



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 27, 2025

Case No. FL-2022-00062

Mr. Gary Ruskin
U.S. Right to Know
4096 Piedmont Avenue, #963
Oakland, CA 94611

Dear Mr. Ruskin:

As we noted in our letter dated May 16, 2025, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State ("Department") has identified one additional responsive record subject to the FOIA. Upon review, we have determined this one record may be released in part.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on the record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing this record and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Assistant United States Attorney Stephanie Johnson at stephanie.johnson5@usdoj.gov or (202) 252-7874. Please refer to the case number, FL-2022-00062, and the civil action number, 22-cv-01130, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Avery Bullard".

Avery Bullard
Supervisory Government Information Specialist
Litigation and Appeals Office

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From:	"Asher, David" (b)(6)@state.gov>
To:	(b)(6)@stanford.edu (b)(6)@stanford.edu>
CC:	DiNanno, Thomas G (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject:	Taiwan News Wuhan lab infected 'humanized mice' with bat coronaviruses in 2019 _ Taiwan News _ 2021_01_11.pdf
Date:	Tue, 12 Jan 2021 03:52:38 +0000

Professor Relman,

Thanks for your time and interest as well as the intro to Dr. Baric. Much appreciated and very insightful.

See attached article that I just happened upon. We appreciate your analysis of the significance of the information, if accurate.

Best regards,

David Asher

Sender:	"Asher, David" (b)(6)@state.gov>
Recipient:	(b)(6) DiNanno, Thomas G (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; Feith, David (b)(6)@state.gov>



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Wuhan lab infected 'humanized mice' with bat coronaviruses in 2019

Did experiments with new bat viruses in transgenic mice lead to COVID-19 pandemic?

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By Keoni Everington, Taiwan News, Staff Writer

2021/01/11 10:39



Shi Zhengli inside WIV laboratory. (gettyimages)

TAIPEI (Taiwan News) — The revelation that a researcher at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) had been infecting "humanized mice" with new bat SARS coronaviruses in 2019 raises the question of whether an accident during these experiments led to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday (Jan. 8), a researcher who goes by the pseudonym Billy Bostickson and his colleagues at DRASTIC (Decentralized Radical Autonomous Search Team Investigating Covid-19) posted a Twitter thread demanding answers about a state-funded project at the WIV in 2019 that involved infecting

transgenic mice with bat coronaviruses. The scientist who headed this project is assistant researcher Hu Ben (胡犇), according to the National Natural Science Foundation of China.

The director of the Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases at WIV, Shi Zhengli (石正麗), also known as "Bat Woman," since 2007 has been researching how spike proteins in natural and chimeric SARS-like coronaviruses bind to the ACE2 receptors in the cells of humans, bats, and other animals. That year, she created a number of chimeras by inserting different segments of the SARS-CoV S spike protein into that of a bat virus (SL-CoV S) which was used as a backbone.

	<p>Assistant Researcher Hu Ben Born in October 1985, from Wuhan, Hubei, PhD; In 2007, Huazhong Agricultural University, animal medical professional, graduate; 2010 Love Agricultural University, specializing in Preventive Veterinary Medicine, Master degree; 2015 years 7 Yue Wuhan Institute of Virology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Microbiology, Ph.D.; August 2015 - So far, assistant researcher of the newly issued virus subject group of Wuhan Institute of Virology, Chinese Academy of Sciences; Email: huben@wh.iov.cn</p>
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Hu Ben. (preintell.cn screenshot)

The conclusion of Shi's team was that a minimal insert region (amino acids 310 to 518) was enough to "convert the SL-CoV S from non-ACE2 binding to human ACE2 binding." In other words, as far back as 2007, the lab had discovered how to convert a virus that only infected bats into one that could infect humans.

In 2014, Shi, Hu, and other WIV scientists began taking part in gain of function (GoF) experiments with Ralph S. Baric of the University of North Carolina. In October of that year, Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, called for funding of such projects to be halted out of concern for their danger, but the GoF projects continued at the WIV.

By 2017, the WIV published a paper in which it reported eight chimeric viruses that it had created from transplanted receptor-binding domains from SARS-like bat viruses collected over the course of five years from a cave in Yunnan. "Using reverse genetics technique[s] developed for WIV1 we constructed infectious bacterial artificial chromosome (BAC) clones with WIV1 backbone & variants of S genes from 8 different bat SARSr-CoVs," wrote the researchers.



WIV team, Shi Zhengli (center). (Weixin photo)

After the WIV experimented with Vero E6 cells, they used transgenic "humanized mice" from Baric's lab, meaning the rodents had been genetically modified to express the human ACE2 protein. In 2019, just before the known start of the pandemic, Hu began his work on a project titled "Pathogenicity of 2 new bat SARS-related covs to transgenic mice expressing human ACE2."

According to Bostickson, "This research involved 'novel' bat coronaviruses inoculated into immuno-suppressed mice with humanised features, such as hACE2, and possibly humanised lungs, bone marrow, etc..." He added that "Such experiments were a recipe for disaster, as we know."

No information about this research has been released to the public since the start of the pandemic, including data on the eight chimeric viruses the WIV had been infecting the mice with. In fact, all of the institute's databases have been offline since the start of the pandemic for alleged "cybersecurity issues," including 100 unpublished sequences of bat betacoronaviruses, which need to be sequenced by international scientists, according to Bostickson.



Hu in Singapore. (Weixin photo)

Bostickson on Friday called on the WIV and their Western collaborators, Aleksei Chmura, Peter Daszak, Tracey Goldstein, Jonna Mazet, Gary Crameri, and Jonathan Epstein, to provide answers on what actually happened in the lab in 2019. In light of the World Health Organization's planned trip to Wuhan to investigate the origins of the virus, DRASTIC has created a petition demanding that the international investigation team answer 50 key questions about the outbreak in Wuhan, including access to the facility's database and laboratory records, which are supposed to go back 20 years.

Hu has yet to respond to a request from Taiwan News for information about the experiments on mice, including the types of coronaviruses involved.

📌 Wuhan coronavirus

📌 lab leak theory

📌 Covid

📌 COVID-19 pandemic

📌 coronavirus pandemic

📌 coronavirus outbreak

📌 Wuhan Institute of Virology

📌 Shi Zhengli

📌 WIV

📌 Bat Woman

📌 Ralph Baric

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