

Biden manages tense relations with China as COVID-19 issues reemerge

by [Haisten Willis](#), [White House Reporter](#)

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President [Joe Biden](#) faces renewed policy pressure as two of the biggest issues from the early days of his term, China and the [coronavirus](#), reemerge in the headlines.

A deadline to release information related to the origins of COVID-19 [came and went](#) Sunday with no action from the White House. Meanwhile, Secretary of State [Antony Blinken](#) got a lukewarm reception during his trip to Beijing.

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Blinken embarked on a trip last weekend that had been delayed since February owing to the Chinese spy balloon incident but ended up meeting with President [Xi Jinping](#) for just 35 minutes. Blinken nonetheless tried to emphasize the trip as a way to help build stronger relations between the two nations.

"China's broad economic success is also in our interest. We have done a remarkable job rebounding from COVID and having a growing economy — very low unemployment, tremendous investments in our future," Blinken said in Beijing. "But we also benefit tremendously when there is growth and progress in other countries — especially of one of the world's largest economies when it comes to China."

Though the secretary of state mentioned COVID-19 in the context of its economic effect, he did not mention the origins of the virus at all.

Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN) suggested Biden's missing the origins deadline was tied to Blinken's visit, which began the same day as the declassification deadline.

"The White House is now overdue to declassify their COVID lab leak intel, and there is no 'Secretary of State is meeting with Xi Jinping' exception in the law President Biden signed," Braun [said](#). "We need to know the truth about how this pandemic started and China's role in covering it up, and the White House must respect the text of the law passed unanimously in both chambers by the people's representatives."

Congress unanimously passed the COVID-19 Origin Act of 2023 in March, and Biden said he was pleased to sign it and shared its goals of releasing as much information as possible about the origins of the virus, which has killed more than 6.9 million people [worldwide](#).

The [law](#) instructed Director of National Intelligence [Avril Haines](#) to "declassify any and all information relating to potential links between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the origin" of COVID-19, including intelligence on the "activities performed by the Wuhan Institute of Virology with or on behalf of the People's Liberation Army" and "coronavirus research or other related activities performed at the Wuhan Institute of Virology prior to the outbreak" of SARS-CoV-2.

ht The bill gave the Biden administration 90 days to declassify the intelligence, a deadline that lapsed Sunday night. The White House did not respond to a request for comment from the *Washington Examiner*.