

Rejecting Covid-19 Inquiry, China Peddles Conspiracy Theories Blaming US | The New York Times

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When a conspiracy theory started circulating in China suggesting that the coronavirus escaped from an American military lab, it had largely stayed on the fringe. Now, the ruling Communist Party has propelled the idea firmly into the mainstream.

This week, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman repeatedly used an official podium to elevate unproven ideas that the coronavirus may have first leaked from a research facility in Fort Detrick, Md. A Communist Party publication, the Global Times, started an online petition in July calling for that lab to be investigated and said it gathered more than 25 million signatures.

Officials and state media have promoted a rap song by a patriotic Chinese hip-hop group that touted the same claim, with the lyrics: “How many plots came out of your labs? How many dead bodies hanging a tag?”

Beijing is peddling groundless theories that the United States may be the true source of the coronavirus, as it pushes back against efforts to investigate the pandemic’s origins in China. The disinformation campaign started last year, but Beijing has raised the volume in recent weeks, reflecting its anxiety about being blamed for the pandemic that has killed millions globally.

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