Trump says he's seen evidence suggesting coronavirus emerged from Wuhan lab, compares WHO to PR agency

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President Trump said Thursday he has seen evidence suggesting that the coronavirus originated from a laboratory in China while continuing his criticism of the World Health Organization's ties to Beijing, comparing the group to a public relations agency.

Trump was speaking to reporters about protecting America's senior citizens when Fox News and others asked if he knew of anything that gave him confidence that the outbreak originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

"Yes, I have," he said, without further explanation. "And, I think that the World Health Organization should be ashamed of themselves because they're like the public relations agency for China."

He earlier speculated about whether China knew about the virus sooner than it has led on and withheld information about the outbreak.

"So far I think China is trying to be... somewhat transparent with us, but we're going to find out," Trump said. "It's a terrible thing that happened. Whether they made a mistake or whether it started off as a mistake and then they made another one or did somebody do something on purpose."

STATE DEPT CABLES HIGHLIGHT POSSIBLE ROLE OF CHINESE LAB IN VIRUS' ORIGIN

Intelligence officials confirmed Thursday that an investigation has been ongoing into whether the pandemic was the result of an accident at the Wuhan lab, a

contradiction from the broad consensus that it originated at a wet market in the city.

"The entire Intelligence Community has been consistently providing critical support to U.S. policymakers and those responding to the COVID-19 virus, which originated in China. The Intelligence Community also concurs with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not man-made or genetically modified," a statement from the office of acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell said in a statement.

"As we do in all crises, the Community's experts respond by surging resources and producing critical intelligence on issues vital to U.S. national security. The IC will continue to rigorously examine emerging information and intelligence to determine whether the outbreak began through contact with infected animals or if it was the result of an accident at a laboratory in Wuhan," he added.

U.S. officials have ruled out the possibility the virus was created by China to be used as a bioweapon. Some said the pathogen may have escaped from the lab amid China's efforts to identify and combat the virus either with the same or greater capabilities than the United States.

In a show of defiance, China has rebuffed U.S. requests that it allow inspectors access to the lab.

On Thursday, Trump said the "world is suffering greatly" while speaking of China's response.

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"This is something that could have been contained at the original location and I think it could have been contained relatively easily," Trump said. "They were either unable to or they chose not to."

After initially praising China's response, he shifted to blaming Beijing, a tactic to divert scrutiny over his own administration's handling of the crisis, according to some Democrats. The U.S. response has been plagued with a shortage of test kits and sometimes contradictory statements between Trump and members of his coronavirus task force.

"Trump is desperate to distract voters from his record of rolling over for China,"

the Democratic National Committee told Fox News in a statement. "He refused to call out China on its coronavirus response and Americans are suffering the consequences."

In regards to Beijing, the Chinese Communist Party has had a history of covering up outbreaks and anything shining a negative light on China. However, health experts previously expressed skepticism that the virus was linked to the Wuhan lab.

Source: https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-coronavirus-wuhan-china-evidence-who-public-relations

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