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# Researcher Tied to Wuhan Lab Thanked Fauci for Dismissing Lab-Leak Theory



Peter Daszak, a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) team tasked with investigating the origins of the coronavirus disease, talks on the phone outside his hotel in Wuhan, China, February 2, 2021. (Thomas Peter/Reuters)

By ZACHARY EVANS

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Peter Daszak, a zoologist whose non-profit steered U.S. funding to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, thanked Dr. Anthony Fauci for pushing back on the theory that the coronavirus leaked from a lab, in an April 2020 email published as part of a FOIA request by *Buzzfeed*.

Daszak's organization, the EcoHealth Alliance, funneled \$3.4 million in grants from the National Institutes of Health to the WIV to study bat coronaviruses between 2014 and 2019. While politicians and scientists in the U.S. have suggested that the novel coronavirus initially leaked from the WIV before spreading across the globe, Daszak has vehemently denied the allegation.

"I just wanted to say a personal thank you on behalf of our staff and collaborators, for publicly standing up and stating that the scientific evidence supports a natural origin for COVID-19 from a bat-to-human spillover, not a lab release from the Wuhan Institute of Virology," Daszak wrote to Fauci on April 18, 2020.

"From my perspective, your comments are brave, and coming from your trusted voice, will help dispel the myths being spun around the virus's origins," Daszak added. Fauci responded to Daszak's email on April 19, writing "Many thanks for your kind note."

Daszak was referring to Fauci's comments on April 17, when a reporter asked him to address concerns that the coronavirus could have leaked from a lab.

"There was a study recently...where a group of highly qualified evolutionary virologists looked at the sequences there and the sequences in bats as they evolve," Fauci said at the time. "The mutations that it took to get to the point where it is now is totally consistent with a jump of a species from an animal to a human."

Fauci has continued to say it is "highly likely" that the coronavirus has a natural origin, although he said earlier in May 2021 that he was "not convinced" that coronavirus developed naturally.

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