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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

May 27, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to request information regarding recent reports that “President Joe Biden’s team shut down” an investigation into the origins of SARS-CoV-2, which included examining the theory that the virus originated in a lab in Wuhan, China.¹

According to reports, the now-terminated investigation was run out of the State Department’s arms control and verification bureau and was the only inquiry looking seriously into the hypothesis that SARS-CoV-2 emerged from a laboratory in Wuhan, China.² The investigation team reportedly briefed Biden administration officials on its findings in February and March 2021.³ Following the briefing, the State Department reportedly terminated the investigation.⁴

To date, the World Health Organization (WHO) is the only entity that has conducted a known public investigation into the origins of SARS-CoV-2. However, the WHO’s investigation has been widely criticized by both outside experts and Biden administration officials, including yourself. Below are several examples of such criticisms:

- On February 13, 2021, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated in advance of the WHO’s report, “We have deep concerns about the way in which the early findings of the COVID-19 investigation were communicated and questions about the process used to reach them.”⁵

¹ Kylie Atwood, *Pompeo-led effort to hunt down Covid lab theory shut down by Biden administration over concerns about quality of evidence*, May 25, 2021, CNN, https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/05/25/politics/biden-shut-down-trump-effort-coronavirus-chinese-lab/index.html?__twitter_impression=true.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Feb. 13, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/13/statement-by-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan/>.

- In a March 25, 2021, interview you discussed the pending release of the WHO report and stated, “We’ve got real concerns about the methodology and the process that went into that report, including the fact that the government in Beijing apparently helped to write it.”⁶
- On March 28, 2021, Dr. Anthony Fauci referenced the WHO’s potential lack of access to information and stated, “If, in fact, obviously, there was a lot of restrictions on the ability of the people who went there to really take a look, then I’m going to have some considerable concerns about that.”⁷
- On March 30, 2021, the governments of the United States, Australia, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom, issued a statement that criticized the lack of information and data made available to the WHO study and stated, “we voice our shared concerns that the international expert study on the source of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was significantly delayed and lacked access to complete, original data and samples.”⁸
- On May 14, 2021, eighteen scientists issued a statement criticizing the WHO’s lack of a thorough investigation and noted, “Although there were no findings in clear support of either a natural spillover or a lab accident, the [WHO] team assessed a zoonotic spillover from an intermediate host as ‘likely to very likely,’ and a laboratory incident as ‘extremely unlikely.’ Furthermore, the two theories were not given balanced consideration.”⁹
- On May 24, 2021, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki stated the Biden Administration is “hopeful the WHO can move into a more transparent, independent phase two investigation” into the origins of COVID-19.¹⁰

While on May 26, 2021, President Biden ordered an intelligence report on the origins of SARS-CoV-2, it remains unclear why the State Department reportedly shut down a U.S.-led effort to investigate the virus’ origins.¹¹ Understanding the origins of SARS-CoV-2 is foundational to the U.S. Government’s efforts to prevent future pandemics and finally bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to better understand the State Department’s decision to

⁶ Interview of Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, by Dana Bash, CNN, Mar. 25, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-with-dana-bash-of-cnns-state-of-the-union/>.

⁷ Ros Krasny and Tony Czucka, *U.S. Officials Air Concerns about WHO’s Covid Origin Report*, Bloomberg, Mar. 28, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-29/u-s-officials-air-concerns-about-who-s-covid-origin-report>.

⁸ Joint Statement on the WHO-Convended COVID-19 Origins Study, March 30, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-who-convended-covid-19-origins-study/>.

⁹ Jesse D. Bloom, et. Al. *Investigate the origins of COVID-19*, Science Magazine, May 14, 2021, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/372/6543/694.1>.

¹⁰ Josh Rogin, *Opinion: Biden is passing the buck on the covid origin investigation*, Washington Post, May 25, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/05/25/biden-is-passing-buck-covid-origin-investigation/>.

¹¹ Statement by President Joe Biden on the Investigation into the Origins of COVID-19, May 26, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/26/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-the-investigation-into-the-origins-of-covid-19/>.

terminate an investigation into virus' origins, we ask that you please provide the following information by June 10, 2021:

1. Please explain why and when the State Department's investigation was terminated, including the names and titles of the individuals who advocated for terminating the investigation;
2. Please provide any written materials, including any draft reports, created during the now-terminated State Department investigation into SARS-CoV-2's origin;
3. Please provide the names and titles of all individuals who received or reviewed any draft reports or briefing on the State Department's investigation in the origins of SARS-CoV-2;
4. Please provide all documents and communications that the State Department cited or relied on during the course of its investigation into SARS-CoV-2's origins;
5. Please explain what other investigations the State Department currently has or previously had into SARS-CoV-2's origins;
6. Please provide the names and titles of the individuals that conducted the investigation into the origins of SARS-CoV-2; and
7. Please provide all State Department cables from 2018 to present that discuss the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations



Rick Scott
United States Senator

Cc: President Joseph R. Biden