COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY,

SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC,

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: MICHAEL FARZAN

Friday, April 21, 2023

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held at WilmerHale, 60 State Street, Boston, Massachusetts, commencing at 9:54 a.m.

Appearances:

For the SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC:

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For MICHAEL FARZAN:

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Mr. Benzine. This is a transcribed interview of Dr. Michael Farzan, conducted by the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic under the authority granted to it by H.R. 5 and the rules of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

This interview was requested by Chairman Brad Wenstrup as part of the select subcommittee's Oversight of the Federal Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Further, pursuant to H.R. 5, the select subcommittee has wide-ranging jurisdiction, but specifically to investigate the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, including, but not limited to the Federal Government's funding of gain-of-function research.

Can the witness please state his name and spell his last name for the record?

Mr. Farzan. Michael Farzan, F-a-r-z-a-n.

Mr. Benzine. Thank you.

Dr. Farzan, my name is Mitch Benzine, and I'm the staff director for the majority staff of the select subcommittee, and I want to thank you for coming in today for this interview. The select subcommittee recognizes that you are here voluntarily and we appreciate that.

Under the select subcommittee and Committee on Oversight and Accountability's rules, you are allowed to have an attorney present to advise you during this interview. Do you have an attorney representing you in a personal capacity present with you today?

Mr. Farzan. I do.

Mr. Benzine. Will counsel please identify themselves.

Mr. Green. Joel Green, WilmerHale.

Mr. Benzine. Is there also an attorney present representing your employer with you today?

Mr. Farzan. I believe he's representing me.

Mr. Benzine. Thank you.

For the record, starting with the majority staff, can the additional staff members please introduce themselves with their name, title, and affiliation.

Ms. Coleman. Olivia Coleman, press secretary.

Mr. Pellegrini. Giancarlo Pellegrini, chief counsel for the minority.

Mr. Lichtman. Miles Lichtman, staff director for the minority.

Ms. Kelly. Kelly O'Keeffe, communications director and senior advisor for the minority.

Mr. Benzine. And can the other counsel?

Ms. Carbonel. Yeah, Iris Carbonel.

Mr. Benzine. Thank you.

Dr. Farzan, before we begin, I would like to go over the ground rules for this interview.

The way this interview will proceed is as follows: The majority and minority staff will alternate asking you questions, one hour per side, per round until each side is finished with their questioning. The majority staff will begin and proceed for an hour, and then the minority staff will have an hour to ask questions. We will then alternate back and forth in this manner until both sides have no more questions.

If either side is in the middle of a specific line of questions, they may choose to end a few minutes past an hour to ensure completion of that specific line of questioning, including any pertinent follow-ups.

In this interview, while one member of the staff for each side may lead the questioning, additional staff may ask questions.

There is a court reporter taking down everything I say and everything you say to

make a written record of this interview.

For the record, to be clear, please wait until the staffer questioning you finishes each question before you begin your answer, and the staffer will wait until you finish your response before proceeding to the next question.

Further, to ensure the court reporter can properly record this interview, please speak clearly, concisely, and slowly. Also, the court reporter cannot record nonverbal answers, such as nodding or shaking your head. So it is important that you answer each question with an audible, verbal answer.

Exhibits may be entered into the record. Majority exhibits will be identified numerically; minority exhibits identified alphabetically.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible. So we will take our time. If you have any questions or do not fully understand the question, please let us know. We will attempt to clarify, add context to, or rephrase our questions.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. If we ask about specific conversations or events in the past and you are unable to recall the exact words or details, you should testify to the substance of those conversations or events to the best of your recollection. If you recall only a part of a conversation or event, you should give us your best recollection of those events or parts of conversations that you do recall.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. Although you're here voluntarily and we will not swear you in, you're required, pursuant to Title 18, section 1001 of the United States Code, to answer questions from Congress truthfully. This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff in this interview.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. If, at any time, you knowingly make false statements, you could be subject to criminal prosecution.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. Is there any reason you're unable to provide truthful testimony today?

Mr. Farzan. No.

Mr. Benzine. The select subcommittee follows the rules of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability. Please note that if you wish to assert a privilege over any statement today, that assertion must comply with the rules of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

Pursuant to that, Committee Rule 16(c)(1) states: For the chair to consider assertions of privilege over testimony or statements, witnesses or entities must clearly state the specific privilege being asserted and the reason for the assertion on or before the scheduled date of testimony or appearance.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. Ordinarily, we take a 5-minute break at the end of each hour of questioning, but if you need a longer break or a break before that, please let us know,

and we'll be happy to accommodate. However, to the extent that there is a pending question, we would ask that you finish answering the question before we take the break.

Do you understand?

Mr. Farzan. Yes.

Mr. Benzine. Do you have any other questions before we begin?

Mr. Farzan. No.

Mr. Benzine. Thank you.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q First, again, I want to thank you for your long career. I want to start briefly discussing your education and experience. Where did you attend undergraduate school, and what degree did you graduate with?

A Harvard College in government.

Q And where did you get your doctorate?

A Harvard Medical School in immunology.

Q Who is your current employer, and what is your current job title?

A Boston Children's Hospital. I'm a professor of pediatrics.

Q And then, briefly, can you run through your past experiences, your career up until now?

A Sure. I started, I guess, started from my Ph.D. work. My Ph.D. work was in HIV and the process by which the virus gets into cells. I continued that work and also then expanded to other viruses, like coronaviruses. I mostly came up through the ranks at Harvard in various parts of the Harvard teaching hospital or the main preclinical department and became professor, full professor in 2012, and then moved to Scripps Research Center and their campus in Florida. And I worked there for 10 years, being

co-chair and chair of the Department of Immunology and Microbiology, and then came back to Boston Children's Hospital as a professor of pediatrics.

Q Thank you.

Can you elaborate more on what your day-to-day in your current position looks like?

A Yeah, I oversee, actually, two labs: one at Boston Children's Hospital and the other at the Broad Institute, which is a Harvard-affiliated institute for mostly bioinformatic-like topics, and I write grants and manage the bureaucracy of grants, interact with the laboratory members, propose projects, give them ideas, shoot down ideas, whatever, you know. And, yeah, that's pretty much it.

Q Is the Broad Institute also affiliated with MIT?

A It's Broad MIT. It's called the Broad Institute of MIT, Harvard MIT, and Mass General Hospital, I believe.

Q Thank you.

Do you currently hold or have you previously held any honorary positions?

A No.

Q Do you currently hold or have you previously held any positions on boards of companies, nonprofits or otherwise?

A I am a founder of a small biotech based in Florida.

Q Can you -- so you talked a little bit about work with coronaviruses and HIV. Can you explain your experiences with emerging disease outbreaks and various other pandemic work before --

A Well, I --

Q -- 2020?

A Before 2020, it was really the -- perhaps, apart from the HIV work, the most

notable work was, of course, coronavirus. And in 2003, with the emergence of the first SARS, we got involved because we -- because it entered cells through a very similar process to HIV. So we worked on that process, and in that process, we identified the receptor for the virus and identified the receptor binding domain of the virus. And then, yeah, spent some time describing the molecular determinants of how the virus changed to become more effective in affecting humans.

Q Thank you.

So you just said that a lot of your day-to-day now is kind of the grant process, overseeing the bureaucracy. Have you, yourself, received grants from the Federal Government before?

A Oh, many times over the years.

Q Do you know, like, a ballpark of how many?

A Less than 100. Less than probably, you know, maybe 30-something, 40-something.

Q And generally on what topics?

A HIV, almost invariably HIV or some aspect of immunology associated with HIV.

Q Would you consider yourself an expert in immunology?

A Facets of immunology.

Q Thank you.

I'm going to real quick just move to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in December of 2019, and just run through a list of people and ask if you have spoken to or emailed any of the following people since, like, December 1st, 2019, regarding COVID-19, specifically.

Dr. Francis Collins?

A No.

Q Dr. Anthony Fauci?

A No.

Q Dr. Lawrence Tabak?

A No.

Q Dr. Hugh Auchincloss?

A No.

Q Dr. Cliff Lane?

A No.

Q Dr. David Morens?

A No.

Q Dr. Ping Chen?

A No.

Q Dr. Ian Watson?

A No.

Q Dr. Andrew Pope?

A No.

Q Dr. Victor Zhao?

A No.

Q Dr. Robert Redfield?

A No.

I paused on Victor Zhao because he was, many years ago, chair of the department here at Harvard.

Q Okay.

Dr. Michael Lauer?

A No.

Q Dr. David Christian Hassell?

A No.

Q Dr. Jeremy Farrar?

A No.

Q Dr. Kristian Andersen?

A Yes.

Q Dr. Robert Garry?

A No.

Q Dr. Eddie Holmes?

A No.

Q Dr. Ian Lipkin?

A No.

Q Dr. Andrew Rambaut?

A No.

Q Dr. Christian Drosten?

A No.

Q Dr. Ron Fouchier?

A No.

Q Dr. Marion Koopmans?

A No.

Q Dr. Peter Daszak?

A No.

Q Dr. Aleksei Chmura?

A No.

Q Dr. Kevin Olival?

A No.

Q Dr. Michael Worobey?

A No -- oh, pause. Yes. I met at a meeting in Stockholm and interacted.

Q Can you elaborate a little bit more?

A We were both invited to this so-called noble symposium on the origins of -- it wasn't the origins of COVID. It was on the COVID pandemic. And he gave a talk, and I gave a talk, and we interacted in a normal collegial way at that meeting.

Q Thank you.

Dr. Jonathan Pekar?

A No.

Q Dr. Florence Debarre?

A No.

Q Dr. James LeDuc?

A No.

Q Dr. Shi Zhengli?

A No.

Q Dr. George Gao?

A No.

Q Dr. Ralph Baric?

A Not after the pandemic. Not after 2020.

Q Okay. Thank you. A lot of noes. That makes things easy.

I want to ask the same kind of question about various institutions in -- primarily, in China from December 2019 to present, just any interaction.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology?

A No.

Q The Wuhan Centers for Disease Control and Prevention?

A No.

Q The Chinese Centers for Disease Control and Prevention?

A No.

Q Wuhan University?

A No.

Q The Chinese Academy of Sciences?

A Not after the pandemic. One of my post docs who discovered the receptor came from the Chinese Academy.

Q The Academy of Military Medical Sciences?

A No.

Q The Fifth Institute under the National Defense Ministry of China?

A No.

Q Thank you.

So you mentioned working on SARS1, and I want to talk about that a little bit and your experiences with that.

When and how did you first learn of that outbreak?

A SARS1?

Q Uh-huh.

A I'm sure the news. Yeah, you know, again, it emerged in the winter of 2002. And, yeah, I just heard about it in the news and, like any virologist, started looking into it.

Q What did the looking into look like?

A As soon as the genome became available, studying the genome. And then

what we did was we, you know, built one of the genes to study the entry process.

Q And you said that through your work, you had done a lot on how it infected cells and the receptor binding domain. Can you explain a little bit more of how SARS infect cells and what the receptor domain does?

A Sure. So the virus comes out of one cell and then needs to target another cell. It targets only cells that express a receptor, that's a susceptible cell. Particularly, a receptor that it infects is a receptor called H2. You've probably heard of.

And what happens is the viral entry protein, the spike protein, the thing that everybody has seen pictures of, has to bind that receptor, and it does so with a very -- in the case of SARS, a very well-defined, discreet domain called the receptor binding domain. And there's literally a physical interaction and a binding event between those two to the base two receptor on the cell and the viral SARS protein.

And that initiates -- that localizes the S protein in a particular way that allows for some proteolytic digestion events to occur. Meaning that the S protein gets chewed up a little bit, and that initiates confirmational changes that allowed for the viral membrane and the cell membrane, which don't like to mix or go together, that provides the energy for those two membranes to go together, to combine.

And that opens up sort of an expanding hole in the cell whereby the viral genetic material can now get into the cell and use the viral -- use the cellular machinery to now transcribe the viral genome and start the reproduction process again.

Q Did SARS1 have a furin cleavage site?

A No.

Q Can you explain the importance in virology of the furin cleavage site?

A I mentioned that it relies on a proteolytic digestion event. When and where that proteolytic digestion event occurs determines, to some extent, the kind of

cells that it can infect. And so, when talk about the kind of cells that it can infect, it talks about, you know, how efficiently it can be transmitted through different means.

And so, when you -- when a furin cleavage site -- you see a furin cleavage site, what you understand is that that virus is emerging precleaved in the producing cell, and so, you don't rely on the viral proteases on the target cell. And that changes the equation. That changes what we would say, the tropism, again, the tropism of the virus meaning the cells that the virus would prefer to go into.

And so that, again, impacts the transmissibility of the virus and the mode by which it's best transmitted.

Q Does it -- when you say it impacts the transmissibility, does it make it more transmissible in humans? Or in mammals, I guess?

A You would want to be careful about context. There's context that would be more transmissible and context that would be less transmissible.

Q Okay.

During your SARS work, did you ever travel to China?

A No.

Q So SARS not having a furin cleavage site, but having a decent receptor binding domain, was SARS1 good at infecting humans?

A It's all relative.

Q Compared to COVID-19, was SARS1 --

A SARS1 is less effective at transmitting among humans than SARS2.

Q How many -- do you remember how many cases worldwide we had of SARS1?

A About 9,000.

Q Would that kind of signify not only that it's not as efficient in transmitting,

but also that maybe it didn't have the, like, asymptomatic spread and various other things that we saw with COVID-19?

A That's reasonable.

Q Have you -- I ran through the names already, but since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you had any work with China at all?

A No -- I'm on a paper on a former post doc who worked in Shenzhen.

Q Okay.

Moving on to COVID-19, just yes or no. Is investigating the origins of COVID-19 important?

A Yes.

Q Is discovering the origins of COVID-19 important?

A Yes.

Q Why?

A Because, well, you know, I maybe can't answer that clearly because I think the action items are clear no matter what.

Q What are the action items no matter what?

A To be alert to the possibility of disruption of natural habitats that might lead to a zoonotic event, laboratory safety, and then, not in this case, but malicious intent.

Q What was the last one?

A Malicious intent.

Q Oh, okay.

A But not in this case.

Q Yeah.

I want to touch on the three things you just said and then go back to my question. So you kind of touched on, like, the three, I guess, most logical pathways of a virus

entering humanity, either from an animal to -- straight to a human, animal intermediate host then enter a human, a laboratory or research-related accident, and then a biological or chemical weapon.

Can you explain a little bit for each? Like, specifically for the zoonotic, how that would happen most likely.

A Well --

Mr. Green. I'm sorry. What's the question?

Mr. Benzine. Explaining how a zoonotic event would occur.

Mr. Green. Just generally?

Mr. Benzine. Yes, not on COVID-19.

Mr. Farzan. Not on COVID-19? There's many scenarios. The model is SARS1, and the way SARS appeared, SARS1 appeared to have emerged was somehow a bat interacted with, likely, palm civets, possibly in a farm, and then that -- those palm civets were transmitted to exotic animal marketplaces where they came in contact with humans.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q So when you say -- I think you said, like, wildlife or kind of destruction of, like, wildlife habitats was a common way. Would, like, illegal wildlife trade also kind of fall into that bucket of a potential --

A Sure, yeah, and there's many, many different pathways. I'm thinking of -- we're a little bit focused on coronaviruses when we're thinking right now, but there are many different pathways for zoonosis.

Q Do you think we, as a globe, will ever know the origins of COVID-19?

A I don't know.

Q Do you think that the origins of COVID-19 is still unsettled?

A Probably, yes, unsettled.

Q Thank you.

What would eventually become COVID-19 was first reported on ProMED on December 30th, 2019. For the record, can you explain what ProMED is?

A Sir?

Q ProMED.

A Oh, PubMed?

Q Or PubMed. Excuse me, yeah.

A So could you repeat the question?

Q Can you explain what PubMed is?

A PubMed is a resource for looking up all medically relevant or research relevant publications.

Q The report said it was an undiagnosed pneumonia from China, Hubei province. Hubei is the province that contains Wuhan. And then China first officially reported an unexplained respiratory virus the next day on December 31st, 2019. Is that when you also first heard of COVID-19?

A Within days, probably.

Q I asked you about some of these names already, but I want to do it again in this context. After you learned of this report, did you speak with or did any of the following people reach out to you via phone, email, or in person: Dr. Francis Collins?

A No.

Q Dr. Anthony Fauci?

A No.

Q Dr. George Gao?

A No.

Q Dr. Jeremy Farrar?

A No.

Q Dr. Eddie Holmes?

A No.

Q Dr. Kristian Andersen?

A Yes.

Q Dr. Ian Lipkin?

A No.

Q Dr. Andrew Rambaut?

A No.

Q Dr. Peter Daszak?

A No.

Q What was the extent of the conversation with Dr. Andersen, or interaction with Dr. Andersen?

A He called me one evening and wanted to convey to me his idea that the virus had been engineered, and was, you know, interested in talking about it, interested in my opinion on that. And I think that, you know -- more than think. I know my tone was a little bit skeptical on that possibility.

And so, we had some back and forth and I don't -- I honestly -- obviously, I've been thinking about this. I don't honestly remember the sort of nature or content of the conversation, except for one line, which is that no human has ever made that RBD. And that was, you know, sort of, I guess, what I mostly know.

Q Can you explain the significance of that line, that the COVID-19 receptor binding domain had never been engineered before, I guess?

A Yeah. It was one of three or four arguments that Kristian was forwarding

about the possibility of engineering, and it did not seem reasonable to me.

Q Do you remember the other --

A Yes.

Q -- arguments that he was forwarding?

A Yes, I do. One, of course, was the furin site. The other was a distribution of restriction sites, and there may have been others. And those were probably the most credible.

Q Okay. Thank you.

Do you recall when you were first made aware of the genomic sequence of COVID-19?

A I'm sure I downloaded it as soon as it was available.

Q What is the importance of the genomic sequence in investigating origins or generally into a virus?

A It's one of the pieces of evidence. It's the code. If there were obvious manipulation, it would be visible. It also tells you some things about the nature of the virus, the seriousness of the virus, those kind of things.

Q What -- is it possible to be manipulated without being visible?

A Yes.

Q How so?

A There are techniques that do not require -- most type technologies tend to work with and -- install and then work with restriction sites that make it convenient to place pieces of genes into other things. There are now a series of other techniques that can be used to simply insert a gene without using restriction sites. So there would be no signature necessarily of those sites.

Q Would it be -- based on the genome in your experience, would it be possible

that one of those techniques was used on COVID-19?

A Possible.

Q So we talked a little bit about this, and I'm not going to reiterate the questions, but I want to touch on the furin cleavage site a little bit more. Can you explain again for the record what the importance of a furin cleavage site is?

A It can change the kind of cells that the virus goes into and, therefore, impact the transmissibility.

And to get to the question before, it can go up or down, and there's reasons it would go up, or reasons it would go down.

Q What has been -- what role has the furin cleavage site played in COVID-19?

A We can infer by its persistence that it's been important for its transmission, for transmissibility.

Q Have there been any other SARS-related viruses or a member of the SAR-CoV virus lineage that has had a furin cleavage site?

A No.

Q Can you tell whether or not there's a furin cleavage site strictly from the genome?

A Yes.

Q On January 3rd, PubMed came out with another update. January 3rd, 2020, PubMed came out with another update and said the number of cases in Wuhan was rising and now that there were cases in Hong Kong. Does that type of spread into other countries signify human-to-human transmission?

A Yes, likely.

Q On January 14th, 2020, the World Health Organization said that there was no clear evidence of human to human transmission of the novel coronavirus. Do you

think it was clear before January 14th that it was spreading human to human?

A I don't know. That's a little out of my --

Q Okay.

I want to shift to we've been -- we discussed it a little bit, but I want to talk more specifically about how a novel virus, in this case, a novel coronavirus, may appear. And you went through kind of three viable pathways: a zoonotic event; a laboratory research-related event; and a malicious event. Is that correct?

A Yeah.

Q And you explained the zoonotic event a little bit, that it could be -- can you explain it again?

A Well, it's just somehow or another a human came in contact with either the original reservoir species or an intermediate and got infected and transmitted it to other humans.

Q So animal farming, wet markets, animal trade --

A Yes.

Q -- those kinds of situations?

In your estimation, what would be considered a laboratory or research-related accident?

A Semantics here. So I -- yeah, I would say it's a semantic point because there are many scenarios that are very gray, and some might consider it a lab leak and some might not consider it a lab leak.

Q I'll run through, like, four, and you can just say yes or no.

A It's semantics. I mean, you're asking me to define a lab leak, and I don't have a particular definition.

Q Okay.

Would a researcher in a lab intentionally manipulating viruses and getting infected be a laboratory event?

A That would certainly be on the clearer end of the spectrum.

Q What about a researcher conducting serial passage with a naturally occurring virus?

A That's still on the --

Q What about a researcher infected during fieldwork and bringing it back to the lab?

A We're entering the gray territory.

Q Okay.

Have lab accidents happened before?

A Yes.

Q Are they relatively common?

A They are more -- it's a -- I don't know if I can put an answer to that.

Q Is it important for all the investigations going on into this to investigate both pathways, a zoonotic event or a laboratory event?

A Sure.

Q I think I know the answers to some of these questions, but I'm going to run through them. Are you aware of the organization EcoHealth Alliance?

A Yes.

Q What is your awareness of them?

A Through the media.

Q Have you ever worked with EcoHealth Alliance before?

A No.

Q Do you know EcoHealth president Peter Daszak?

A No.

Q Have you ever met Peter Daszak?

A No.

Q Moving on to some more general questions on the Wuhan Institute of Virology. It is Mainland China's first biosafety level 4 laboratory. Can you explain the various biosafety levels and the type of research that would be conducted under each one?

A Not well. There are certain precautions one takes at each level, and the levels get more serious as you go from one to four. And we rarely do BSL-3 work, and we mostly live in BSL-2 land. So I could speak to the fact of what was necessary there. And BSL-4, we just don't do that kind of work.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Okay.

I want to introduce what we're going to mark as majority exhibit 1. This is a fact sheet published by the U.S. State Department on January 15th, 2021. I'll give you a minute to familiarize yourself with it, but as you are, have you ever seen this document before I showed it to you just now?

A I don't think so.

Mr. Green. Just take a minute.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q So point number one, and I think it's on page 2 of the document --

A Maybe you -- this is a -- who generated this document?

Q The State Department. I printed it.

A Oh, you generated it but they produced it.

Q They produced it, and it uses declassified intelligence.

A Sure.

Q One of the -- point number one is the U.S. Government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the WIV became sick in autumn of 2019, before the first identified case of an outbreak with systems consistent with both COVID-19 and common seasonal illness.

If there was a laboratory research-related incident, would it be reasonable to believe that researchers inside the lab would be sick?

Mr. Green. Are you asking him to speculate?

Mr. Benzine. Yes.

Mr. Farzan. Not really my comfort zone.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Okay.

A Or my area of expertise.

Q We can move on from that one then.

So I want to talk generally, if it is in your expertise, about gain-of-function research. We can move on from exhibit 1 and talk generally about gain-of-function research if you're comfortable answering the questions.

Is a fair definition of gain-of-function research, quote, "a type of research that modifies a biological agent so that it confers new or enhanced activity to that agent"?

A That sounds like an official definition. Again, I'm not an expert on certainly the definition.

Q Do you -- have you ever -- in your experience, have you done those kinds of experiments?

A No, absolutely not.

Mr. Pellegrini. I'm sorry. I just didn't catch that answer.

Mr. Farzan. No. The answer is no.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q You testified earlier that not only now are you heavily involved in the bureaucracy of Federal grant-making but have received Federal grants before. In the process of grant-making in either of those roles, has there ever been research voluntarily not published?

So in the process of a grant, have you ever conducted or known someone to conduct an experiment that they did not publish or make public?

A Sure.

Q Is it also common, or in your experience, have you either firsthand or through kind of your overseeing experience known a grant application that has gotten denied by the Federal Government for funding but received funding elsewhere?

A Yes.

Q Is it common for organizations to begin some of the work under the aims of a proposed grant prior to it being approved?

A Yes.

Q During research conducted under various grants, can knowledge, techniques, or experience be transferred from, one, the primary organization to suborganizations?

A Sure.

Q Generally, back to serial passage -- and let me know again if this is outside kind of your expertise. Are you able to tell the difference between a virus that was evolved or went through passage in nature or one that evolved in a lab?

A Not decisively.

Q Can that passage pressure, either in nature or in a lab, result in a furin cleavage site?

A Yes.

Q I want to talk a little bit about the February 1st conference call that has been in the news quite a bit and the genesis and drafting of the proximal origin on SARS-CoV-2 paper.

I would like to introduce what is going to be exhibit 2.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q This is a roster, a proposed roster of the call. And for the record, it's an email between Dr. Jeremy Farrar and Dr. Anthony Fauci. And it's Bates numbered SSCP_NIH000798.

Is your name on that roster?

A No.

Q Were you invited to this call?

A No.

Q Did you take -- partake in the call?

A No.

Q Did you have prior knowledge of the call taking place?

A No.

Q Did you have knowledge after the call, before it was made public via FOIA?

A No. No.

Q I want to go to another exhibit what will be majority exhibit 3.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 3

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q This is an email chain amongst many of the scientists that were on the call, and it is Bates numbered SSCP_NIH000759 through SSCP_NIH000768. I'll give you a minute to kind of flip through and familiarize yourself.

While you're flipping through, this email chain appears to be several various scientists from around the world sharing their notes and perspectives on COVID-19. Would you agree?

A Yes.

Q Can we -- can I draw your attention to the bottom of the page that ends in 760.

A Yes.

Q At the very bottom, it says: From Mike Farzan. Do you agree that that represents you?

Mr. Green. Yeah, hold. We're going to take a second to read this.

Mr. Benzine. Yeah.

Mr. Farzan. All right. Yeah, I agree that's my name.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q That's your name? Yes, yes.

A It's referring to me.

Q That's what I was asking.

I want to keep this exhibit, but also introduce another one so we can kind of work side by side here. This is an email chain between yourself and Katherine Eban. It is Bates numbered FARZAN-0000055 through FARZAN-0000058.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 4

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q First, do you know who Katherine Eban is?

A Yes.

Q Throughout the -- can you tell me who she is, for the record?

A She's a writer for Vanity Fair.

Q Throughout the pandemic, have you received a significant number of media or press requests to comment?

A Yes.

Q Has your response been similar across the board, that you're interested in the topics but want to stay under the radar until the politicians move on?

A Yes.

Q I apologize.

Mr. Green. Our current circumstances would suggest we're not doing a very good job.

Mr. Benzine. Yes.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q At the bottom of the page that ends in 58, Ms. Eban, in the first email that starts, Hi, Dr. Farzan, appears to ask you for an interview with you. Was that the first time that she had asked to interview you?

A February 3rd -- I'm not sure. She's come at me a couple times.

Q Okay.

Mr. Green. And then the email says, I wanted to circle back.

Mr. Benzine. Yes.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q And you've declined an --

A I've declined.

Q -- on-the-record interview every time?

A Every time.

Q And going to page 56 of that exhibit, at the very bottom, it's an email or -- it's at the very bottom. It's an email from you to Ms. Eban, and it references the February 2020 meeting that we had just been talking about. And in it, you say: I never emailed anyone. I had a private evening conversation with one of the participants before the February 2020 meeting, and my comments were apparently transcribed and distributed to the other participants at the meeting.

Who was that call with prior to the February 2020 conference call?

A Kristian Andersen.

Q And that's what you had testified to previously, correct?

A Yes.

Q Did Dr. Andersen tell you that he was going to attribute you to those comments?

A I am not sure. I think there is an email suggesting he did, but, yeah.

Q When you were speaking with Dr. Andersen, did he ever tell you or imply that there was a conference call after?

A No.

Mr. Pellegrini. Sorry. Was that no?

Mr. Benzine. No.

Mr. Farzan. That's a no.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Next in that email, you write: I do not remember whether I provided permission for my off-the-cuff thoughts to be distributed this way.

Do you recall whether, sitting here now, whether or not you gave permission to Dr. Anderson?

A I still don't know.

Q Why, in your own estimation, why wouldn't you have given permission?

Mr. Green. I don't think he said he didn't. He just doesn't recall whether he did or did not.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Flipping to the page that ends in 55, at the very bottom of the page, it's an email from you back to Ms. Eban, and it states: First set of enumerated observations appear to be result of notes KA took from our telephone one night conversation before the early Feb meeting.

Is KA Kristian Andersen?

A Yes.

Q Is this the same conversation that we've been talking about --

A Yes.

Q -- that late-night conversation?

It's the same email, but it flips then to the top of page 56. You continue: The second set of quotes appear to be Farrar speaking for himself based on those notes, or possibly KA summarizing his feeling about my notes. There may also have been a paraphrased quote from me. I sometimes give probabilities to things in this manner, but where the quotes were lost, I am simply not sure.

Here today, do you recall if you ever gave the probabilities that are referenced?

A I do not know.

Q You also say that you never wished to have a public opinion on the various scenarios. Why not?

A I suppose many reasons. For starting, it would require a lot of work to give a decisive answer.

Q I now want to introduce what will be majority exhibit 5.

Mr. Green. Are you done with these?

Mr. Benzine. For the most part. I'd keep them just in case.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 5

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q And for the record, this is an email chain between yourself and a gentleman named Diego Rod. It is Bates numbered FARZAN-0000065 through FARZAN-0000069.

Just at the outset, do you know who Diego Rod is?

A No.

Q I think that was pretty clear from the emails.

Did you get a lot -- throughout the pandemic, have you gotten a lot of kind of these kinds of emails of people you don't know asking for your opinion on things?

A Yes.

Q So at the bottom of page 69, Mr. Rod asks you: Has your estimate changed from 70:30 or 60:40 lab:nature?

And you responded: I don't recall ever thinking the probabilities favored a lab leak.

Mr. Rod emailed back and cited the emails we were just discussing in exhibit 3, the notes from the conference call that has your name on it. And you responded: I think those numbers were inverted.

I know you said you don't recall, but I'm going to ask the question anyway. Based off your recollection, do you think the numbers were inverted, that you were actually 30:70 or 40:60?

A I don't know and I don't know even if I provided numbers.

Q Okay.

Going back to, I believe, exhibit 3, the conference call notes. So in them, it's -- and you've said this before. It's clearly, at a minimum, secondhand, and, as you testified, you were not on the conference call. You did not email with any of these people and talks a little bit about it.

And do you have any speculation as to why Dr. Andersen shared your thoughts on the call?

Mr. Green. You have to answer verbally.

Mr. Farzan. No, I don't have any speculation.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Have you talked, spoken with Dr. Andersen since then regarding this?

Mr. Green. Since when?

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Since February 1st, 2020, regarding him affiliating these comments --

A We've had email exchange, exchanges.

Q Can you kind of summarize what those were?

A Mostly to the point that everything is going public, look out.

Q Okay. And for the record, those emails have not been produced to the committee.

Have you had any conversations with Dr. Farrar since -- at all?

A No, never.

Q Never. Okay.

Mr. Green. I'm sorry. I didn't understand the last question. Can you repeat it, please?

Mr. Benzine. Had any --

Mr. Green. Oh, Farrar.

Mr. Benzine. Farrar, since he was on this, had any conversations with Farrar.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Going to the Andersen conversations via email. To the best of your recollection, since we do not have copies of those emails, what was kind of the gist of them beyond emails are going public, look out? Like, what else was said?

Mr. Green. And I'm just going to direct Dr. Farzan not to reveal any privilege information or communications that involve Scripps' attorneys.

Mr. Farzan. Right.

Just, really, just kind of look out, that these emails were public and, you know, be alert.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q To your recollection, when did those -- did the email conversation take place?

A I don't even have a very good fix on this. Basically, when the initial emails became public.

Q Okay.

Again, to your recollection, via FOIA or after there was congressional interest?

A Yeah, about that time, yes.

Q Okay.

Mr. Benzine. We're getting close to the end of the hour. So I think we'll go

ahead and go off the record and take a 5-minute break.

[Recess.]

[11:02 a.m.]

Mr. Pellegrini. Back on the record.

EXAMINATION:

BY MR. PELLEGRINI:

Q Dr. Farzan, my name is Giancarlo Pellegrini, the minority chief counsel for the select subcommittee. I will be asking you a few questions. All the same guidelines my colleague described for your conversation with him will also apply to our conversations.

If I could please direct you back to Majority Exhibit 3, it is a rather lengthy email chain, and the first page of it is bates numbered SSCP-NIH-759.

A Yes.

Q And on the second page of that document with the bates number 760 at the bottom, we have the, "from Mike Farzan," phrase that we discussed earlier.

A Yes. Sorry.

Q No. Beneath that phrase is a numbered list one through five. Number one on that numbered list, if I could read it out loud for you, is the, "RBD didn't look engineered to him," the him presumably is you, "as in no human would have selected the individual mutations and cloned them into the RBD, "parentheses, "I think we all agree."

That parentheses, I think we all agree, are you inclined to guess that that is Dr. Farrar now speaking as opposed to you, Dr. Farzan?

A I know it is not me. I don't know who it is.

Q It is not you, that is the point. Right.

I think you alluded to that same concept earlier, which is the idea that the RBD does not look engineered to you because no human would have selected those individual mutations. Does that continue to be your view today --

A Yes.

Q -- more or less?

Could you just explain a little bit more about the logic of that thought and the science underpinning it? I do want to caution you, I do not have a scientific background, so laymen's terms to the extent possible, please.

A So the phrase -- this is somebody's summary of a sentence that is probably the only sentence I fully remember of the conversation, which is no human made that RBD. And the reason was, sort of, it was too clever. It was clearly a product of evolution and selection rather than somebody either grabbing it from a known source or changing it in a way that they would imagine make it even better.

Q Where would their notion or their lack of imagination, where would that come from? Preexisting knowledge or studies? Could you talk a little more about that?

A Preexisting coronaviruses. The body of work that had been done previously.

Q There seems to be -- of course, you cannot speak to this -- but at least it is my sense that I don't want to use the phrase universal agreement, but there seems to be a fairly widespread scientific belief in exactly this, that the RBD seems to not be engineered. Is that also your perception?

A Yes. And I will add, sort of, gratuitously, that it is been really -- there has been a lot of data since then that is very consistent with that.

Q Okay. And there was a, I think, a slightly separate discussion about the extent to which today's technology can allow somebody to manipulate a virus without leaving a signature?

A Sure.

Q Would it be correct to say then that although manipulation of SARS-CoV-2 without leaving a signature, though that would have been perhaps technically possible, the particular mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 RBD strongly suggest that deliberate engineering did not occur?

A Let me make a scientific point. So the signature that we were referring to was something in the nucleotides, meaning the DNA code for the protein. And so, you know, there was no signature for that. But the analysis that I was doing sort of, you know -- maybe analysis is too fancy a word, but the kind of impression I was having was that the RBD as a protein was not something a human would have conceived of.

Q Okay. Thank you.

[Farzan Exhibit No. A
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. PELLEGRINI:

Q I would like to introduce minority exhibit A. I will give you a copy of that. One to you.

I will give you a moment to review the email, it is relatively brief.

A Yeah.

Q Is the email familiar to you?

A Recently because I was provided a list of emails.

Q Great. This is an exchange between yourself and Dr. Andersen in June of 2021. Dr. Andersen, in the middle of the page says to you, "I hope people haven't been bothering you as Mike in my email to Tony," to which you respond, "Nah, just enjoying the minor notoriety."

Do you have a general recollection of what Dr. Andersen is referring to there?

A A general recollection, yes.

Q What is that general recollection?

A There was an email that listed five people who said something about, you know, we think it is not evolutionary, a product of evolution, and I was listed on that.

Q And was that email then somehow publicly -- made publicly available?

A Yes, I believe it was, a part of the FOIA thing.

Q Got it. And so in the previous hour, there was a discussion of the possibility of yourself and Dr. Andersen at some point trading emails about the -- something is coming, something is going to happen as a result of information being made publicly available?

A Yeah.

Q And I think there was a discussion about, the extent to which, whatever emails it was you were thinking of may or may not have been produced to the select subcommittee.

My question is simply: Is it possible that this email exchange, which has been previously produced, is the one that you were thinking of?

A Yeah. I -- yes.

Q That is a possibility?

A Yeah. Yes.

Q Great. If I could just ask you a more general question without respect to any particular email: As you sit here today, we described a few of the different possible origins of SARS-CoV-2; zoonotic, natural, laboratory-based, or malicious intent. As you sit here today, what is your view about which of those options is perhaps likelier than the other, understanding that we all lack certainty? But do you have a view as to likelihoods?

A Well, two things. One, I think we can probably take malicious intent off the

table very cleanly and early. And then the rest of it, you know, it depends on a definition of lab leak and all this. And so -- and the answer is, I think -- well, I just don't know, I guess. I don't have an opinion of which is more likely at this point.

Q I think what I am going to do is turn it over to my colleague, Mr. Lichtman for a few questions.

BY MR. LICHTMAN:

Q Thank you, Dr. Farzan.

During the previous hour, you mentioned having a general familiarly with the BSL safety labs, noting that you have done BSL2 work and rarely BSL3 work. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Would you feel any concern as a general matter about the possibility of researchers working with SARS-like coronaviruses at BSL2 facilities?

A Would I have a concern about that? Yes.

Q Could you elaborate on that, please?

A For a replicative virus with pandemic potential, that would be an inappropriate safety level.

Q And regardless of whether SARS-CoV-2 emerged in nature or from a research-related incident, is it important to raise oversight and safety standards for work with SARS-like coronaviruses and similar viruses?

A Yes.

Q Is it important to raise oversight and safety standards for any gain of function research that might be occurring both domestically and internationally?

A Being careful about your definition of gain of function so that it is not overly broad, yes.

Q And regardless of whether SARS-CoV-2 emerged naturally or from a

research-related incident, is it important to prioritize our efforts to prevent, detect, and control zoonotic pathogens and diseases?

A Yes.

Q Turn it back to Giancarlo.

Mr. Pellegrini. I think that that is all the questions the minority has for this particular round. So we can go off the record.

[Recess.]

Mr. Benzine. Back on the record.

Thank you, Dr. Farzan. We are kind of wrapping up here, and I have a few questions. Then I want to talk about the proximal origin paper briefly.

First, I want to introduce this as Exhibit 6.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 6

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q It is emails from you and Dr. Andersen, and bates numbered Farzan, and then six 0s, 1 and through Farzan six 0s, 3. I want to go to the bottom of page 2. You don't have to read the text. I am just going to ask you a specific question.

The bottom of page 2. You provide your cell phone to Dr. Andersen, and Dr. Andersen responds, "Great, thanks, Mike. Eddie should contact you. His number is," and then an Australian cell phone number.

Do you believe that to be Eddie Holmes?

A Yes.

Q Did Eddie Holmes ever contact you?

A No.

Q Thank you.

We will shift gears, and I will introduce as Exhibit 7 -- and my apologies for it not being stabled.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 7

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q So while I am passing this out, this is the final published version of a paper entitled, "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2," published as a correspondence in Nature Medicine Magazine; is that correct?

A Yes.

Q In this paper, the authors, of which you are not one, but the authors are Dr. Kristen Andersen, Dr. Andrew Rambaut, Dr. Ian Lipkin, Dr. Edward Holmes, and Dr. Robert Garry. They make two primary assertions in both, kind of, the introduction and the conclusion. In the introduction, it is at the bottom of the second paragraph in the first column. And it says, "Our analysis clearly show that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus. Would you agree with that assertion?

A The assertion that this is what this says or --

Q Or their assertion in the paper.

Mr. Green. Can you repeat the question, please?

Mr. Benzine. The paper asserts that our analysis, meaning the authors that I just read, clearly shows that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus. Do you agree with that statement?

Mr. Farzan. Yeah. No -- I -- you know --

Mr. Green. Are you asking if he agrees with their analysis, or are you asking if he agrees with --

Mr. Benzine. Correct, if he agrees with their analysis in the statement that they

produced.

Mr. Farzan. It was not a purposefully manipulated virus, and I -- it is -- you know, more recent analysis suggests it was not a laboratory construct -- oh, yeah. Excuse me. Construct. We are missing the word construct. It was not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q Okay. Flipping to page 3 of the document. In the center column at the end of the first full paragraph -- so the paragraph starts with, "the genomic features."

A Sorry. We are on the final page?

Q Yeah. In the center column. The paragraph starts with, "the genomic features."

A Yes.

Q The last line is, "However, since we observed all of notable SARS-CoV-2 features, including the optimized receptor binding domain and polybasic cleavage site in related coronaviruses in nature, we do not believe that any type of laboratory based scenario is plausible. Do you agree with the authors' assertion there?

A Not -- no.

Q Can you for the record, is a polybasic cleavage site and a furin cleavage site the same thing?

A Yes, in this context.

Q Have there been polybasic cleavage sites or furin cleavage sites observed in SARS-like coronaviruses in nature?

A I know, but that is not what that says, of course, but yes.

Q Have there been furin cleavage sites in related -- what is a related coronavirus?

A Yeah, what is a related coronavirus. There certainly have been a lot of furin sites emerging in coronaviruses, but there is no example of a sarbecovirus that has a furin site other than SARS2.

Q Thank you. Moving on, same document, in the acknowledgments section that is at the bottom of the third column, and on the fourth line it says, "We thank M Farzan for discussions."

Do you believe that is referring to you?

A Yes.

Q Do you believe that is referring to your conversation you had with Dr. Andersen before the February 1st phone call?

A I don't know. I don't know. I was not aware that he had done this.

Q You were not aware that Dr. Andersen thanked for you discussions?

A I was not aware until this, you know, sort of, became a public issue. Yes. Yeah.

Q Okay. Did you -- just so this is a clean question: Dr. Andersen being a corresponding author for this paper thanked you, Dr. Farzan, for discussions in the acknowledgments section, and you were not aware of that prior to publication?

A I was not aware of that prior to publication. I -- the conversations would be presumably the one that I had.

Q All right. Thank you.

Moving on to -- this will be Exhibit 7 -- Exhibit 8. Excuse me.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 8

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q This is an email between yourself and -- he is German, so I am going to not

pronounce his name correctly -- Jens Kuhn?

A Jens.

Q Jens Kuhn. And bates marked Farzan hyphen 0000105. And at the bottom, the last email from Jens, Dr. Kuhn -- first, for the record, who is Dr. Kuhn?

A Dr. Kuhn was a -- he graduated from my laboratory, and he is a virologist who -- he is working for a contractor right now, and I don't know the name. It is a contractor for the Federal Government, and I don't know what the --

Q Okay. His email address is NAID.NIH.gov, so a fair assumption that the contractor works for --

A Works for NAID. Yeah.

Q On February 17th, Dr. Kuhn emails you a web address to virological.org, and the last line of it, the last few words, if the, "the proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2."

Do you believe that is the version of Exhibit 7 I just showed you prior to it being published in Nature Medicine?

A A version.

Q A version. And you respond, "self promotion with modest added value, managed to talk about ACE-2 and RBD without citing Farzan, Fang Li, Wenhui Li, or Steve Harrison, he said, snittily." What did you mean by that?

A I was showing a little bit of, sort of, private peeve about a failure to cite something that he should have cited in his work.

Q What was that? What should he have cited?

A The -- two things actually. One is the discovery of ACE-2, and the second is the crystal structure of ACE-2 bound to the receptor binding site.

Q Dr. Kuhn responds, "well, it is Andersen, Holmes, and Garry. That is like the three biggest egos ever combined in one piece." Do you agree with Dr. Kuhn's assertion

there that --

A I actually only know Andersen, so I really can't say.

Q Okay.

A Jens knows these people a little better.

Q All right. Thank you. We can move on from that one.

The final one -- if I am tracking correctly, Exhibit 9.

[Farzan Exhibit No. 9

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. BENZINE:

Q This is an email chain between yourself and Dr. Andersen. And bates marked Farzan hyphen 00000102 through Farzan hyphen 00000104. The primary place I want to draw your attention is Dr. Andersen's email in the center of the first page.

A Okay.

Q Well excuse me. Back up a little bit. You email first, hey, just saw your review, nice," on February 17th, 2020. Is that referencing the -- one of the drafts of proximal origin that was made public?

A Let's see, I am -- I need to see that. I don't know. The answer's going to be I don't know, but which email are we referring to?

Q On the bottom of page 102, the first page of the document, on February 17th, you emailed Dr. Andersen, "hey just saw your review, nice."

A Your review, nice. Right. That would be -- so I wrote that on February 17th. So, yeah. I am not a hundred percent sure.

Q Okay. The next email from Andersen -- Dr. Andersen he says, "Hey, Mike. Thanks. I was actually in the desert when that got pushed out, so a little rushed, IMO," meaning in my opinion, "but pressure from the higher-ups to get it out."

To your knowledge or recollection, who could be the higher-ups that he is referencing?

A No idea on that.

Q Okay. Thank you.

Some final questions. The U.S. Intelligence Committee has been investigating the origins COVID-19 since early 2020. Are you generally aware of those efforts?

A Very generally.

Q On May 26th, 2021, President Biden announced that he directed the Intelligence Committee to redouble their efforts to investigate the origins of COVID-19, and deliver an assessment in 90 days. Are you generally aware of that announcement?

A Yeah.

Q And on October 29th, 2021, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a declassified assessment regarding the origins of COVID-19. Are you generally aware of that assessment?

A Yes. I don't believe I have read it.

Q Okay. That was my next question. Have you read that assessment?

A I don't believe I have read it.

Q At any point between January 2020 and present, have you been contacted by anyone in the Intelligence Community to assist in these assessments?

A No.

Q And then my final question, and we have kind of touched on it a little bit, but do you believe sitting here today that it is possible that COVID-19 is the result of a laboratory or research-related accident?

A Yeah. Science and possible -- you know, it is -- possible is -- yes. I believe it is possible.

Q Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Benzine. We can go off the record, and I will let the minority ask questions if they have any questions.

Mr. Pellegrini. I think I think we will take 5 minutes if that is all right, and then we will just have a few more.

Mr. Benzine. Okay.

[Recess.]

[11:38 a.m.]

BY MR. PELLEGRINI:

Q We are going to go back on the record?

Dr. Farzan, we just have a few more questions for you.

A Okay.

Q I am going to start by turning it over to my colleague now?

A Okay.

Mr. Lichtman. Dr. Farzan, I would like to revisit a line of inquiry that my colleague was pursuing during the first hour regarding reports of researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology falling in the Fall of 2019.

I would like to enter into the record a document titled, "Updated Assessment on COVID Origins," that was published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the National Intelligence Council.

Let's mark this as Exhibit B.

[Farzan Exhibit No. B

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. LICHTMAN:

Q I am going to ask you turn to page 8. On page 8 there is a box of text in the upper right hand corner titled,

"Wuhan Institute of Virology Illnesses in Fall 2019, not diagnostic." Do you see the spot?

A Yes.

Q The text reads, quote, "The Intelligence Community assesses that information indicating that several Wuhan Institute of Virology researchers reported symptoms consistent with COVID-19, in autumn 2019, is not diagnostic of the pandemic's origins. Even if confirmed, hospital admission alone could not be diagnostic of COVID-19

inception." Is that correct?

A That is what it reads, yes.

Q I will pass it back to Giancarlo.

BY MR. PELLEGRINI:

Q Dr. Farzan, I have just a couple of questions about the proximal origins paper. They are more general. You don't even need to have the paper in front of you.

A Okay.

Q It is correct that you were not a coauthor of that paper?

A Correct.

Q Were you ever shown a draft of the paper before it was publicly released?

A No.

Q Were you involved in any way with rearranging or editing or tinkering with the phrasing of the proximal origins paper?

A No.

Q So you would have no firsthand personal knowledge of how the paper was written, why it was written this way, or that way; is that correct?

A That is correct.

Q Okay. This is also a general question on a slightly different topic. Dr. Anthony Fauci has been, sort of, a focal point of attention for us here in the subcommittee and in public discourse.

Could you talk just a little bit about your view of Dr. Fauci, whether you have worked with him in the past or how you view him from a reputational point of view?

A My perspective of Dr. Fauci comes from my work on HIV, and he has been a supportive HIV and worked before it was cool, before we had a drug. And so, I have very strong feelings that he was enormously useful in helping us address the HIV problem,

and in that work, build a foundation for a lot of efforts to prevent other viruses from infecting humans.

So my impression of Dr. Fauci starts in the 1980s, and you know, and that is the basis of my, I would say, probably respect for him.

Q It sounds like it is fair to say that you have a high professional regard for Dr. Fauci?

A I do.

Q Great.

I think that is all that the minority has, and we can go back off the record, and I think, conclude?

Mr. Benzine. Yup.

[Whereupon, at 11:42 a.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

_____

Witness Name

_____

Date