

# **American WHO Representative's Past Connection to the Wuhan Institute of Virology Raises Questions**

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The World Health Organization's (WHO) latest mission to Wuhan to trace the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic is back in the headlines. But not for the right reasons.

Its ostensible purpose was tainted from the start, as revealed by a March 17, 2021 article in The Wall Street Journal that showed the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) secured veto rights over who was going to be allowed to travel to Wuhan to conduct the purported investigation.

With the CCP's power to effectively pick and choose who should be on the team, the only American invited to be part of WHO's investigation was Peter Daszak. He is the president of the EcoHealth

Alliance, a government-funded nonprofit that is purportedly engaged in research to prevent pandemics.

It seems as no coincidence that Daszak was handpicked for this effort. In fact, given his own likely motivations, he may have been the CCP's best hope of covering up the origins.

To understand why, we need to go back and look at Daszak's close affiliation to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), dating back to at least 2013, when he co-authored a bat coronavirus study with the director of the lab, Shi Zhengli.

Daszak co-authored further papers with Shi in 2017 and 2018.

But it's not just Daszak's collaboration with Shi that raises questions, but also what they were collaborating on. The 2013 research successfully managed to get deadly viruses to dock to human cell receptors.

The viruses had been isolated from horseshoe bats in Yunnan province, a part of China more than 1000

miles from Wuhan. It is not clear whether the viruses were extracted and brought back to Wuhan or whether the bats themselves were brought back to Wuhan.

Chinese CCTV news footage from April 2018 suggests that the bats may have been brought to the laboratory.

Daszak himself took issue with that suggestion in a November 2020 tweet. For unknown reasons, Daszak subsequently deleted his tweet. When alerted to the deletion, Daszak, instead of providing an explanation, blocked this author on Twitter.

The work done by Shi and Daszak was no secret. The fact that they isolated a deadly virus from a bat was celebrated in research circles:

“Recently, the team led by Dr. Zhengli Shi from Wuhan Institute of Virology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Dr. Peter Daszak from Ecohealth Alliance identified SL-CoVs in Chinese horseshoe bats that were 95% identical to human SARS-CoV and were able to use human angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptor for docking and entry.

Remarkably, they isolated the first known live bat SL-CoV that replicates in human and related cells,” states an abstract of an article headlined “Bats as animal reservoirs for the SARS coronavirus: Hypothesis proved after 10 years of virus hunting.”

But not everyone was thrilled about what Daszak and Shi were doing. In 2015, Shi had created “a chimeric virus expressing the spike of bat coronavirus SHC014 in a mouse-adapted SARS-CoV backbone.” In layman’s terms, she had artificially generated a hybrid version of a bat coronavirus in her lab. This research came on the back of the 2013 study that Shi had undertaken with Daszak, in which the virus had for the first time been isolated in a lab. That led to Nature, the international weekly journal of science, publishing a 2015 article titled “Engineered bat virus stirs debate over risky research”.

The type of experiments that were being done by Daszak and Shi are called gain-of-function research, a term referring to research that aims to increase the virulence and lethality of viruses—something that raises even more questions now given what happened with the current pandemic.

Daszak is quoted in the 2015 Nature piece as defending these kinds of experiments because they would help identify a “virus from a candidate emerging pathogen to a clear and present danger.” But others did not agree. According to Rutgers University Professor Richard Ebright, cited in the same piece, “the only impact of this work is the creation, in a lab, of a new, non-natural risk.”

Essentially, the issue can be boiled down to this: Is it worth isolating viruses from the wild and experimenting on them in the laboratory to be a step ahead in case the virus might one day follow the same path naturally or is the risk that something goes wrong too high?

It was not just scientists writing in Nature that found the risk was too high. The Obama administration also determined that these gain-of-function experiments were too risky and suspended them in the United States in 2014.

While the research itself was causing great concern, so too was the manner in which the experiments were being conducted at the Wuhan Institute of

Virology. In January 2018, the U.S. embassy in Beijing sent staffers from its environment, science and health sections to the institute to investigate reports of inadequate biosafety. Eerily, the diplomatic cable sent by the embassy back to Washington, which was obtained by The Washington Post, read: “During interactions with scientists at the WIV laboratory, they noted the new lab has a serious shortage of appropriately trained technicians and investigators needed to safely operate this high-containment laboratory.”

Daszak himself warned, in a co-authored paper published in *Nature*, of the risk of laboratory spillovers in 2015. At the time, he said: “Among all high risk interfaces and hosts, only viruses transmitted to humans by contact with wild animals in the wildlife trade and in laboratories, such as [various viruses], were more likely to have broader geographic reach.”

Daszak’s collaborator Shi, the director of the WIV, also published a piece in 2010 describing how a lab leak in Yunnan Province had led to an outbreak of Hantavirus.

But that was not the end of it. After the Obama administration banned gain-of-function experiments, Daszak outsourced the work to the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

The project that Daszak outsourced to the WIV, titled “Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence”, was funded by Dr. Anthony Fauci’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease NIAID (NIAID). It is not clear how much of the \$3.7 million in U.S. government grants that Fauci gave Daszak ultimately ended up at the WIV but the research output from Daszak’s project features many articles involving bat experiments at the WIV.

Daszak advertised his deeds, even tweeting out in November 2019 that “we’ve made great progress with bat SARS-related CoVs ... ID’ing ones that bind to human cells, using recombinant viruses/humanized mice.”

In a December 2019 interview with YouTube channel MicrobeTV, Daszak boasted that he could “manipulate [coronaviruses] in the lab pretty easily.” He also explained how coronaviruses could “get into human cells in the lab” and that he had started

experiments with chimeras (hybrid organisms comprised of genetic material from more than one organism) combining coronaviruses with other viruses.

Soon after his December 2019 interview, news of a bat coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan started filtering out. Despite his knowledge of the pre-2020 coronavirus experiments at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, Daszak became a driving force to focus the scientific community and media on natural origins.

In a co-authored statement published in the medical journal, *The Lancet* on Feb. 18, 2020, Daszak and others claimed that scientists had “overwhelmingly conclude[d] that this coronavirus originated in wildlife, as have so many other emerging pathogens.”

In retrospect, the last part of this sentence looks particularly contrived. As does the next part of his statement: “Conspiracy theories do nothing but create fear, rumors, and prejudice that jeopardize our global collaboration in the fight against this virus.”

As subsequent freedom of information requests have revealed, Daszak not only drafted this statement but persuaded other scientists to sign and sought to “avoid the appearance of a political statement.”

Daszak further wanted to “put it out in a way that doesn’t link it back to our collaboration so we maximize an independent voice.”

The Lancet failed to disclose that four of the statement’s signatories worked for Daszak at the EcoHealth Alliance. Instead of withdrawing the statement, or at least adding a conflict of interest note, The Lancet announced on Nov. 23, 2020 that it had made Daszak the head of its own task force to find the origins of the virus. Half of its task force is composed of signatories of the February 2020 statement.

Also in February 2020, Daszak published a piece in the New York Times in which he preemptively castigated virus “misinformation campaigns and conspiracy theorists” while at the same time pronouncing that “pandemics usually begin as viruses in animals that jump to people when we make contact with them.” He also claimed that “we

know roughly where they originate and what's responsible for them," at a time when we knew almost nothing about the origins of this virus.

The final insult came when Daszak was appointed as a member of the WHO team that was supposed to get to the bottom of where the virus came from. Even before he set off for China, Daszak had already determined that the lab leak theory was a "conspiracy theory" and "pure baloney."

Since his return from China, Daszak has been pushing even harder to deflect from the lab leak theory. He recently told NPR that his "team found new evidence that these farms were supplying vendors at the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, where an early outbreak of COVID-19 occurred."

NPR did not push back on this falsehood, when even the WHO admitted after its trip to Wuhan that "all the samples related to the animal products or animals were all negative."

In a March 10 live stream hosted by Chatham House, Daszak was asked why the Wuhan Institute

of Virology had deleted a database of over 16,000 virus sequences and why the WHO hadn't demanded to see the sequences. He responded by vouching for his collaborators at the Wuhan Institute of Virology and claimed that there was nothing relevant in the database.

It is impossible to think of any person who could be less qualified to investigate the origins of the virus than Peter Daszak. Daszak worked directly with the Wuhan Institute of Virology on risky bat virus research. Daszak bragged about creating genetically manipulated bat viruses. Daszak published papers with the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Daszak provided funding for the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Daszak appears to be a friend of the institute's director, writing in a tweet on Nov. 7, 2020, "looking forward to that special moment when we hit the baiju and the karaoke with Zhengli & Linfa." Daszak ruled out a lab leak immediately before the facts were known.

How did anyone other than the CCP think that it would be a good idea to put Daszak in charge of investigating the origins of the virus? The old saying about putting the fox in charge of the hen house does

not do him justice. As long as Peter Daszak is investigating himself, we will never find out what really happened at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

*[https://www.theepochtimes.com/american-who-representatives-past-connection-to-the-wuhan-institute-of-virology-raises-questions\\_3741280.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/american-who-representatives-past-connection-to-the-wuhan-institute-of-virology-raises-questions_3741280.html)*