

The Deplorable Ethics of a Preemptive Pardon for Fauci

BY  ALEX WASHBURNE JANUARY 20, 2025 GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH 7 MINUTE READ

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Anthony “I represent science” Fauci can now stand beside Richard “I am not a crook” Nixon in the history books as someone who received the poison pill of a preemptive pardon.

While Nixon was pardoned for specific charges related to Watergate, the exact crimes for which Fauci was pardoned are not specified. Rather, the pardon specifies:

Baseless and politically motivated investigations wreak havoc on the lives, safety, and financial security of targeted individuals and their families. Even when individuals have done nothing wrong – and in fact have done the right things – and will ultimately be exonerated, the mere fact of being investigated and prosecuted can irreparably damage reputations and finances.

In other words, the dying breath of the Biden administration appears to be pardoning Fauci for crimes he didn't commit, which would seem to make a pardon null and void. The pardon goes further than simply granting clemency for crimes. Clemency usually alleviates the punishment associated with a crime, but here Biden attempts to alleviate the burden of investigations and prosecutions, the likes of which our justice system uses to uncover crimes.

It's one thing to pardon someone who has been subjected to a fair trial and convicted, to say they have already paid their dues. Gerald Ford, in his pardon of Richard Nixon, admitted that Nixon had already paid the high cost of resigning from the highest office in the land. Nixon's resignation came as the final chapter of prolonged investigations into his illegal and unpresidential conduct during Watergate, and those investigations provided us the truth we needed to know that Nixon was a crook and move on content that his ignominious reputation was carved into stone for all of history.

Fauci, meanwhile, has evaded investigations on matters far more serious than Watergate. In 2017, DARPA organized a grant call – the PREEMPT call – aiming to preempt pathogen spillover from wildlife to people. In 2018 a newly formed collaborative group of scientists from the US, Singapore, and Wuhan wrote a grant – the DEFUSE grant – proposing to modify a bat sarbecovirus in Wuhan in a very unusual way. DARPA did not fund the team because their work was too risky for the Department of Defense, but in 2019 Fauci's NIAID funded this exact set of scientists who never wrote a paper together prior or since. In late 2019, SARS-CoV-2 emerged in Wuhan with the precise modifications proposed in the DEFUSE grant submitted to PREEMPT.

It's reasonable to be concerned that this line of research funded by Fauci's NIAID may have caused the pandemic. In fact, if we're sharp-penciled and honest with our probabilities, it's likely beyond reasonable doubt that SARS-CoV-2 emerged as a consequence of research proposed in DEFUSE. What we don't know, however, is whether the research proceeded with US involvement or not.

Congress used its constitutionally-granted investigation and oversight responsibilities to investigate and oversee NIAID in search of answers. In the process of these investigations, they found endless pages of emails with unjustified redactions, evidence that Fauci's FOIA lady could "make emails disappear," Fauci's right-hand-man David Morens aided the DEFUSE authors as they navigated disciplinary measures at NIH and NIAID, and there were significant concerns that NIAID sought to obstruct investigations and destroy federal records.

Such obstructive actions did not inspire confidence in the innocence of Anthony Fauci or the US scientists he funded in 2019. On the contrary, Fauci testified twice under oath saying NIAID did not fund gain-of-function research of concern in Wuhan...but then we discovered a 2018 progress report of research NIAID funded in Wuhan revealing research they funded had enhanced the transmissibility of a bat SARS-related coronavirus 10,000 times higher

than the wild virus. That is, indisputably, gain-of-function research of concern. Fauci thus lied to the American public and perjured himself in his testimony to Congress, and Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) has referred Fauci's perjury charges to the Department of Justice.

What was NIAID trying to preempt with their obstruction of Congressional investigations? What is Biden trying to preempt with his pardon of Fauci? Why do we not have the 2019 NIAID progress report from the PI's who submitted DEFUSE to PREEMPT and later received funding from NIAID?

It is deplorable for Biden to preemptively pardon Fauci on his last day in office, with so little known about the research NIAID funded in 2019 and voters so clearly eager to learn more. With Nixon's preemptive pardon, the truth of his wrongdoing was known and all that was left was punishment. With Fauci's preemptive pardon, the truth is not yet known, NIAID officials in Fauci's orbit violated federal records laws in their effort to avoid the truth from being known, and Biden didn't preemptively pardon Fauci to grant clemency and alleviate punishment, but to stop investigations and prosecutions the likes of which could uncover the truth.

I'm not a Constitutional scholar prepared to argue the legality of this maneuver, but I am an ethical human being, a scientist who contributed another grant to the PREEMPT call, and a scientist who helped uncover some of the evidence consistent with a lab origin and quantify the likelihood of a lab origin from research proposed in the DEFUSE grant. Any ethical human being knows that we need to know what caused the pandemic, and to deprive the citizenry of such information from open investigations of NIAID research in 2019 would be to deprive us of critical information we need to self-govern and elect people who manage scientific risks in ways we see fit. As a scientist, there are critical questions about bioattribution that require testing, and the way to test our hypotheses is to uncover the redacted and withheld documents from Fauci's NIAID in 2019.

The Biden administration's dying breath was to pardon Anthony Fauci not for the convictions for crimes he didn't commit (?) but to avoid investigations that could be a reputational and financial burden for Anthony Fauci. A pardon to preempt an investigation is not a pardon; it is obstruction. The Biden administration's dying breath is to obstruct our pursuit of truth and reconciliation on the ultimate cause of 1 million Americans' dying breaths.

To remind everyone what we still need to know, it helps to look through the peephole of what we've already found to inspire curiosity about what else we'd find if only the peephole could be widened. Below is one of the precious few emails investigative journalists pursuing FOIAs against NIAID have managed to obtain from the critical period when SARS-CoV-2 is believed to have emerged. The email connects DEFUSE PI's Peter Daszak (EcoHealth Alliance), Ralph Baric (UNC), Linfa Wang (Duke-NUS), Ben Hu (Wuhan Institute of Virology), Shi ZhengLi (Wuhan Institute of Virology) and others in October 2019. The subject line "NIAID SARS-CoV Call – October 30/31" connects these authors to NIAID.

To: Alison Andre[andre@ecohealthalliance.org]
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From: 任雨霏[renliiipb]
Sent: Thur 10/17/2019 11:08:03 AM (UTC-04:00)
Subject: Re:NIAID SARs-CoV call - October 30/October 31

Dear Alison,
Thanks for the informatio. We will connect to the meeting center.
Best
Lili Ren

At 2019-10-17 21:36:38, "Alison Andre" <andre@ecohealthalliance.org> wrote:

Dear All,

Our NIAID SARs-Cov call has been scheduled for Wednesday October 30th at 8:00pm Eastern time (Thursday October 31st at 8:00am China/Singapore time).

Call in details:

US:
China:
Singapore:

Passcode:

Calendar invite to follow.

Thank you,
Alison

Alison Andre
Executive Assistant to the President

It is approximately in that time range – October/November 2019 – when SARS-CoV-2 is hypothesized to have entered the human population in Wuhan. When it emerged, SARS-CoV-2 was unique among sarbecoviruses in having a furin cleavage site, as proposed by these authors in their 2019 DEFUSE grant. Of all the places the furin cleavage site could be, the furin cleavage site of SARS-CoV-2 was in the S1/S2 junction of the Spike protein, precisely as proposed by these authors.

In order to insert a furin cleavage site in a SARS-CoV, however, the researchers would've needed to build a reverse genetic system, i.e. a DNA copy of the virus. SARS-CoV-2 is unique among coronaviruses in having exactly the fingerprint we would expect from reverse genetic systems. There is an unusual even spacing in the cutting/pasting sites for the enzymes BsaI and BsmBI and an anomalous hot-spot of silent mutations in precisely these sites, exactly as researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology have done for other coronavirus reverse genetic systems. The odds of such an extreme synthetic-looking pattern occurring in nature are, conservatively, about 1 in 50 billion.

The virus did not emerge in Bangkok, Hanoi, Bago, Kunming, Guangdong, or any of the myriad other places with similar animal trade networks and greater contact rates between people and sarbecovirus reservoirs. No. The virus emerged in Wuhan, the exact place and time one would expect from DEFUSE.

With all the evidence pointing the hounds towards NIAID, it is essential for global health security that we further investigate the research NIAID funded in 2019. It is imperative for our constitutional democracy, for our ability to self-govern, that we learn the truth. The only way to learn the truth is to investigate NIAID, the agency Fauci led for 38 years, the agency that funded gain-of-function research of concern, the agency named in the October 2019 call by DEFUSE PI's, the agency that funded this exact group in 2019.

A preemptive pardon prior to the discovery of truth is a fancy name for obstruction of justice. The Biden administration's dying breath must be challenged, and we must allow Congress and the incoming administration to investigate the possibility that Anthony Fauci's NIAID-supported research caused the Covid-19 pandemic.

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