

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

Majority (202) 225-5074
Minority (202) 225-5051

June 29, 2023

Mr. David Morens, M.D.
Senior Scientific Advisor
Office of the Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
5601 Fishers Lane, MSC 9806
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Morens:

Documents in possession of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic (Select Subcommittee) suggest that you may have used your personal e-mail to avoid transparency and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), potentially intentionally deleted federal records, and acted in your official capacity to disparage your fellow scientists, including by encouraging litigation against them.

Further, your e-mails also raise concerns that you may have knowledge or information suggesting Dr. Anthony Fauci, former Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), wished to influence the COVID-19 origins narrative without his “fingerprints.”

This is all very troubling and raises serious questions. As such, we are requesting documents and communications from your personal e-mail and cell phone that are responsive to the Select Subcommittee’s investigation. Additionally, pursuant to the Select Subcommittee’s February 13, 2023 letter, we request you sit for an in-person transcribed interview on August 2, 2023.¹

I. You may have intentionally used your personal e-mail to avoid transparency and FOIA and may have intentionally deleted federal records.

In one e-mail you write that you “always try to communicate over gmail because my NIH email is FOIA’d constantly.”² You continue, “[d]on’t worry, just send to any of my addresses and I will delete anything I don’t want to see in the New York Times.”³

¹ Letter from Hon. Brad Wenstrup, Chairman, Select Subcomm. on the Coronavirus Pandemic, H. Comm. on Oversight & Accountability, to Hon. Xavier Becerra, Sec’y, U.S. Dep’t of Health and Human Servs. (Feb. 13, 2023).

² E-Mail from David Morens, M.D., Senior Scientific Advisor, Nat’l Inst. of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, to Peter Daszak, Ph.D., et. al., President, EcoHealth Alliance, Inc. (Sept. 9, 2021).

³ *Id.*

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Message

From: David Morens
[REDACTED]@gmail.com]
Sent: 9/9/2021 4:34:31 PM
To: Peter Daszak
[REDACTED]
CC: Garry, Robert F
[REDACTED]; Kristian G.
Andersen [REDACTED]
Edward Holmes
[REDACTED]
Jason Gale
[REDACTED]
Rasmussen, Angie
[REDACTED]
Robert Kessler
[REDACTED]
Stephen Goldstein
[REDACTED]
Subject: Re: here's the latest line of attack
today...

External Sender. Be aware of links, attachments and requests.

Peter and colleagues,

As you know, I try to always communicate on gmail because my NIH email is FOIA'd constantly.

Yesterday my gmail was hacked, probably by these GoF assholes, and until IT can get it fixed I may have to occasionally email from my NIH account.

It spent a couple hours today but couldn't fix it.

Stuff sent to my gmail gets to my phone, but not my NIH computer.

Don't worry, just send to any of my addresses and I will delete anything I don't want to see in the New York Times.

d

David M. Morens, MD

[REDACTED]

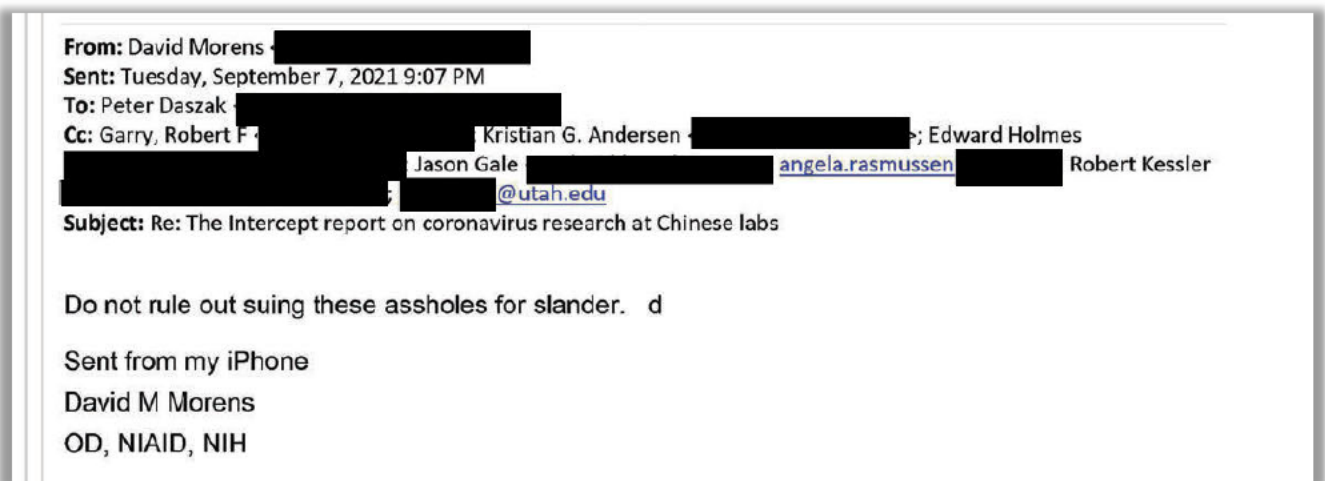
[REDACTED]@gmail.com
(work)
(cell)

[REDACTED]0001774

II. You used your official capacity to disparage your fellow scientists and those whose opinion was different than your own, including by encouraging litigation against them.

In addition to your attempt to hide your involvement with certain scientists regarding the origins of COVID-19, you also appear to use your official position to disparage others you disagree with on numerous occasions.

On one occasion, in response to a report in *The Intercept* entitled, “New Details emerge About Coronavirus Research at Chinese Lab,” you use your official platform to encourage EcoHealth Alliance, Inc. President Dr. Peter Daszak to “not rule out suing these assholes for slander.”⁴ While this e-mail was also sent from your personal e-mail, your email signature includes “OD [Office of the Director], NIAID [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases], NIH [National Institutes of Health].”⁵ This gives the appearance of a government official encouraging litigation against the press for reporting that does not follow public health bureaucrats’ pre-conceived narrative and is unacceptable.



On another occasion, in response to a different scientist’s characterization of Dr. Alina Chan and Dr. Richard Ebright as espousing “amateurish, disingenuous bullshit” regarding gain-of-function research, you responded, “[a]men and good for you! You are right that Ebright and his ilk are not only NOT experts but are harmful demagogues.”⁶

⁴ E-Mail from David Morens, M.D., Senior Scientific Advisor, Nat’l Inst. of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, to Peter Daszak, Ph.D., et. al., President, EcoHealth Alliance, Inc. (Sept. 7, 2021).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ E-Mail from David Morens, M.D., Senior Scientific Advisor, Nat’l Inst. of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, to Angela Rasmussen, Ph.D., Research Scientist II, Vaccine & Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (Sept. 9, 2021).

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On Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 4:28 PM David Morens [REDACTED] wrote:

Amen and good for you! You are right that Ebright and his ilk are not only NOT experts but are harmful demagogues. They need to be called out. Because i am in government i can only fo this off the record, but i have done do again and again. Some of them are knowingly promoting false equivalences. If they interviewed a Holocaust survivor, they would say they have to give equal time and space to a Nazi murderer. They have no shame. d

Sent from my iPhone

David M Morens

OD, NIAID, NIH

On a third occasion, this time with your official e-mail address, you responded to another scientist's characterization of Dr. Chan as "quite dangerous," by stating, "I know OF Alina Chan based on two papers of hers I came across, one of which was a screed against Eddie's recent review. It seemed biased, cherry-picked, and not the work of a scientist with integrity."⁷

On 21 Aug 2021, at 1:03 am, Morens, David (NIH/NIAID) [E] <[REDACTED]@niaid.nih.gov> wrote:

Thanks to both you and Kristian. Very heelpful to know what the experts think, because 5o us mere mortals, phylogenetic and sequencing interpretation is a bit inscrutable.

Yes, although I don't know her personally, I know OF Alina Chan based on two papers of hers I came across, one of which was a screed against Eddie's recent review. It seemed biased, cherry-picked, and not the work of a scientist with integrity.

<image004.gif>

David M. Morens, M.D.

CAPT, United States Public Health Service

Senior Advisor to the Director

Office of the Director

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

National Institutes of Health

[REDACTED]
Bethesda, MD 20892-2520

[REDACTED] (assistant: [REDACTED])

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@nih.gov

Disclaimer: This message is intended for the exclusive use of the recipient(s) named above. It may contain information that is PROTECTED, PRIVILEGED, and/or CONFIDENTIAL, and it should not be disseminated, distributed, or copied to persons not authorized to receive such information. All sensitive documents must be properly labeled before dissemination via email. If you are not the intended recipient, any dissemination, distribution, or copying is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please erase all copies of the message and its attachments and notify us immediately.

⁷ E-Mail from David Morens, M.D., Senior Scientific Advisor, Nat'l Inst. of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, to Robert Garry, Professor, Tulane School of Medicine (Aug. 21, 2021).

These e-mails raise additional serious concerns about your objectivity while stationed in the Office of the Director of NIAID—an agency that obligates billions of dollars annually. The Select Subcommittee has questions about whether you made or influenced any funding decisions based on your personal motives or biases towards scientists.

III. You spoke with reporters regarding the origins of COVID-19 potentially because Dr. Anthony Fauci wished to influence the origins of COVID-19 narrative without his “fingerprints.”

Documents previously released by the Select Subcommittee established that, according to e-mails, Drs. Fauci and Francis Collins “prompted” the drafting of a paper to “disprove” the lab leak theory.⁸ This paper turned into “The Proximal Origin of SARs-CoV-2” (Proximal Origin).⁹ After increased pressure from Dr. Collins, Dr. Fauci appeared to cite Proximal Origins from the White House podium to downplay the lab leak theory.¹⁰ At the time, however, Dr. Fauci publicly claimed to not remember the name of the paper or those who wrote it.¹¹ Yet, in response to a private follow-up question from a member of the press, Dr. Fauci cited Proximal Origins—the paper he “prompted” a few months earlier—as proof COVID-19 was not the result of a lab leak.¹²

New e-mails suggest that Dr. Fauci took additional efforts to tamp down the lab leak theory by requesting you speak with the press regarding the origins of COVID-19, because he did not want to directly influence the stories.¹³ On July 29, 2021, you wrote, “[b]ut today, to my total surprise, my boss tony [Fauci] actually ASKED me to speak to the National Geographic on the record about origins. I interpret this to mean that our government is lightening up[,] but that *Tony doesn’t want his fingerprints on origin stories.*”¹⁴

⁸ Memorandum from Select Subcomm. on the Coronavirus Pandemic Staff to Select Subcomm. on the Coronavirus Members (Mar. 5, 2023).

⁹ Kristian Andersen, Ph.D., et. al., *The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2*, NATURE MEDICINE (Mar 17, 2020).

¹⁰ Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, The White House (Apr. 17, 2020).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² E-Mail from Anthony Fauci, M.D., Dir., Nat’l Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, to Bill Gertz, Nat’l Sec. Correspondent, The Washington Times (Apr. 19, 2020).

¹³ E-Mail from David Morens, M.D., Senior Scientific Advisor, Nat’l Inst. Of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, to Jason Gale, Bloomberg (July 29, 2021).

¹⁴ *Id.* (emphasis added).

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From: [REDACTED]@niaid.nih.gov At: 07/29/21 07:38:47
To: Jason Gale (BLOOMBERG/ NEWSROOM:) , [REDACTED]@TULANE.EDU,
[REDACTED]@sydney.edu.au, [REDACTED]@utah.edu
Subject: RE: Fwd:Re: URGENT: Seeking comment on paper in Nature:
Scientific reports

Jason, I can almost always talk on background or off the record, and if needed I MIGHT be able to speak ON the record. In the US government we all have to get approval from HHS or the Whitehouse to speak to the press. Sometimes they are touchy about certain issues and say no. For many months, I have not been approved to talk about "origins" on the record.

But today, to my total surprise, my boss Tony actually ASKED me to speak to the National Geographic on the record about origins. I interpret this to mean that our government is lightening up but that Tony doesn't want his fingerprints on origin stories.

Bottom line, I can speak to you on background and, if you need or want quotations or attributions, you can request to speak to me formally. They can only say no or, better yet, steer you to Tony....

Have you asked Dr. Newman when he might be able to share the paper he mentioned? I would love to see that....

<mime-attachment.gif>

David M. Morens, M.D.

CAPT, United States Public Health Service

Senior Advisor to the Director

Office of the Director

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

National Institutes of Health
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]0001347

In the interview referenced in your e-mail, you not only strongly imply against a lab leak, but go further and imply the U.S. should stop searching for or investigating the origins of COVID-19. You stated, "[t]here is progenitor virus out there somewhere, and we should look for it...[b]ut at some point, it crosses over from doing due diligence to wasting time and being crazy.

We may have seen that point already.”¹⁵ To be clear, investigating the source of a pandemic that has killed more than one million Americans is not “wasting time” or “being crazy.”¹⁶ This raises the question of whether this was the narrative Dr. Fauci approved you to say.

To better assist the Select Subcommittee in its investigation of the origins of COVID-19 and, in this case, any potential violations of federal record keeping laws, and considering your use of personal e-mail for official purposes specifically discussing these issues, we therefore request the following documents and information from any personal e-mail accounts, but primarily [REDACTED] and any personal cell phones, but primarily [REDACTED], as soon as possible but no later than July 13, 2023:

1. All documents and communications regarding the drafting, publication, or critical reception of the following publications:
 - a. The Correspondence in *The Lancet* titled, “Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19.”
 - b. The Correspondence in *Nature Medicine* titled, “The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2.”
 - c. The Letter in *Science* titled, “Investigate the origins of COVID-19.”
 - d. The Review in *Cell Press* titled, “The origins of SARS-CoV-2: A critical review.”
 - e. The Publication in *Science* titled, “The Hunan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan was the early epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic.”
 - f. The Publication in *Science* titled, “The molecular epidemiology of multiple zoonotic origins of SARS-CoV-2.”
 - g. The Publication in *The Lancet* titled, “The *Lancet* Commission on lessons for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic.”
 - h. The Perspective in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* titled, “Pandemic origins and a One Health approach to preparedness and prevention: Solutions based on SARS-CoV-2 and other RNA viruses.”

¹⁵ Priyanka Runwal, *Why it's so tricky to trace the origin of COVID-19*, NAT'L GEOGRAPHIC (Sept. 13, 2021).

¹⁶ Jesse D. Bloom, et. al., *Investigate the origins of COVID-19*, SCIENCE (May 14, 2021); Jeffrey D. Sachs, et. al., *The Lancet Commission on lessons learned for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic*, THE LANCET (Sept. 14, 2022).

- i. The Report in *Zenodo* titled, “Genetic evidence of susceptible wildlife in SARS-CoV-2 positive samples at the Huanan Wholesale Seafood Market, Wuhan: Analysis and interpretation of data released by the Chinese Center for Disease Control.”
 - j. The Pre-Print Publication in *Nature* titled, “Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in the environment and animal samples of the Huanan Seafood Market.”
 2. All documents and communications, including text messages, regarding the Wuhan Institute of Virology, EcoHealth Alliance, Inc., or the origins of COVID-19 between November 1, 2019, and present between yourself and the following individuals or regarding or referencing the following individuals:
 - a. Anthony Fauci
 - b. Francis Collins
 - c. Lawrence Tabak
 - d. Hugh Auchincloss
 - e. Cliff Lane
 - f. David Morens
 - g. Ping Chen
 - h. Ian Watson
 - i. Andrew Pope
 - j. Victor Dzau
 - k. Robert Redfield
 - l. Michael Lauer
 - m. David Christian Hassell
 - n. Jeremy Farrar
 - o. Robert Garry
 - p. Michael Farzan
 - q. Edward Holmes
 - r. W. Ian Lipkin
 - s. Andrew Rambaut
 - t. Peter Daszak
 - u. Aleksei Chmura
 - v. Kevin Olival
 - w. Christian Drosten
 - x. Ron Fouchier
 - y. Marion Koopmans
 - z. Michael Worobey
 - aa. Jonathan Pekar
 - bb. Florence Debarre
 - cc. Angela Rasmussen
 - dd. Ralph Baric
 - ee. James LeDuc
 - ff. Shi Zhengli

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gg. Ben Hu
hh. Yu Ping
ii. Yan Zhu
jj. Zhou Yusen
kk. Peter Hotez
ll. Richard Ebright
mm. Y. Alina Chan
nn. Jesse Bloom
oo. David Relman.

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic is authorized to investigate “the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic, including but not limited to the Federal Government’s funding of gain-of function research” and “executive branch policies, deliberations, decisions, activities, and internal and external communications related to the coronavirus pandemic” under H. Res. 5. To schedule the interview or ask any follow-up or related questions please contact Select Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-5074.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Brad R. Wenstrup, D.P.M.

Chairman

Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic

cc: The Honorable Raul Ruiz, Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic