

JOE BIDEN

China's stonewalling of Covid origin probe led Biden to reveal latest intelligence review

The intelligence community has been unable to reach a "definitive conclusion" about the origins of the virus, Biden said.



— President Joe Biden speaks at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland on Thursday. Evan Vucci / AP

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By Kristen Welker and Dareh Gregorian

WASHINGTON – President Joe Biden's decision to announce an [intensified 90-day review into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic](#) came about in part because of the Chinese government's

refusal to participate in an investigation by the World Health Organization, a source familiar with the decision said.

Biden asked the intelligence community in a statement Wednesday to [redouble its efforts](#) to get to the bottom of [the origins of Covid-19](#) after new reports raised questions about whether it spread from a laboratory in Wuhan, China.

The source said the genesis of Biden's request goes back weeks, after he'd received information that he'd asked for back in March. The information was in the President's Daily Brief, the highly classified briefing prepared by the intelligence community.

Biden asked whether he could declassify some of the report without compromising sources and methods so the White House could share the information publicly, the source said.

That effort was underway when China announced Tuesday that it wouldn't participate in "phase two" of the WHO's investigation into the origins of Covid-19. A [joint WHO-China study](#) in March found that the virus had probably been transmitted from bats to humans and that the theory that the virus had spread through "a laboratory incident was considered to be an extremely unlikely pathway."

U.S. to investigate Covid origins after report questions whether the virus leaked from a Chinese lab



China's decision not to cooperate "heightened interest in us being more transparent about the steps we were taking," the source said. "We continue to believe that China has crucial information about the origins of the pandemic that it is not sharing with the international community."

[The Wall Street Journal](#) this week reported and [NBC News confirmed](#) that a U.S. intelligence report identified three researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology who had sought treatment at a hospital after they fell ill in November 2019. The lab's senior researcher had previously denied that anyone at the facility had gotten sick during that time period.

In his statement Wednesday, Biden noted that the intelligence community has been unable to reach a "definitive conclusion" about the origins of the virus, and he said he asked national security adviser Jake Sullivan in March to prepare a report about what was known.

Biden said the findings concluded that while two elements of the intelligence community "lean" toward the explanation that the virus came from animal contact, another one leans toward the laboratory explanation.

"I have now asked the Intelligence Community to redouble their efforts to collect and analyze information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion, and to report back to me in 90 days," his statement said.

Chinese officials [lashed out](#) over Biden's announcement earlier Thursday, suggesting that the U.S. was being duped into believing conspiracy theories.

"Some people in the United States completely ignore facts and science," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters.

Kristen Welker reported from Washington, and Dareh Gregorian reported from New York.



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