

U.S. hypes old 'lab-leak' theory in new information war operation against China

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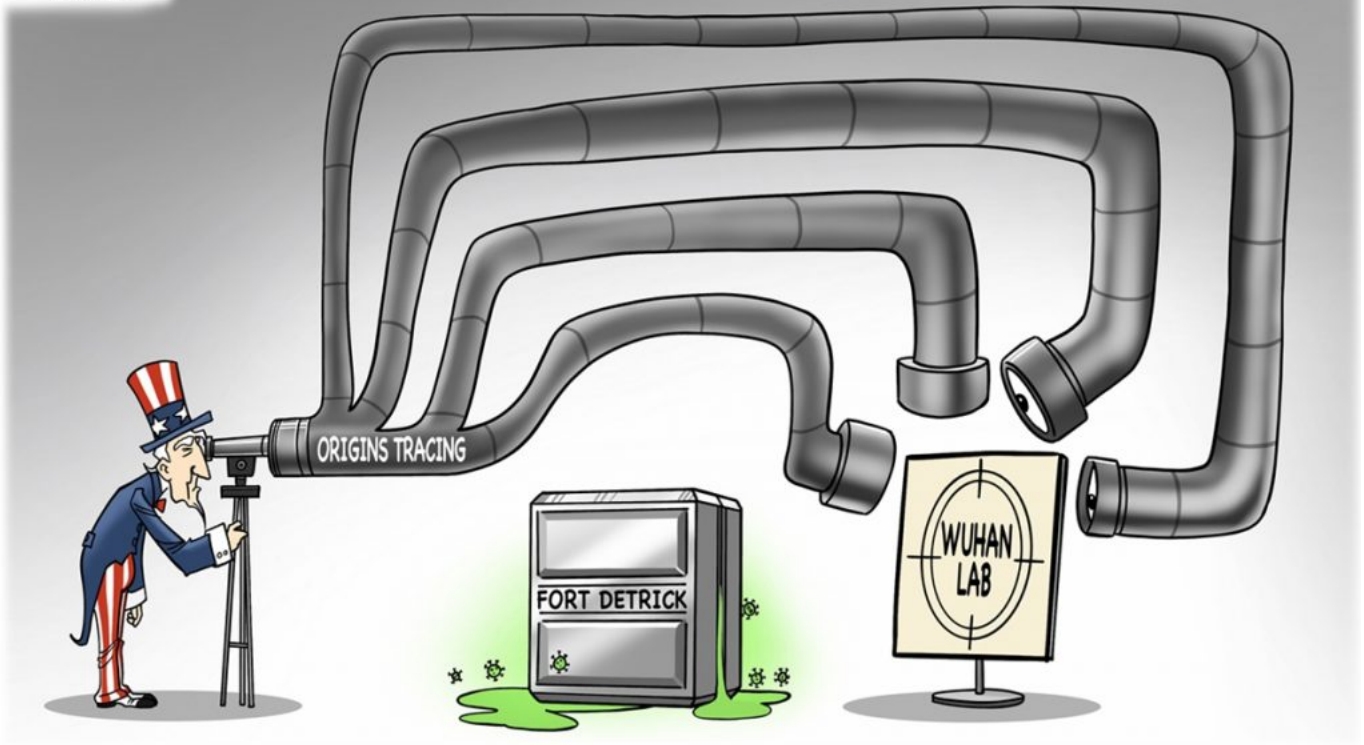


Illustration: Liu Rui/GT

Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. again gave the “lab-leak” theory a major boost, as its Energy Department, citing “new intelligence” but holding “low confidence” in it, joined the FBI in smearing China.

Reported exclusively by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) on Sunday, the claim immediately made headlines in major U.S. news outlets. However, its timing and source “only show the low credibility” of the report, analysts said, adding that the new hyping of an old topic is part of the U.S.’ political and information warfare with China.

Mao Ning, spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said at Monday’s routine press briefing that the origins-tracing of SARS-CoV-2 is about science and should not be politicized. Certain parties should stop rehashing the “lab leak” narrative, stop smearing China and stop politicizing the origins-tracing, she noted.

The WSJ reported that a classified intelligence report provided by the Energy Department to the White House and key members of Congress said the virus likely spread due to a mishap at a Chinese laboratory.

The department admitted to having “low confidence” in the conclusion, which was made after “new intelligence” was gathered by the department’s network of national laboratories, according to the WSJ report.

One of the WSJ report’s authors is Michael R. Gordon, who was behind the “weapons of mass destruction” narrative the U.S. fabricated to justify its invasion of Iraq 20 years ago.

Lü Xiang, research fellow with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times on Monday that the timing of the hype is not a coincidence and that the U.S. will not leave COVID out of its “ammunition depot” against China.

China's smooth transition in its COVID-response policy over the past months didn't give the U.S. a chance to attack China over an out-of-control epidemic or economic failings, which is why the U.S. had to rehash the same old story, Lü said.

Lü also ascribed the latest hype to the earlier-than-usual presidential election campaign, as media will bring topics to the table for both parties to "make a fuss about."

The WSJ report has already prompted debate between Trump supporters and opponents on Twitter. Some netizens also suspected the report aims to divert public attention from recent U.S. mishaps, such as the train derailment and chemical leak in Ohio.

The WSJ report remained very ambiguous in its wording despite its sensational headline. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said there is "not a definitive answer" on the origins tracing as the intelligence community has "a variety of views."

Being ambiguous and non-official and using media rather than government departments to announce something demonstrated the U.S.' skill in fighting a political war, Lü said.

Hysterical crusades against China have become a signature of the U.S. in our time. To win the competition with China, the U.S. will not let a single chance go by to smear China, whether it is a balloon that has gone astray, a carefully planned "lab-leak" theory, or unfounded weapon supply accusations regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the expert said.

