

Intelligence Analysis: Origination of the Coronavirus

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Abstract

Amidst the current Coronavirus outbreak, many questions linger. One question that has yet to be answered with full optimism is the origin of the virus. We know that the virus began in Wuhan, China. What is less understood is if it came from an animal at the Wuhan market or the genetic lab within the city. This analysis of this intelligence issue attempts to investigate the origin of the virus and will conclude with the analyst's final Intelligence Assessment.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Wuhan, China, Pandemic

Intelligence Analysis: Origination of the Coronavirus

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As we search for the answers to these questions, it becomes even more troublesome that the originating country is unwilling to work with others to solve these questions. China has rejected an international investigation into the origins of the Coronavirus claiming the investigation to be politically motivated and would only dampen their fight against the virus. (Corera, 2020)

Scientists and researchers have stated that if the Coronavirus had been human-made, the genome sequence would more closely resemble earlier viruses (Stellino, 2020) and have a structure that more readily was thought to attach to humans. Researchers insist that genetic modifications would have been constructed from the backbone of viruses already known to cause illness in humans. (Anderson, 2020) The research suggests that the virus came from an animal in wildlife with it most closely resembling the bat Coronavirus.

Investigations into the origin of the Coronavirus shows no human to bat contact, suggesting that there may have been an intermediate animal. (Anderson, 2020) The Pathogenic state likely evolved as the virus jumped into humans gaining its current genomic features through adaptation while remaining undetected through human to human transmission. (Scripps Research Institute, 2020)

Much of the evidence proves that the virus does derive from a naturally evolving origin. However, any virus manufactured in a lab would, for obvious reasons, appear to have originated naturally. That would precisely be the goal of creating such a thing. As we examine the first few known cases, many originated from the Wuhan market, but the first case had no association with the market. (Bryner, 2020) The fact that this case is unassociated with the market in Wuhan further perplexes the issue.

An article in The Washington Post by Josh Rogin dated April 14, 2020, (Rogin, 2020) stated that in January 2018, two years before the Coronavirus outbreak swept through China, two United States embassy officials sent a cable to Washington D.C. This cable stated the concern that the lab in Wuhan was involved in risky bat coronavirus research. One of the cables states, "the researchers also showed that various SARS-like coronaviruses could interact with ACE2, the human receptor identified for SARS-coronavirus. This finding strongly suggests that SARS-like coronaviruses from bats can be transmitted to humans to cause SARS-like diseases." (Rogin, 2020)

This information regarding the study of bat coronavirus for Sars research in the city of Wuhan two years before the outbreak would be a very unusual coincidence. Beyond that, the outbreak occurring in this same city from a naturally evolving virus that spontaneously spread. If this did occur, it still leaves one to wonder why China will not allow investigations or research into the origin of the virus. (Stepmann, 2020)

Where Did the Coronavirus Originate?

1. Initial Hypothesis

- The Coronavirus originated in a medical lab in Wuhan, China
- The Coronavirus is a naturally evolving virus that came from animals

2. Evidence

- There is no evidence that it has been engineered.
- Two years ago, cables were sent to Washington from U.S. Diplomats with concern about risky bat research in the lab.
- If genetic manipulation had occurred, a scientist would likely have used a gene that was known to bind to humans.
- Wuhan market was quickly cleaned up, so evidence of the origin could not be investigated.
- Many early cases of the Coronavirus have been linked to the market, but not all, most notably the first known case. (Prof Chaolin Huang, 2020)
- China is not allowing investigations into the virus' origin
- Wuhan has been researching bat coronavirus for years
- Virus exploded in the same city where studies of the virus were conducted
- U.S. Intelligence has warned of this potential pandemic. (Harrington, 2020)
- In 2014 the U.S. suspended risky disease research, research that focused mainly on SARS and MERS type infections. (Reardon, 2014)

Conclusion

It is a possibility that we will never know the exact origin of the Coronavirus. As we know, just because no proof of evidence leads to conclude the Coronavirus is lab-created, does not mean this conclusion is false. These results may only mean the evidence has been well concealed as was intended. Scientists have agreed that the virus is from an animal. That is not saying that it did not come from a lab. The extraordinary coincidence that this disease originated

in the same city that had been studying and researching bat coronavirus is too much to accept as just chance.

In addition to this alarming correlation, warnings had been sent to Washington D.C. concerned about this very issue. If China had nothing to hide, they would be allowing investigations and further research, not only for the reason of understanding the origin but to find ways to prevent this from occurring again. (Kwong, 2020)

The following ACH analysis shows a competing hypothesis along with the evidence that the current coronavirus pandemic originated from a lab in Wuhan, China.

ACH Table:

#	Link	Evidence	Type	Credibility	Relevance	H:1	H:2
						0.00	-4.00
						originated in a lab	Natural evolving
E1		No evidence that proves lab creation		Medium	Low	NA	C
E2		2018 Cables to D.C. showed concern		Medium	Medium	C	I
E3		lab creation would have used a human binding gene		Medium	Medium	NA	C
E4		Market was cleaned up, unable to investigate		Medium	Medium	NA	NA
E5		First Case had no link to the market.		Medium	Medium	C	NA
E6		China not allowing investigation into the origin		Medium	Medium	C	I
E7		Wuhan has been researching bat coronavirus for years.		Medium	Medium	C	NA
E8		Virus originated in city that was studying the virus.		Medium	Medium	C	II
E9		U.S. intelligence warned of this pandemic for years		Medium	Medium	NA	NA
E10		2014 U.S. Suspends risky disease research		Medium	Medium	NA	NA

(Riggs, 2020) (U.S. Government, 2009) (IDI Staff, 2013) (Bacastow, 2018)

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