

United States Senate

June 22, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

Since your confirmation as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), public debate surrounding the origins of the outbreak of COVID-19 has changed drastically. In May, the United States Senate adopted a bipartisan amendment authored by myself and Senator Kristen Gillibrand calling on the World Health Assembly (WHA) to authorize an international scientific investigation into the origins of COVID-19, with full access to all relevant records, samples, and personnel in China during their 74th annual meeting.¹ The Resolution also stated that, should such an investigation not be authorized by the WHA the U.S. government partner with other willing governments around the world should carry out a “comprehensive and data-driven” investigation. Unsurprisingly, China blocked all efforts to launch an additional investigation during the WHA meeting, and their government continues to use its economic and geopolitical levers of power to undermine an independent investigation. As members of the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government, we must now follow through on our end of that Resolution.

As part of this investigation, I write to you today concerning events surrounding the 2019 World Military Games that took place in Wuhan, China from October 18-28. Following completion of the games, athletes from numerous participating countries reported experiencing symptoms similar to those associated with COVID-19. This merits a thorough examination as a possible “super spreader” event based on the time, location, and reported symptoms of the participating

¹ U.S. Congress, *S.Res. 256, A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the need to conduct a comprehensive investigation to determine the origins of COVID-19* (117th), May 28, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-resolution/256>.

athletes. Doing so has the potential to unveil further evidence around the earliest days of the outbreak of this virus.

In recent weeks, a report from the U.S. Intelligence Community that built on a State Department document confirmed at least three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) went to the hospital with COVID-like symptoms in November of 2019.² Additionally, the National Institute of Health found that blood samples collected in multiple U.S. states in early January 2020 contained COVID-19 antibodies. Researchers for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have also found antibodies in blood collected by the American Red Cross as early as Mid-December 2019.³ These events track with the estimated timeline provided by former CDC Director Robert Redfield who has stated the virus was being transmitted in Wuhan in September or October of 2019.

The World Military Games' proximity to the WIV and the new details of the athletes potentially being exposed to COVID-19 while participating in the event present an alarming coincidence our government must investigate to establish an accurate timeline of the outbreak. If these individuals were exposed in October, this evidence will further help us understand the origin of COVID-19 and prepare for future outbreaks. As such, I would appreciate a timely response to the following questions:

1. Was HHS aware of any American participants in the World Military Games demonstrating symptoms consistent with COVID-19 at any point after their return?
2. Is HHS aware of any American participants testing positive for COVID-19 antibodies at any point following their return from Wuhan, China?
3. If the answer to questions one or two is yes, was that information shared with agencies and offices within HHS or with any other federal agencies or state governments?
4. Upon the return of the American participants or at any time since, did HHS coordinate with the U.S. Army in any way regarding their arrival in the United States or domestic travel once back in the country?

² Wall Street Journal, Intelligence on Sick Staff at Wuhan Lab Fuels Debate on Covid-19 Origin, by Michael R. Gordon, Warren P. Strobel and Drew Hinshaw, May 23, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/intelligence-on-sick-staff-at-wuhan-lab-fuels-debate-on-covid-19-origin-11621796228>. see also, U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet: Activity at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, January 15, 2021, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/fact-sheet-activity-at-the-wuhan-institute-of-virology/index.html>.

³ Basavaraju, Sridhar V., Monica E. Patton, Kacie Grimm, Mohammed Ata Ur Rasheed, Sandra Lester, Lisa Mills, Megan Stumpf et al, "Serologic testing of US blood donations to identify SARS-CoV-2-reactive antibodies: December 2019-January 2020." *Clin. infect. dis* (2020), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33252659/>.

5. Are there any ongoing investigations within HHS concerning the events surrounding the World Military Games?
6. Has HHS leadership been in contact with former CDC Director Redfield regarding why he thinks his estimated timeline of when the virus began circulating in Wuhan in the fall of 2019 is accurate? If not, why?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would like to receive a response to these questions by July 6th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Roger W. Marshall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" being particularly prominent.

Roger Marshall, M.D.

United States Senator

Cc: Dr. David Kessler, Chief Science Officer for COVID-19 Task Force, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services