

# **EXHIBIT 4**

## MAD SCIENTISTS France 'warned Wuhan lab could be turned into a 'biological arsenal' by Chinese military four years before Covid 'leak'

Imogen Braddick

13:40 ET, Jul 29 2021

**FRANCE warned that the Wuhan lab linked to the Covid outbreak could be turned into a "biological arsenal" by the Chinese military four years before the pandemic, it is reported.**

A former US state official under the Trump administration has claimed French scientists were "kicked out" of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in 2017, prompting French officials to warn the US they had grave concerns about China's plans.



**The Wuhan Institute of Virology has come under increased scrutiny over the origins of Covid** Credit: AFP



**French scientists were reportedly 'kicked out' of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in 2017** Credit: AFP

David Asher, now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute think tank, told the [Daily Caller News Foundation](#) that French intelligence officials warned the US that China was cutting back on agreed collaboration at the lab in 2015.

Following the 2003 SARS outbreak, France and China signed an agreement in 2004 to build a new biosafety lab at the Wuhan Institute of Virology to "fight and prevent new diseases".

France provided the lab's design, biosafety training, and much of its technology before the BSL-4 level lab - now at the centre of storm over an alleged lab leak - officially opened in 2018.

And under the agreement between Paris and Beijing, some 50 French scientists were sent to help train the Chinese lab workers and supervise the work of the researchers.

But cooperation between France and China came to a halt in 2017 when the French scientists were "kicked out", prompting concerns about China's motivations, Asher said.

And French security and defense experts had already opposed the collaboration between the two countries, the newspaper Le Figaro reported.

## **GRAVE CONCERNS**

National security officials did not want to share sensitive technology with China as they feared the lab could one day be transformed into a "biological arsenal", according to Le Figaro.

The US State Department has already claimed that the Wuhan institute had engaged in classified research on behalf of the Chinese military since 2017.

Asher said US federal funding to the lab should have been halted when the French warned the US State Department in 2015.

"The Chinese basically sucked State into its honey pot operation to gain access to US technology, knowledge, and material support. Classic. Just as they have done in every sector," Asher said.

He said the State Department officials "in charge of nonproliferation should have shut down all cooperation".

Between October 2009 and May 2019, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided \$1.1 million to the US-based EcoHealth Alliance for a sub-agreement with the lab, according to USAID.

## FUNDING PROBE

A federal watchdog is also investigating the National Institutes of Health after it was revealed the organisation gave over \$800,000 in funding to the Chinese lab.

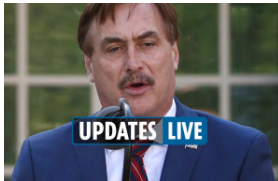
According to emails obtained by WikiLeaks, the US State Department voiced concerns about the Wuhan lab as early as 2009, asking what France knew of how China planned to "vet incoming foreign researchers".

The idea that Covid may have emerged from a lab leak has been gaining momentum - but Beijing has repeatedly insisted that a leak would have been "extremely unlikely".

Last week, Yuan Zhiming, director of the National Biosafety Laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, said "no pathogen leakage or staff infection accidents have occurred" since the lab opened in 2018.

And China said the World Health Organisation's plan to audit Chinese labs as part of the probe into the origins of the pandemic showed "disrespect" and "arrogance towards science".

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The UN health body recently said the second stage of the investigation should include inspections of Chinese laboratories amid mounting pressure from the US.

But China's vice health minister Zeng Yixin said he was "extremely surprised" by the plan, which he said showed "disrespect for



common sense and arrogance towards science".

The United States criticised the Chinese stance, which White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki described as "irresponsible and frankly dangerous".