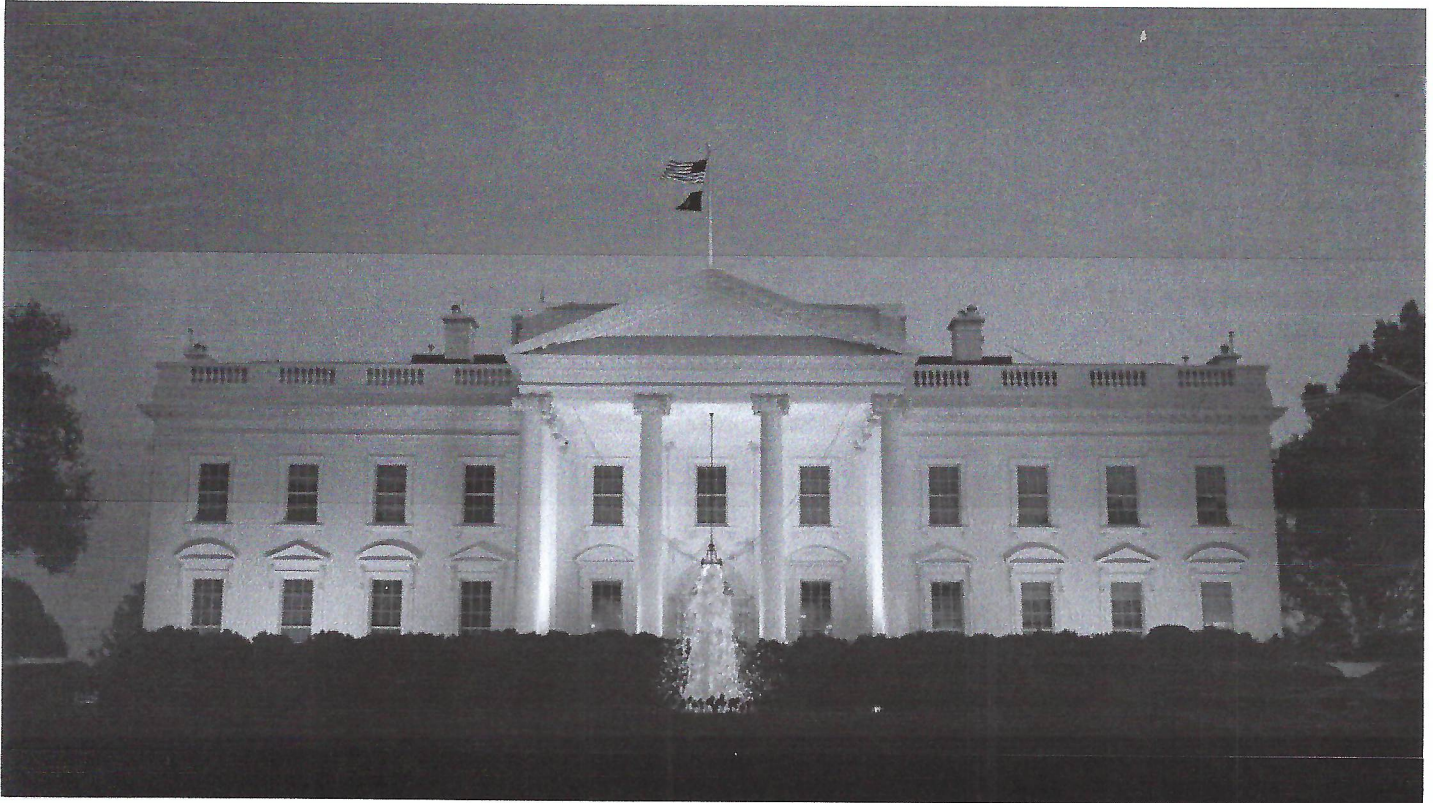


# White House touts Covid-19 'lab leak' theory on new website

By Sarah Oweremohle, CNN

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The US government's Covid.gov website now redirects to the White House's new lab leak website. Al Drago/Bloomberg/Getty Images

**(CNN)** — The White House on Friday morning launched a new website championing the theory that the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 was a human-made pathogen that leaked from an infectious disease laboratory in Wuhan, China.

The page revives a long debate about the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic that has seen investigations by federal agencies, global health organizations and congressional committees. In January, the CIA issued a report concluding that a lab leak was likely, but with “low confidence” in that judgment, paralleling similar conclusions from the Energy and State departments.



The CIA had previously said it did not have enough information to make a determination about where the virus originated. The World Health Organization has said it remains open to all hypotheses, including that the virus spread from animals to people in a Wuhan market.



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Yet the Trump administration's new website takes the lab leak theory even further than most of those reports, stating that the virus "possesses a biological characteristic that is not found in nature" and "if there was evidence of a natural origin it would have already surfaced. But it hasn't."

The federal website Covid.gov, which previously linked to information about vaccines, testing and treatment, now redirects to the White House's lab leak website.

While US intelligence agencies have remained open to the possibility the virus was naturally



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engineered. Many scientists believe, based on analyses of the virus and early cases, that the virus occurred naturally in animals and spread to humans in an outbreak at the Wuhan market. They've also said that the origin of the virus may never be proved.

US Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Marty Makary appeared to defend the website change during a Fox News interview Friday afternoon.

"I think people want some closure. The entire nightmare of Covid for three-plus years was likely entirely avoidable, had we not [been] messing with Mother Nature in a way that they should not have," Makary said. He added that people also want answers on prolonged school closures and vaccine requirements.

In several ways, the new White House page echoes a final report issued last year by the Republican-led House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, linked on the site. Republican members of the committee concluded last fall that the virus originated in a lab; Democrats issued a separate report that did not draw a definitive conclusion about the virus' origins but also pressed for more transparency.

The new White House site also details perceived failures of the Covid-19 response, including "lockdowns," mask mandates, infectious disease research funding and HHS "obstruction" of

those congressional probes.



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Some of those officials are named. A section of the page is dedicated to President Joe Biden's pre-emptive pardon of retired National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Multiple Trump administration officials, such as Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., have railed against the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Biden administration's response in particular. The website could tee up further action from the health agency, as Kennedy has criticized broad coronavirus vaccine requirements and controversial infectious disease studies known as gain-of-function research.

Many congressional Republicans have also called for the administration to reinstitute a ban on this type of research, which can involve making a virus more transmissible or changing other traits to study its spread. A moratorium on gain-of-function studies was lifted during the first Trump administration.

Biden officials last year issued policy guidance that would have put more stringent oversight on gain-of-function research, but not broadly ban those studies. The guidance is set to go into effect this May.

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