

# New York Times: Intelligence officials said to have untapped evidence on Covid-19 origins

By [Caroline Kelly](#), CNN

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**(CNN)** — President Joe Biden's instructions to the US intelligence community to [redouble its efforts in investigating the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic](#) came on the heels of intelligence officials informing the White House that they possessed unreviewed evidence necessitating greater computer analysis that could potentially provide answers, [The New York Times reported](#) Thursday.

The paper cited senior administration officials, who opted not to detail the new evidence or the computational analysis to be done. The disclosure raises the question of whether the government fully examined existing intelligence and public health information in seeking out the virus's emergence.

It also comes as the Office of the Director of National Intelligence [issued an unusual public statement Thursday](#) on the status of its intelligence gathering into the genesis of the pandemic, publicizing divisions within the intelligence community about whether the virus escaped from a lab in China or occurred naturally.

ODNI spokesperson Amanda Schoch reiterated what Biden had said Wednesday, that there is a difference of opinion among various intelligence agencies and their degrees of confidence in the theories.

Administration officials told the Times that the White House wants US allies to participate more strongly in investigating the possibility that the virus originated in a Chinese lab, a scenario that had previously been considered less likely.

The probe has not hit a dead end, a senior Biden administration official told the paper, adding that it will now draw on federal scientific resources, including the national labs, that had not previously been tapped for it.

Biden's mandate on Wednesday came the same week as news of a US intelligence report that found [several researchers at China's Wuhan Institute of Virology had fallen ill](#) in November 2019 and had to be hospitalized, a new detail about the severity of their symptoms that could fuel further the debate about the origins of the pandemic, according to two people briefed on the intelligence.

A State Department fact sheet released by the Trump administration in January said the researchers had gotten sick in autumn 2019 but did not go as far as to say they had been hospitalized. China reported to the World Health Organization that the first patient with Covid-like symptoms was recorded in Wuhan on December 8, 2019.

A Biden administration official told the Times that if the new investigation did not produce explanations, it would be due to China's obfuscation. Current officials told the Times that the main focus of the new inquiry is to increase pandemic preparedness going forward, and administration officials think that the new intelligence effort, combined with China misleading the WHO, will provide a chance for greater intelligence sharing and teamwork.

Administration and intelligence officials told the Times that tracking down the virus' inception would require efforts from not only scientists, but also spies. Top officials have told the spy agencies that their scientifically focused teams will play a key part in the undertaking, after months of work on the subject already.

Current and former intelligence officials told the Times they were dubious that someone would unearth communications that would provide evidence of a lab leak.



Biden said in the statement Wednesday that in March he had directed his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, to task the intelligence community with preparing a report on the most up-to-date analysis of the origins of the pandemic, including whether the virus had emerged from human contact with an infected animal or from a laboratory accident. The President said he had received that report earlier this month and asked for additional follow-up.

"As of today, the U.S. Intelligence Community has 'coalesced around two likely scenarios' but has not reached a definitive conclusion on this question. Here is their current position: 'while two elements in the IC leans toward the former scenario and one leans more toward the latter -- each with low or moderate confidence -- the majority of elements do not believe there is sufficient information to assess one to be more likely than the other,'" Biden said in the statement.

That's essentially the same public determination that the intelligence community has had for more than a year about the origins of Covid-19, though Wednesday's statement did make clear that these two scenarios are "likely" and not just being investigated. [CNN reported in April 2020](#) that the intelligence community was investigating if the novel coronavirus had spread from a Chinese laboratory rather than a market in Wuhan, China. The Chinese government has maintained that the virus originated and spread naturally.

*CNN's Natasha Bertrand, Kylie Atwood, Katie Bo Williams, Zachary Cohen, Kate Sullivan, Donald Judd, Phil Mattingly, Alex Marquardt and Veronica Stracqualursi contributed to this report.*



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