



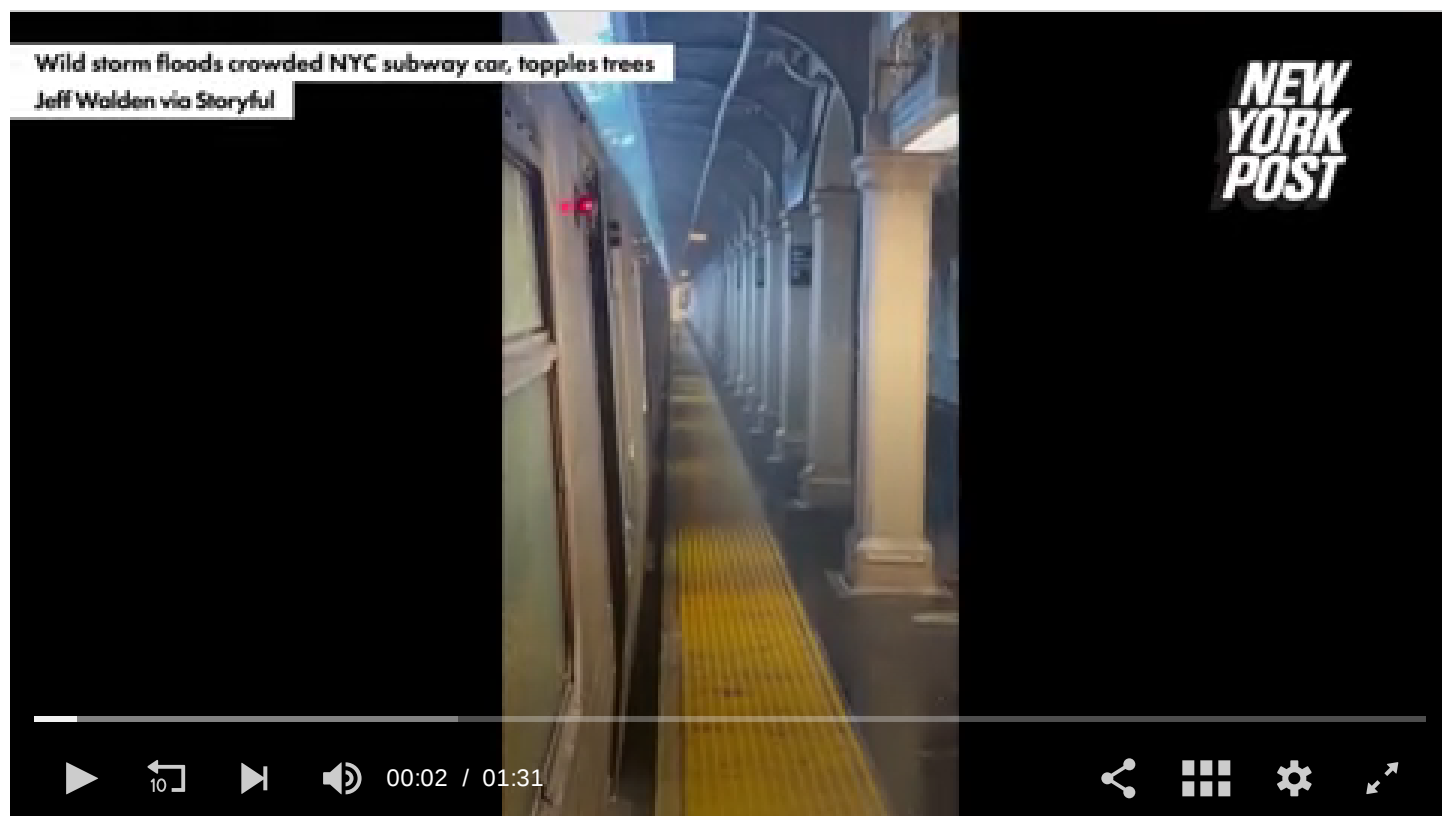
## NEWS



# CIA tried to pay off analysts to bury findings that COVID lab leak was likely: whistleblower

By Josh Christenson

Published Sep. 12, 2023, 10:38 a.m. ET

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The Central Intelligence Agency offered to pay off analysts in order to bury their findings that **COVID-19 most likely leaked from a lab in Wuhan, China**, new whistleblower testimony to Congress alleges.

A senior-level CIA officer told House committee leaders that his agency tried to pay off six analysts who found SARS-CoV-2 likely originated in a Wuhan lab if they changed their position and said the virus jumped from animals to humans, according to a letter sent Tuesday to CIA Director William Burns.

Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic Chairman Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) and Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Mike Turner (R-Ohio) requested all documents, communications and pay info from the CIA's COVID Discovery Team by Sept. 26.

"According to the whistleblower, at the end of its review, six of the seven members of the Team believed the intelligence and science were sufficient to make a low confidence assessment that COVID-19 originated from a laboratory in Wuhan, China," the House panel chairmen wrote.



The CIA offered to pay off analysts in order to bury their findings that COVID-19 most likely leaked from a lab in Wuhan, China, according to a letter sent to Director William Burns.

Getty Images



A senior-level CIA officer told House committee leaders that his agency tried to pay off six analysts who found SARS-CoV-2 likely originated in a Wuhan lab if they changed their position.



**NEW YORK POST**

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"The seventh member of the Team, who also happened to be the most senior, was the lone officer to believe COVID-19 originated through zoonosis."



"The whistleblower further contends that to come to the eventual public determination of uncertainty, the other six members were given a significant monetary incentive to change their position," they said, noting that the analysts were "experienced officers with significant scientific expertise."

Wenstrup and Turner also asked for documents and communications between the CIA and other federal agencies, including the State Department, the FBI, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Energy Department.

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Dear Director Burns:

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic (Select Subcomm House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) (together "the Comm received new and concerning whistleblower testimony regarding the Agency's inv the origins of COVID-19.

A multi-decade, senior-level, current Agency officer has come forward to p information to the Committees regarding the Agency's analysis into the origins of According to the whistleblower, the Agency assigned seven officers to a COVID I Team (Team). The Team consisted of multi-disciplinary and experienced officers v scientific expertise. According to the whistleblower, at the end of its review, six of members of the Team believed the intelligence and science were sufficient to mak confidence assessment that COVID-19 originated from a laboratory in Wuhan, Ch seventh member of the Team, who also happened to be the most senior, was the lo believe COVID-19 originated through zoonosis. The whistleblower further conten to the eventual public determination of uncertainty, the other six members were gi significant monetary incentive to change their position.

These allegations, from a seemingly credible source, requires the Committ further oversight of how the CIA handled its internal investigation into the origins To assist the Committees with their investigations, we request the following docum information as soon as possible, but no later than September 26, 2023.

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## Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2023

Mr. Andrew Makridis  
Former Chief Operating Officer  
Central Intelligence Agency  
[TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL]

Dear Mr. Makridis:

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic (Select Subcommittee) and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) (together “the Committees”) have received new and concerning whistleblower testimony regarding the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) investigation into the origins of COVID-19. Specifically, the whistleblower pointed the Committees to a CIA led COVID Discovery Team(s) in which you played a central role in its formation and eventual conclusion that the CIA was “unable to determine” the origins of COVID-19.

These allegations, from a seemingly credible source, require the Committees to conduct

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In a separate letter, the House committee leaders identified former CIA chief operating officer Andrew Makridis as having “played a central role” in the COVID investigation and asked him to sit for a transcribed interview.

“At CIA we are committed to the highest standards of analytic rigor, integrity, and objectivity. We do not pay analysts to reach specific conclusions,” CIA Director of Public Affairs Tammy Kupperman Thorp told The Post in a statement. “We take these allegations extremely seriously and are looking into them. We will keep our Congressional oversight committees appropriately informed.”

Makridis did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The FBI was the first US intelligence agency to conclude the COVID-19 pandemic most likely originated with a lab leak. In February, the **Energy Department also concluded a lab leak was likely**, based on new intelligence.



In a separate letter, the House committee leaders identified former CIA chief operating officer Andrew Makridis as having “played a central role” in the probe and asked to interview him.

The US intelligence community **declassified its 10-page report on COVID origins** in June, which found “biosafety concerns” and “genetic engineering” taking place at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, but most of its “agencies assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not genetically engineered.”

Several scientists at the Wuhan lab also became sick in the fall of 2019 with symptoms “consistent with but not diagnostic of COVID-19,” the report states.

The CIA and one other intelligence agency “remain unable to determine the precise origin of the COVID-19 pandemic, as both hypotheses rely on significant assumptions or face challenges with conflicting reporting,” it says.



Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic Chairman Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) in the letter requested all documents, communications and pay information from the CIA.

AP



Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Mike Turner (R-Ohio) in the letter said the analysts were “experienced officers with significant scientific expertise.”

Getty Images

But some former US intelligence officials have **disagreed with the assessment**. In April, former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe told Congress that the so-called “lab leak theory” was the “only” credible explanation for the pandemic, which has since claimed the lives of nearly 7 million people across the globe, according to the World Health Organization.

“My informed assessment as a person with as much access as anyone to our government’s intelligence ... has been and continues to be that a lab leak is the only explanation credibly supported by our intelligence, by science and by common sense,” Ratcliffe told the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic in a hearing.

“If our intelligence and evidence supporting a lab leak was placed side by side with our intelligence and evidence supporting the other theory, the lab leak side of the ledger would be long, convincing, even overwhelming — while the spillover side would be nearly empty and tenuous,” added Ratcliffe, a former Texas Republican congressman who served as President Donald Trump’s second and last director of national intelligence.



In April, former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe told Congress that the so-called “lab leak theory” was the “only” credible explanation for the pandemic.

AP

As the former number three official at the CIA during the pandemic, Makridis coordinated his agency’s response to COVID before retiring in 2022.



**What do you think? Post a comment.**

He now serves as a senior adviser at Beacon Global Strategies.

The strategic advisory firm also [says on its website](#) that he spent “over a decade in the Directorate of Intelligence working and then leading the technical analysis of Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and North Korean strategic weapons and space capabilities.”