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News Item

China adopts Russia's disinformation playbook | Axios

By Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian
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> The Chinese Communist Party has spent the past week publicly pushing conspiracy theories intended to cast doubt on the origins of the coronavirus, and thus deflect criticism over China's early mishandling of the epidemic.
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> **Why it matters:** The strategy is a clear departure from Beijing's previous disinformation tactics and signals its increasingly aggressive approach to managing its image internationally.
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> **What's happening:** Verified Chinese government Twitter accounts, Chinese embassies and consulates, and some Chinese media outlets have promoted several different conspiracy theories about the origins of the coronavirus.
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> - One theory, tweeted multiple times by Chinese foreign ministry deputy spokesperson Zhao Lijianand boosted by official Chinese state media, states that the virus may have come from a U.S. military lab.
> - Another suggests the disease first appeared in Italy in November, before it appeared in Wuhan.
> - Numerous pronouncements from a variety of Chinese government sources have stated more vaguely that the virus may not have come from Wuhan, the city in Hubei where the outbreak began.
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