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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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May 24, 2024

The Honorable Avril Haines
Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
1500 Tysons McLean Drive
McLean, VA 22102

Dear Director Haines,

Pursuant to Rules X and XI of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Committee is investigating the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic with an intent to inform ongoing legislative discussions regarding biosecurity reforms. Relevant to this inquiry are possible links to the activities of the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) with the start of the pandemic. Although the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) does not have a consensus view about the origins of the pandemic, IC agencies have included a review of the WIV's activities in the context of the origins of the pandemic.

Recently disclosed information from Canada provides additional insight into the WIV's interests and activities in the months leading up to the pandemic. In Canada, it was revealed that Canada's highest security lab (where Ebola and coronaviruses are studied) was infiltrated by Chinese scientists receiving secret payments from China's military. This information was revealed in a report from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in February 2024, following a two-year investigation.¹

Two scientists at Canada's high-security infectious disease laboratory – Xiangguo Qiu and her husband, Keding Cheng – provided confidential scientific information to China and were fired in 2021 after a probe concluded Dr. Qiu posed “a realistic and credible threat to Canada's economic security” and it was discovered they engaged in clandestine meetings with Chinese officials. CSIS discovered Dr. Qiu had applied for and likely received a position under China's Thousand Talents Program and that her position came through the WIV.²

¹ Ryan Tumilty, Catherine Levesque, Fired Scientists at Winnipeg lab worked closely and covertly with Chinese government, CSIS report says, National Post (February 28, 2024).

² *Id.*

According to CSIS, Dr. Qiu, who worked at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, lied when confronted with her actions, making “blanket denials” and “half-truths, and personally benefited from the arrangement,” noting that she repeatedly lied to the CSIS and “refused to admit to any involvement in various PRC [People’s Republic of China] programs.”

In a January 2021 letter recommending that Dr. Qiu’s security clearance be revoked, CSIS stated: “The Service assess that Ms. Qiu developed deep, cooperative relationships with a variety of People’s Republic of China institutions and has intentionally transferred scientific knowledge and materials to China in order to benefit the PRC government.”³

The two infectious-disease scientists were escorted out of the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg in July 2019, and later had their security clearances revoked. They were fired in January 2021. Their whereabouts are not known.

Of particular concern is that Dr. Qiu covertly and without authorization provided the Ebola genetic sequence, intellectual property related to research of Ebola, and possibly other pathogens to China.⁴ Others informed CSIS that Dr. Qiu and her husband used Gmail accounts extensively, rather than her government of Canada emails. This would appear to be a good source of communications between these spy-scientists in Canada and Wuhan and/or the Chinese military.

CSIS found an application from her to one of China’s talent programs that said she would work for the WIV for at least two months every year. As part of her enrollment, CSIS said, Dr. Qiu committed to “building the People’s Republic of China’s biosecurity platform for new and potent infectious disease research.”⁵ The CSIS investigation found Dr. Qiu led a project at the WIV that would assess cross-species infection and pathogenic risks of filoviruses, work that CSIS said suggests “gain-of-function studies were possibly to take place.”⁶ CSIS also noted Dr. Qiu, who headed the vaccine development and antiviral therapies section at the Winnipeg lab, collaborated on scientific papers with Chinese military researchers, including Major-General Chen Wei, a high-ranking officer in the People’s Liberation Army.⁷

In a report, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) found Dr. Qiu lied about an October 2018 trip to China that she had said was a personal vacation, but later acknowledged after being presented with contradictory evidence that the trip was paid for by the WIV and she met the WIV’s director during the visit.⁸

³ *Id.*

⁴ According to an email uncovered by CSIS, Dr. Qiu discussed shipping the Ebola virus to the WIV, without authorization. Catharine Tunney, Lies and scandal: How two rogue scientists at a high-security lab triggered a national security calamity, CBC News (March 2, 2024).

⁵ Robert Fife, Steven Chase, and Marieke Walsh, Censored documents about Winnipeg scientists reveal threat to Canada’s security, The Globe and Mail (February 28, 2024).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

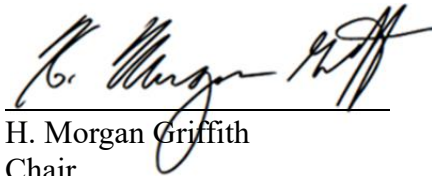
In light of these concerns, please provide a briefing to the Committee on what the U.S. intelligence community knows about the CSIS report, and communications between the WIV scientists and Dr. Qiu and Mr. Cheng while they were at the National Microbiology Laboratory. We would appreciate a response to this request by June 10, 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact Majority Committee Staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
Committee on Energy and
Commerce



H. Morgan Griffith
Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations



Brett Guthrie
Chair
Subcommittee on Health

CC: Frank Pallone Jr., Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Anna Eshoo, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health
Kathy Castor, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Michael Turner, Chairman, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
Jim Himes, Ranking Member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence