



EXCLUSIVE: Leaked Pentagon Report Forensically Dismantled Fauci-Led Natural Origin Study

Description

Researchers at the Department of Defense wrote a devastating takedown of the Proximal Origin study, which was used by Dr. Anthony Fauci as proof that the COVID-19 virus had come from nature.

The takedown, dated May 26, 2020, was written in the form of a working paper called "Critical analysis of Andersen et al. The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2." It was authored by Commander Jean-Paul Chretien, a Navy doctor working at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and Dr. [Robert Cutlip](#), a research scientist at the Defense Intelligence Agency. The paper came to light on May 15, when it was leaked to the public via virus origins search group DRASTIC (Decentralized Radical Autonomous Search Team Investigating COVID-19).

The working paper forensically dismantles the natural origin case made in Proximal Origin and concludes, "The arguments that Andersen et al. use to support a natural-origin scenario for SARS-CoV-2 are based not on scientific analysis, but on unwarranted assumptions."

The existence of this internal Pentagon paper is crucial, as it proves that government officials were well aware in the early months of the pandemic that there was no evidence in support of a natural origin of the COVID-19 virus. Additionally, given the crushing discrediting of Proximal Origin, Pentagon officials would also have been aware of Fauci's efforts to seed a false narrative about the origin of COVID-19.

Proximal Origin was initially conceived by Fauci during a secret teleconference held on Feb. 1, 2020. The ostensible purpose of the teleconference was to deflect attention from a possible lab origin of COVID-19 and to shift the focus to a natural origin theory. Fauci directed a number of scientists, led by Kristian Andersen of Scripps Research and Robert Garry of Tulane Medical School, to pen a study that could be used to discredit the lab leak theory. Despite being directly involved in the inception of the paper, as well as in shaping its arguments, Fauci's role was concealed from the public. Fauci later bestowed Andersen and Garry with lavish taxpayer-funded grants.

The defects in Proximal Origin were immediately noticed by reviewers at science journal Nature. This fact only became known late last year from emails obtained via the Freedom of Information Act by

independent journalist Jimmy Tobias. However, with the help of Jeremy Farrar, who now is the chief scientist of the World Health Organization and who had helped Fauci shape the natural origin narrative, Proximal Origin was accepted for publication in Nature Medicine on March 17, 2020. It boldly concluded that no “laboratory-based scenario is plausible.”

On April 17, 2020, President Donald Trump confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic likely started in a Wuhan laboratory in China. On the same day, while attending a White House press conference, Fauci categorically dismissed the possibility of a lab origin of COVID-19, citing Proximal Origin as corroboration. Fauci feigned independence, telling reporters that he could not recall the names of the authors. What was not known at the time was that Fauci not only knew the authors well, but had personally led the effort to have Proximal Origin written.

Proximal Origin became the media’s go-to natural origin authority, repeating Fauci’s claim that the paper provided dispositive proof that COVID-19 had come out of nature. It also became the most-read article on COVID-19 and one of the most cited academic papers of all time.

Yet, while the public was being told by Fauci and the media that Proximal Origin had settled the origin debate, Pentagon researchers came to a very different conclusion.



National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci waits for the beginning of a hearing before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies of Senate Appropriations Committee at Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 17, 2022. (Alex Wong/GettyImages)

Chretien and Cutlip found that COVID-19's features, which Proximal Origin ascribed to natural evolution, were actually "consistent with another scenario: that SARS-CoV-2 was developed in a laboratory, by methods that leading coronavirus researchers commonly use to investigate how the viruses infect cells and cause disease, assess the potential for animal coronaviruses to jump to humans, and develop drugs and vaccines."

One of those features is COVID-19's furin cleavage site, which makes the virus particularly infectious in humans. This feature has never been observed in any naturally occurring betacoronaviruses. Proximal Origin claimed that since this feature was not part of any known laboratory-generated virus, it had to have arisen through a "natural evolutionary process." As Chretien and Cutlip point out, this argument is "not based on scientific analysis but on an assumption that the prior work would have been published if it had been done."

According to the Pentagon report, a similar argument made in Proximal Origin about COVID-19's receptor binding domain, the part of a virus that allows it to dock to cells in humans or animals, was "not a scientific argument but rather an assumption of intent and methodology for a hypothesized scientist."

The Pentagon report also highlights a major logical flaw in Proximal Origin in that it relies on a lack of publications about particular aspects of coronavirus engineering as a reason to conclude that such engineering did not take place. For instance, Proximal Origin claims that "the genetic data irrefutably show that SARS-CoV-2 is not derived from any previously used virus backbone." As Chretien and Cutlip point out, "The absence of a publication does not mean that the research was not done."

In what is perhaps the most notable portion of the Chretien and Cutlip paper, the authors note the collaboration between Ralph Baric of the University of North Carolina, a pioneer of gain-of-function experiments, and Shi Zhengli, the director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology. As Chretien and Cutlip point out, Baric and Shi carried out an experiment in 2015 that mirrored how the COVID-19 virus would have been engineered in a laboratory. The direct link between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the know-how needed to make COVID-19 was not mentioned in Proximal Origin.

While Chretien and Cutlip did not offer a definitive answer on the origin of COVID-19, they concluded that none of the arguments in Proximal Origin lessened the plausibility of a laboratory origin. Proximal Origin claimed to have done the exact opposite.

Given the sweeping nature of the takedown of Proximal Origin, the question is why the public was not told about the Pentagon's paper, which was fully paid for by taxpayers?

Instead, the Pentagon, which was led at the time by Trump appointee Mark Esper, allowed Fauci's false origin narrative to fester. One of the two authors, Cutlip, left the Department of Defense in 2021. The circumstances of his departure are not known. Cutlip's bio states that he is currently a visiting professor at Fairmont State University in West Virginia. The bio also states that Cutlip was part of "the Corona Virus Task Force, providing intelligence to the President of the United States." It is not known

whether Cutlip shared his insights with either Trump or President Joe Biden.

By Hans Mahncke

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