



Office of the Director of National Intelligence

8 April 2026

Hana Mensendiek
US Right to Know
4096 Piedmont Avenue, #963
Oakland, CA 94611-5221

Re: Litigation 25-cv-02164 | ODNI FOIA Case DF-2025-00480

Ms. Mensendiek,

This letter is the first interim response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, dated 23 May 2025 and received by the Information Management Office (IMO) on 27 May 2025, in which you requested “Assessment(s) and/or report(s) on the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic that have been produced by the ODNI since it released its declassified version of the report, ‘Potential Links Between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Origin of the COVID-19 Pandemic,’ in June 2023.”

Your request is being processed in accordance with the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended. This response addresses the processing of one (1) document responsive to your aforementioned request (Bates Pages: 25-cv-02164 (DF-2025-00480) 000001 – 000002). We have determined that this document can be released to you in part, pursuant to FOIA exemptions:

- (b)(3), which applies to information exempt from disclosure by statute. The relevant statute includes the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, specifically:
 - Section 102A(h)(1) (codified at 50 U.S.C. § 3024(h)(1)), which mandates the protection of intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, and,
 - Section 102A(l) (codified at 50 U.S.C. § 3024 (l)), which protects the names and identifying information of ODNI personnel.
- (b)(6), which applies to information that, if released, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Furthermore, the Central Intelligence Agency claimed additional FOIA exemptions for the information present in the document.

- (b)(1), which applies to information that is currently and properly classified pursuant to Executive Order 13526, Section 1.4(c).
- (b)(3), which applies to information exempt from disclosure by statute. The relevant statute includes the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, specifically:
 - Section 102A(h)(1) of the National Security Act of 1947, 50 U.S.C § 3024(h)(1)
 - Section 6 of the Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 U.S.C. § 3507

If you have any questions, your attorney may contact attorney Brian Levy of the Department of Justice via e-mail at Brian.Levy2@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,

Louis P. DiNatale III

Louis P. DiNatale III
Chief, Information Management Office

Enclosures



NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL

3 October 2023

(b)(3)

To: (U) Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence

From: (U) (b)(3), (b)(6) National Intelligence Officer for Weapons of Mass Destruction and Proliferation, National Intelligence Council

Subject: (U) **Protecting Analytic Objectivity of the IC's Investigation of COVID-19 Origins**

Reference: (U/~~FOUO~~) In response to your request for insight into how analytic objectivity has been preserved throughout the pandemic on the IC's evolving assessment of COVID-19 origins.

(b)(3) Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Intelligence Council (NIC), in concert with other ODNI components, embraced an inclusive approach with regard to the analysis of the pandemic's origins to best capture the diversity of thought across IC agencies and protect analytic objectivity. This approach was achieved through IC-wide and agency-specific communications and meetings; analytic exercises and approaches that aimed to strengthen tradecraft and clarify divergent views on the cause of the first human case of COVID-19; and working with collectors to ensure broad access to reporting across agencies and the breadth of analytic outreach.

(U/~~FOUO~~) **IC-Wide Inclusion and Transparency**

(b)(3) In February 2020, the National Intelligence Officer for Weapons of Mass Destruction and Proliferation (NIO/WMD) initiated a regularly occurring IC-wide meeting for analysts, collectors, and technical officers with varied expertise to help synchronize the IC's investigation of how SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, first infected humans. Throughout the pandemic, the NIC encouraged broad participation from across the IC and varied the focus of those meetings depending on new developments, analytic production, and customer requests, as well as staffing levels at IC agencies.

- (b)(3) The NIC used these meetings to level-set analytic updates and new reporting and to troubleshoot issues broadly facing the IC. For example, recognizing the challenge of preserving analytic resources during a protracted period of reduced staffing early in the pandemic, the NIC championed consistency and turnover from week to week to verify that any COVID-19 analytic progress was documented and shared across the IC.
- (b)(3) The NIC also used these meetings to build and maintain robust distribution lists and provide guidance to agencies regarding the coordination and publication of assessments related to the origins of the pandemic and to relay critical developments as transparently as possible. Those meetings also gave space to individual agencies to discuss their own products with the broader IC.

(U) *This memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for WMD and Proliferation. It was drafted by the National Intelligence Council. Questions may be directed to the NIO on secure (b)(3).*

(b)(3)



(b)(3)

(U//~~FOUO~~) Analytic Argumentation

(b)(3) During the conceptualization, drafting, coordination, and review of NIC products on COVID-19 origins, the NIO/WMD remained committed to accurately representing agencies' views, while applying analytic tradecraft and using structured analytic exercises to strengthen arguments for both origins hypotheses. For NIC analytic output—such as publications, talking points, and briefs—the NIO/WMD provided IC stakeholders with the opportunity to review text to capture positions, reporting, and caveats appropriately. Timelines for IC coordination varied based on tasking urgency—wherein the NIC tried to maximize the duration and frequency of coordination windows across the IC. The NIC also shared updated versions of products to IC stakeholders as they were reviewed through the NIC and ODNI so that any red line issues were addressed in real time before publication.

- (b)(3) When possible, the NIC worked with IC agencies to establish definitions relevant to COVID-19 origins to ensure that agencies were using the same lexicon in analytic and/or collection-related discussions.
- (b)(3) For the Presidential-directed 90-Day Study from May through August 2021, the NIO/WMD secured the assistance of (b)(1), (b)(3) to organize two separate structured analytic exercises to examine the underlying reporting and strengthen the argumentation for both origins hypotheses. The resulting Team A/ B analysis and Analysis of Competing Hypothesis exercises involved participation of dozens of analysts, collectors, and technical officers from across the IC.
- (b)(3) The NIC also adopted an atypical format in the assessment that resulted from the 90-Day Study to reflect varying assessments among analysts—and not consensus judgments of agencies—to better account for alternative interpretations within agencies that were unable to coalesce around one hypothesis and accommodate dissents from analysts at agencies that did make official origin assessments.

(U//~~FOUO~~) Pushing Analytic Requirements for Both Laboratory and Natural Origins Hypotheses

(b)(3) The NIC worked with individual agencies to ensure equal access to sensitive reporting and also with ODNI's National Counterproliferation and Biosecurity Center (NCBC) and broader network of National Intelligence Managers for regional and functional topics to drive collection and analytic outreach on COVID-19 origins.

- (b)(3) The NIC worked with (b)(1), (b)(3) reporting stakeholders to ensure that all coordinating agencies received access to (b)(1), (b)(3) to level the playing field for coordination.
- (b)(3) Working with NCBC and the IC, the NIC provided input so that analytic requirements were built against both natural and laboratory-based scenarios. ODNI issued multiple collection emphasis messages related to COVID-19 origins to drive collection to close the key intelligence gaps, equally weighing both hypotheses.
- (b)(3) During and after the 90-Day Study, the NIC consulted with the IC to understand the breadth of outside experts agencies consulted for insight that factored into agencies' research and judgments. These outside experts are recognized in the fields of virology, computational biology, immunology, microbiology, epidemiology, evolutionary biology, genetic engineering, and biosafety and were sought out for their technical knowledge, rather than opinions on origins. Furthermore, the NIC—and individual agencies—consistently explored open-source theories on COVID-19 origins for potential leads or new ways of thinking about pandemic origins.