Defense to talk about the details about that. But when you talk about the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, I think every nation has an obligation to go to the United Nations and evaluate whether this missile launch was consistent with that Security Council resolution. I don't think it remotely is, and I need – I think Iran needs to be held accountable for what they've done. They've now had a military organization that the United States has designated terrorists attempt to launch a satellite.

You talked about the naval ships. You saw the President's statement this morning. The President's been very clear to the Department of Defense and frankly to the State Department team too to do everything we need to do to make sure that we protect and defend our officers, our military officers, our diplomats around the world, to continue to ensure that they are secure and safe. What he said this morning and what I know he's told all of us in leadership inside the government is take whatever action is necessary to make sure that you can defend and keep our people safe. I'm confident that the Department of Defense will do that in response to what the President said this morning as well.

And then finally, you talked more broadly about deterrence. Two thoughts. First: The Iranian regime has gone around the world spreading disinformation in response to this virus. One of the things they've said is that, boy, we need resources in order to take care of the virus at home. And all the while they are launching satellites, driving ships around the Arabian Gulf, coming and harassing U.S. naval vessels. They continue to underwrite Shia militias, they're working to support Hizballah. Yesterday my Iranian counterpart – or the day before – was in Syria talking to the butcher in Damascus.

I hope that the Iranian regime will respond to the Iranian people's demands to prioritize resources, resources that the Iranian regime clearly has, to the health and security and safety of the Iranian people, rather than continuing their global terror campaign. You can see they're still hard at it. You can see they still have resources. You should note, we, the – at the very first news that the COVID virus had hit Iran, offered humanitarian assistance to the people of Iran. That offer was rejected. That offer still stands. We've assisted other countries in delivering humanitarian assistance to the Iranian people. I only wish that the Iranian regime cared about its people as much as the rest of the world has demonstrated that it does.

MS ORTAGUS: Barbara.

QUESTION: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, we're hearing that there is panic buying in North Korea at the moment. I was wondering if you have any reading about what's going on there. And given the reports that Kim Jong-un is in very poor health, has the U.S. tried to reach out to Pyongyang for any information, and what was the response?

And then a broader question on China, if I may. How would you say that the Chinese behavior – this disinformation that you are talking about – what effect do you think that has on a long-term relationship with the U.S.? Do you think it will damage it significantly?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Barbara, thanks. I don't have anything to add on North Korea. As the President said last evening I think it was, we're watching closely what's taking place there. But I don't have anything to add.

As for China, nations that desire to be part of the global landscape have obligations for truthful information – they have obligations to share and be transparent and open. That's our expectation for every country. What I think – I think you were referring to was you called it disinformation. Seeking to transfer responsibility or to deny access to the world so that the world can figure out what's going on – you have to remember, these labs are still open inside of China, these labs that contain complex pathogens that were being studied. It's not just the Wuhan Institute of

Virology. There are multiple labs inside of China that are handling these things. It's important that those materials are being handled in a safe and secure way such that there isn't accidental release.

We have an elaborate regime inside the United States to do that. Many countries do it as well. We have lots of regimes where – I'll give you an example in the nuclear context, where the world inspects sites so that we can ensure that there's proper handling. The United States spends a lot of money training others to help them handle nuclear materials in an appropriate way. We have to make sure that the Chinese Government is handling those materials in an appropriate way not only in the Wuhan Institute of Virology but elsewhere. So this is an ongoing obligation that the Chinese Government has as well as an ongoing obligation of the World Health Organization that has responsibility for compliance with the rules.

I hope I didn't bore you with them, but they're important to understand that there are a set of global regulations that the Chinese Communist Party signed up for. These aren't American rules we apply, these are rules that the Chinese Government signed up for, and the World Health Organization has a continuing obligation – not just one from back in December but a continuing obligation to make sure that those rules are being complied with today in a way that protects us not only from the ongoing pandemic but a future one as well.

MS ORTAGUS: Michel.

QUESTION: Thank you so much. Mr. Secretary --

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: -- first, have you delivered the President's warning to Iran directly? And second, do you – are you concerned that the oil price will have an effect on the security and stability of the Gulf states and your partners in the region?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I never comment on communications, internal communications between myself and private – between myself and my counterparts. So I don't have any comment on your first question.

On your second one, the President has been incredibly focused on trying to create a more stable energy market in light of the enormous decrease in demand, right. You've seen crude oil demand fall somewhere between 20 and 35 percent over the past several weeks, and you've seen the price impacts that have resulted from that, right. You had the front futures contract trading for negative \$37 for a few hours a couple days back now. What the President did a couple of weekends ago and the work that he's engaged in today are twofold: one, to do everything we can to ensure that we preserve America's capacity to deliver on its energy resources here; and second, to work to try and create stability in the energy markets so that you get price signals that are consistent with real demand, and that also means getting the global economy cranked back up again. A key element that will have the most significant impact on those price issues, on those supply chain issues in the energy industry is getting the world back going and getting demand back to the levels we had back in October, November, and December of 2019.

Here in the United States we had one of the most robust economies that the United States has ever had. When we get back to those levels and the world gets back to those levels, those governments that depend for a significant amount of their revenue – for their national GDP on oil will be in a better place than they are today. There's real risk. With low prices and low volumes of demand, those countries are really going to face financial challenges, and we've been in conversation with many of them about how we can bridge that gap collectively.

MS ORTAGUS: Rich.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary --

SECRETARY POMPEO: Rich, how are you?

QUESTION: Good, how are you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm good.

QUESTION: Given its failure to notify the WHO in a timely manner, do you think that the Chinese Government owes countries or individuals compensation? And also, just as you'd spoken about the multiple labs within China, what's your assessment of China's handling of these dangerous materials? Do you think that they do a sufficient enough job of it?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I'm going to leave the accountability piece of this for another day in terms of what we do to assign accountability and how we hold other nations accountable, other than to say is that the rules set – the WHO rules set itself contemplates nations complying with their obligations, and it gives the director general of the WHO enormous authority with respect to nations that do not comply, and we expect every country who signs up for the International Health Regulations and the leadership of the WHO to then enforce them. And so we're counting on that. We're now counting on that not only retrospectively, but that that continue today.

What's the second question, Rich?

QUESTION: You mentioned multiple labs within China.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. I'm not going to comment on that. What I will say is it's always easier to know the answer to your question about whether these labs are in compliance not only with the regulations but if they're handling this material in a way that is adequate, safe, and secure, if the world can have access to those places, if they will share that information openly and transparently and in spite – the President said this – we tried to get in to take a look at what was going on early on in this, to come in alongside the World Health Organization early on; it would have been back in January if I remember correctly. We still do not have a sample of the virus nor has the world had access to the facilities or other locations where this virus may have originated inside of Wuhan.

MS ORTAGUS: Said.

QUESTION: Thank you, Morgan. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Sir, a new Israeli Government was formed, a unity government between Mr. Netanyahu and General Gantz, and they vowed to begin annexing parts of the West Bank on the 1st of July. I wonder if you would have a comment on that.

Also on the aid you released recently, you released \$5 million to the Palestinian Authority to fight COVID-19. Are they – they need a lot more. So will there be any more aid in the pipeline? Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Two good questions. On the first one – on the second one, we are happy to provide that \$5 million of assistance^[1], and we hope that it'll get to the right place. Our concern with having provided assistance, the reason we stopped providing assistance previously was that this – these resources weren't getting to the place they needed to, to the Palestinian people. We hope that this money, this \$5 million will get where it needs to go to provide real assistance to the Palestinian people who, to your point and I agree with, are going to need a lot of help as they move through this. We'll evaluate whether this \$5 million both worked, delivered, and second, if there's more resources that are both either appropriate or can be delivered in a way that actually gets to the Palestinian people.

Your first question was about the election.

QUESTION: The government.

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're happy with the – a new government's formed. A fourth election, we think, wouldn't have been in Israel's best interest, but we'll leave that to them. We think it's not in the world's best interest. We're glad that there is a now fully formed government in Israel.

As for the annexation in the West Bank, the Israelis will ultimately make those decisions. Those are – that's an Israeli decision, and we will work closely with them to share with them our views of this in a private setting.

MS ORTAGUS: I need to get the Secretary to his next meeting, but we still have two special guests to continue this briefing so --

SECRETARY POMPEO: Great. Thank you all. Thanks for being with me. Everybody have a good morning.

MS ORTAGUS: Okay. So we're going to have John Barsa first, and then Jim Richardson, and then we'll go right to Q&A again. So, John.

MR BARS: Good morning. Thank you for having us here today. For those of you who I have not yet met, my name is John Barsa. I am the new acting administrator at USAID, and I'm deeply honored to have been chosen for this position. I would like to thank President Trump for the support and confidence he's placed in me with this charge. I look forward to working with him, Vice President Pence, Secretary Pompeo, and other leaders throughout the interagency as we lead one of the finest workforces in the U.S. Government today.

We are here to discuss how the United States continues to demonstrate global leadership and help countries around the world fight the COVID-19 pandemic. With the \$2.7 billion in emergency supplemental funding Congress has provided, USAID is working with the State Department and the CDC to provide assistance that strengthens health systems, meets emergency humanitarian needs, and mitigates the economic impact of the virus's spread.

With the Secretary's announcement today, we have contributed a total of more than \$775 million across more than 100 countries facing the threat of this global pandemic. Here's a little bit more detail for you on the specific pots of money that this announcement encompasses. It includes nearly \$103 million from the Economic Support Fund account, which nongovernmental organizations will use to implement a variety of interventions to support communities and countries. We'll also be committing \$100 million in humanitarian assistance from USAID's International Disaster Assistance Account to help meet urgent, lifesaving needs in crisis-affected areas, and \$667[2] million in migration and refugee assistance to support displaced populations, which remain the most vulnerable populations to this pandemic.

In every corner of the globe, the United States is lending a helping hand to countries that need it the most. Many of these countries are places where we regularly provide assistance. Our expanded presence in other countries demonstrate the extraordinary nature of this crisis.

For example, on April 11th the United States, through USAID, committed critically needed assistance to Italy to mitigate the overwhelming disruption the pandemic has had on the delivery of health care in communities and to help stabilize the country's economic situation. This assistance will help improve Italian citizens' access to essential health care during the current pandemic and support Italy's recovery.

In this latest round of funding, State and USAID will provide COVID-19 assistance to some countries for the first time since the outbreak began. These countries include Algeria, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Bulgaria, the Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Ecuador, Eswatini, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Jordan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Montenegro, Morocco, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Lesotho, Liberia, Panama, Namibia, Niger, Romania, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Uganda, the West Bank, and Yemen.

MS ORTAGUS: Well done.

MR BARSA: It was a quick list. Now, did you all memorize it? (Laughter.) As you know, we work through international organizations and NGOs in many of these countries to reach people in need, and as you can see from the list of countries I mentioned, the kind of places where we are responding is, of course, varied. To make sure our assistance is as impactful as possible, the support we provide is tailored to each country's capacity and needs. Our toolkit of support includes investments that improve case management, disease surveillance, and public health screening. It strengthens infection prevention and control of medical facilities, bolsters laboratory capacity, scale of communications campaigns to raise awareness, expand access to water and sanitation, and more.

America remains the leader in global health and humanitarian assistance. Through unmatched generosity, the American people have saved countless lives, protected those people who are most

vulnerable to disease, built health infrastructure, and promoted the stability of communities and nations. America has always led the world through times of strife, turmoil, and uncertainty, and this pandemic is no different.

Lastly, I want to highlight President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Secretary Pompeo for their extraordinary leadership on the world stage throughout this crisis. This all-star team and the rest of the Trump administration is working around the clock to stem the spread of virus at home and abroad, and they deserve our recognition. So thank you very much.

MS ORTAGUS: Jim.

MR RICHARDSON: Thank you, Morgan. I'm Jim Richardson, and I'm the director of foreign assistance here at the Department of State. First of all, I want to acknowledge the leadership, as John just did, of the President and the Vice President and of the Secretary, and really our talented teams both at State and USAID around the world, as we work together to defeat COVID-19. To put it simply, pandemics like COVID-19 do not respect national borders, and so that our response, our USG response, can't either.

Through decades of U.S. global leadership in health and humanitarian assistance, we know that the smart and strategic investments are critical to our primary mission of maintaining the health and safety of the American people. We can and must actually fight the pandemic both here and overseas. It's not a zero-sum game; it actually builds on each other.

Through the American people's generosity, the State Department of the United States continues to demonstrate global leadership in the face of this pandemic. In fact – this fact is underscored by what the Secretary just announced of an additional \$270 million for humanitarian and economic security assistance, bringing our total to 775 million spread over 100 countries worldwide, nearly all of them John just mentioned. So we'll implement this funding around – through a strategic, all-of-America approach to ensure that this world is safe from infectious diseases, both today and also in the future.

When it comes to our investments thus far, let me address a couple hot-button topics that I'm sure you will ask me about. First of all, let's talk about Italy. We've provided \$50 million in economic support to Italy, one of our closest allies and friends who has been at the forefront of the fight against COVID. These funds will help support the recovery of the Italian economy, they – and support international organizations and NGOs, including many faith-based organizations, many of which are already on the ground saving lives.

Second, the United States is also providing \$5 million to the Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza to battle the pandemic. The United States welcomes the ongoing cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to address the COVID-19 crisis and Israel's facilitation of goods and equipment to the West Bank and Gaza in support of this effort.

Third, I want to talk about the Northern Triangle – El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras. We're providing \$7 million to help address this outbreak. This comes on top of what the President and the Secretary have announced of \$258 million in targeted foreign assistance for these three – for these three countries. These funds will benefit both the United States and our important allies. By targeting economic assistance to regions with high outflow migration, we can help keep

people at their – at home while supporting and deterring illegal immigration to the United States.

As you're aware, well aware, the United States – or last week the President announced that we are pausing for the next 60 to 90 days funding for the World Health Organization while we examine the failures to the response. First and foremost, this pause will not impact our commitment to fight COVID around the world. We are focused on outcomes, and as such we are working with other partners around the world, including community and faith-based organizations, to get the job done.

To put it in perspective, as the Secretary, I believe, mentioned, the WHO only receives about 4 percent of U.S. global assistance – global health assistance every year. There are plenty of amazing and highly qualified organizations implementing these programs around the world, and to be honest, no organization – or country for that matter – is owed a single nickel from the American people. We provide assistance out of generosity and U.S. national interest. At the very least, the American people should demand that every organization we fund – every NGO, every contractor, and every multilateral – is transparent, accountable, and results-oriented, and that's what this President's review will do.

To the – at the end of the day this should be about saving lives, not about saving a bureaucracy. For more than half a century, the United States has been the largest contributor to global health security. We have built the foundations upon which the global health system is based, contributing over \$140 billion in this century alone. In the face of COVID-19, our global leadership will continue and is once again underscored by what the Secretary has announced. And with that, we'll be available for questions.

MS ORTAGUS: Okay. Let's – you haven't asked one yet, right? Okay, go ahead. And CBS, if you have one, I think you, too, haven't gone yet, right? Okay.

QUESTION: Okay, so I don't know who this goes to, but I'll throw the question out and you guys can decide. So with regard to the pause on the World Health Organization funding, what will determine if they get that funding or not, and who is actually leading the review of that funding right now?

MR RICHARDSON: Go ahead, John.

MR BARSÁ: In terms of what the President said – so it's a 60- to 90-day pause. I think there are multiple elements within government who will be looking at the review. I'm not going to – we have nothing to announce today in terms of the internal review processes, how it's going to work out. Know that others who interact with World Health Organization are contributing to the review process.

QUESTION: Okay, but what is the review looking for? What does the World Health Organization have to do in order to secure its funding?

MR BARSÁ: As the President stated, and the Secretary stated this morning, there's numerous questions in terms of the management of the World Health Organization, how they have been

operating and holding member states accountable in their actions. So the review is going to be all-encompassing, getting to all manners of management and operation questions.

QUESTION: And one thing that the Secretary said was that the World Health Organization has not highlighted the fact that the CCP didn't reveal what it knew about the coronavirus pandemic when it knew it. If the WHO does that, is that something that you guys are looking for?

MR BARSAS: I'm not going to comment on any interim findings or discussions. I just -- I'll have to say we'll have to wait till the final review is done.

MS ORTAGUS: You want to add anything?

MR RICHARDSON: Nope, sounds good.

MS ORTAGUS: No? Okay. CBS.

QUESTION: I had a question about the cooperation with vaccine development.

MS ORTAGUS: Okay.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR RICHARDSON: It's probably --

MR BARSAS: Vaccine development. Go on.

MS ORTAGUS: Go ahead, ask your question.

QUESTION: Considering that several countries are working on a vaccination, and given that the funding has been halted to WHO, does that mean this will affect at all cooperation between WHO countries on sharing information about a vaccine, depending on who comes up with one first? Or will the U.S. step in to help facilitate cooperation on a vaccination?

MR BARSAS: Okay. Couple things to think about. First, let's talk a little bit about scale. As the Secretary and Jim mentioned, over the last two decades the United States has contributed over \$140 billion dollars in health work. In 2018, the last year that I actually have actual figures, it needs to be noted that only 4 percent of U.S. funds went to the World Health Organization. Ninety-six percent of our funds went to other organizations. So during this pause, what USAID and other entities are doing -- we're looking for alternate partners to carry out the important work. So be it vaccines, polio, or any number of health issues, by no means are we pausing our efforts to eradicate polio or come up with vaccines. We're going with existing programs outside of the World Health Organization, and we're looking for different partners.

MS ORTAGUS: Robin.

QUESTION: Just some clarification on that. So first of all, you are -- I was wondering if there might be a carveout for certain WHO programs like polio, but you're saying no, there isn't,

you're going to find somebody else to do the polio – or to do those programs that you're committed to?

And then I just have a few other questions as well, if – do you want to answer that one first?

MR BARSА: Okay, so I'll start with that one. So even before the onset of this pandemic, USAID was working, piloting a new partnership initiative to look for other regional community-based partners outside of the normal menu of people we work with. I look forward to next week expanding the new partnership initiative in a more formal manner, but what we're doing right now is we're looking for different partners right now in terms of – working polio or any number of health issues, are there other entities, local community-based entities, faith-based organizations, are there other groups that can continue on this work. So part of the assessment that is taking place during this 60-to-90-day pause is to evaluate the availability of new partners to carry out this work.

So know that the questions you ask in terms of are there other partners for whatever program of interest, that's part of the assessment. So we're evaluating that now. I have people in our missions and our Global Health Bureau. We're looking for new partners right now. It's good government.

QUESTION: And just to --

MS ORTAGUS: I want to get to everybody, (inaudible).

QUESTION: Just a quick – one quick follow-up.

MS ORTAGUS: Okay, one more (inaudible).

QUESTION: There's a fair bit of U.S. expertise at the WHO, so you've had health experts there – you still have health experts there. Is that cooperation going to be cut off as well? Are you sort of cutting off the WHO not just in terms of funds, but also in coordination and cooperation?

MR BARSА: So part of your question is getting at to the end point of an assessment. We cannot tell you what decision is going to be made at the end of the assessment. During this assessment that the President announced, 60 to 90 days, we're going to look at all aspects of operations in World Health Organizations. So some of the questions you pose are the questions we ourselves are going to be asking in terms of capabilities during this pause period.

MS ORTAGUS: (Inaudible.)

MR RICHARDSON: Yeah, let me just – so the way I would say it is that the pause is about new decisions to provide assistance through the WHO. There is a lot of existing contracts that we've already essentially sent the check to pay for individuals, and we're not asking for refunds at this point. In terms of exemptions or those types of things, the President said we're pausing all assistance for 60 to 90 days. If the President has a subsequent announcement, we'll leave that to him to make that about target assistance.

MS ORTAGUS: Nick, go ahead.

QUESTION: So on the partners, just to be clear, as you examine the partners, are you taking the money that would have been going to the WHO over the next two to three months and plan to transfer them, transfer that funds to partners? Or are you withholding the money so that you possibly could still give it to the WHO depending on reforms? And if I could zoom in on IHRs, let me ask – let me have you answer that first and then we --

MR BARSA: Okay. So as the Secretary stated, in the aggregate, we have committed over \$775 million just on the pandemic alone. So when we're looking for new partners, we're looking for partners who can execute the funds in these countries for their specific needs. So it can't be a cookie cutter approach. So a solution for a challenge in one country is not the same as a solution in another country. So we're looking at ways to address the challenges individually with the funds that are being announced.

QUESTION: Right, but does that mean that the money that would have gone to the WHO will instead go to partners? Or is the money for the WHO being held back and possibly could still go to the WHO in the future?

MR BARSA: It – again, it's a pause in new funding. As Director Richardson announced, money that has been given to WHO already is not being taken back, so some of those contracts and existing work is continuing.

QUESTION: Okay. And then on the international --

MS ORTAGUS: Do you have anything to – (inaudible).

MR RICHARDSON: Yeah, let me just – yeah, so at the end of the day, this pandemic can't wait for the review. So our assistance to countries around the world is going to move forward. We will absolutely use the best – every time that we make a decision to provide assistance to any country around the world, we have to make a choice: Do we use a multilateral organization? Do we use an NGO? Do we use a faith-based organization? Do we use a contractor? And that's really what the expertise of USAID does, to – looks at the whole what – how are we going to get the best results in this circumstance.

And so for every contract or every dollar flowing today, we're just taking WHO off the table and we're going to provide that assistance to these other organizations in order to get the job done. Our system simply can't wait. That said, we're going to have a lot of global health resources in response to this pandemic over the coming years. Congress has already provided an additional \$2 billion, and so we'll look forward to continuing to make more announcements about funding over the next several months.

QUESTION: And then quickly on the IHRs, on the International Health Regulations, as I understand them, there is no real enforcement mechanism. I know the Secretary talked specifically about the leadership being able to enforce them, but is one of the reforms that you're asking for to increase the enforcement mechanism, or do you believe that enforcement mechanism is already there, and therefore this is a true failure not of regulation, but of the leadership?

MR BARSА: Well, again, we'll have to get back to you with the details on that. Again, so we're – I'm not going to prejudge the outcome of any assessment.

MS ORTAGUS: Said, go ahead.

QUESTION: A quick question.

MS ORTAGUS: Sure.

QUESTION: Is the money dispensed to the West Bank and to the hospitals – does it go directly there? Because I think USAID is not operating in the West Bank anymore.

MR RICHARDSON: No, so we mostly – we use implementing partners around the world. As I said, we use contractors, NGOs, multilateral organizations to actually be our hands and feet in most places around the world. So we'll be announcing the actual implementing partner here in the next couple days.

MS ORTAGUS: Anybody else? Rich?

QUESTION: Just following up on what the Secretary had to say about the – and a bit what Nick was talking about – the director general of WHO has an enormous power available to him to enforce those who violate regulations. What is available to him?

MR BARSА: Well, as the Secretary stated, there are certain mechanisms which oblige member-states to comply with agreements beforehand. So part of our review is to see what authorities did WHO leadership have. Did they execute the authorities and keep compliance? So the question you're asking gets exactly to the heart of what our review – is the management of the World Health Organization running it the way it should be run?

MS ORTAGUS: And just to follow up on both of your and Nick questions, I think the best thing for us to do is to get a briefing probably with Ambassador Bremberg or someone from IO, so we'll get that – I know you were wanting that, Nick, so we'll go ahead and get that scheduled, and I think we could through a little bit more detail through Andrew or through IO. Okay?

QUESTION: Can I ask John one more question?

MS ORTAGUS: Sure. Then we've got to – I just blew off my next meeting, so go ahead.

QUESTION: So – thank you. So you talk about a lot more work that USAID is going to have to do to identify new partners. So how – do you have the capacity to do that? Has USAID had to hire new people? What does your team look like?

MR BARSА: No, again, so before the onset of the pandemic, we already knew good government was to diversify the base of implementing partners that we're working with. So under the leadership of Mark Green, who was administrator at the time, we started a pilot program called the New Partnership Initiative. So we started out in 14 missions. So we already knew the good government solution was to not depend on just a few implementers and partners, so what we are doing is that we've been already working with our workforce. We've gotten to

pilot – the pilot program has been very successful, so next week I’ll be signing an order expanding that pilot to all of our missions worldwide. This is something that was going to occur regardless of the pandemic.

So with the pandemic coming on here, we’re already starting to work with new partners. That does not necessitate new contracting staff either in DC or the missions, but what we’ve been doing is providing guidance to our contracting staff to look and consider other partners. Are there other NGOs, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations which are localized in the country that have more permanence? So this was going to go on regardless of the implementing – regardless of the onset of the pandemic, so we’re just fortunate that we’ve already been thinking along these lines and are able to execute now without any additional investment in staff or personnel.

MS ORTAGUS: Thanks so much, guys. Don’t forget about the 1:00 p.m. with Brownlee, the repatriation briefing.

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[1] USAID is providing \$5 million from International Disaster Assistance funds to an implementer for COVID-19 response in the West Bank. These funds are not being provided to the Palestinian Authority.

[2] USAID is providing \$67 million in migration and refugee assistance to support displaced populations.

Sender:	"Keshap, Atul"	(b)(6)
	Fritz, Jonathan D	(b)(6)
Recipient:	(b)(6)	
	(b)(6)	