

Australia sabotaged China trade based on US media lies

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne's 19 April 2020 thought bubble on ABC Insiders, calling for an inquiry into China's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, set off a diplomatic firestorm that has damaged export trade to China, our biggest customer. Whereas previously China had been prepared to make allowances regarding accusations of barley dumping and improper labelling of beef exports, it started enforcing the letter of the law, no longer inclined to do Australian businesses any favours.

Five days before Payne's outburst, the *Washington Post* had reported that US State Department cables from 2018 expressed safety concerns over the Wuhan P4 biosecurity lab. This report prompted blowhard Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on 17 April to demand China "come clean" about the origins of the virus, which demand Payne effectively echoed. This week, the cables the *Washington Post* reported on were made public. They reveal the Post's 14 April report to have been dishonest spin which twisted the cables into an insinuation of unsafe practices whereas they say the opposite.

Washington Post reporter Josh Rogin's 14 April article was deliberately dishonest. Curiously published as an opinion column, Rogin reported: "Two years before the novel coronavirus pandemic upended the world, US Embassy officials visited a Chinese research facility in the city of Wuhan several times and sent two official warnings back to Washington about inadequate safety at the lab, which was conducting risky studies on coronaviruses from bats.

"In January 2018, the US Embassy in Beijing took the unusual step of repeatedly sending US science diplomats to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), which had in 2015 become China's first laboratory to achieve the highest level of international biosecurity safety (known as BSL-4). ...

"What the US officials learned during their visits concerned them so much that they dispatched two diplomatic cables categorised as Sensitive But Unclassified back to Washington. The cables warned about safety and management weaknesses at the WIV lab and proposed more attention and help. The first cable, which I obtained, also warns that the lab's work on bat coronaviruses and their potential human transmission 'represented a risk of a new SARS-like pandemic'. 'During interactions with scientists at the WIV laboratory, they noted the new lab has a serious shortage of appropriately trained technicians and investigators needed to safely operate this high-containment laboratory', states the 19 January 2018, cable, which was drafted by two officials from the embassy's environment, science and health sections who met with the WIV scientists."

Rogin's article fed media claims the virus originated from the Wuhan lab, but scientists in Australia, the US and Europe who had worked at the Wuhan lab objected strongly, vouching for the lab's standards and professionalism. That didn't seem to matter though, as the *WaPo* report fuelled the flames of anti-China hysteria being fanned by the China-haters in the Trump administration who were desperate to deflect blame for the USA's disastrous handling of the coronavirus pandemic onto China. Now the cables show the scientists were telling the truth and the Post was lying.

Complimentary and cooperative

The 19 January 2018 cable Josh Rogin cited firsthand is very complimentary of the new Wuhan lab, and in fact it reveals the high level of collaboration that existed between the Wuhan lab and equivalent labs in the United States. It describes the lab as "state-of-the-art", ready to contribute to the development of new anti-viral drugs and vaccines. Yes, twice the cable noted the new lab's shortage of highly trained and appropriately trained technicians and investigators needed to "safely operate" such a lab, but that observation was made in the context of how new the lab was, not as a safety concern. In the very next sentence to the one quoted by Rogin (above) as a safety concern, the cable noted: "University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston (UTMB), which has one of several well-established BSL-4 labs in the United States ... has scientific collaborations with WIV, which may help alleviate *this talent gap* [not safety deficiency-Ed.] over time." (Emphasis added.) The cable ends by citing the WIV's research on SARS-like coronaviruses from bats as an example of its capability. Not only did the cable not express safety concerns in relation to this research, it emphasised its importance: "From a public health perspective, this makes the continued surveillance of SARS-like coronaviruses in bats and study of the animal-human interface critical to future emerging coronavirus outbreak prediction and prevention."

Looking back from mid-2020 to this January 2018 cable, it is striking evidence of how complimentary and cooperative the USA and China were at the time, and stands as a stark contrast to the animosity between the two nations today. China didn't initiate the deterioration of the relationship, however, hostile political elements in the USA did, and dishonestly so. For instance, as Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo had access to these State Department cables, and would have known the *Post* was deliberately twisting them, but he participated in the lie. And Australia bought into it, at the expense of diplomatic goodwill and hardworking barley and beef exporters.

It's
time
for



Australians and Americans to wake up and learn how propaganda works, not only because it's economically damaging, but because the non-stop Western media propaganda against China is leading to war. One of Australia's chief China haters, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) director Peter Jennings, is predicting a possible military exchange with China later this year! On 19 July BBC host Andrew Marr confronted China's UK Ambassador with old ASPI footage of prisoners at a train station in Xinjiang, China, awaiting transfer to another prison, and compared it to the Nazis transporting Jews to concentration camps. In fact, the images look very similar to US prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, but that comparison doesn't make for good propaganda to demonise China as pure evil and justify the ongoing military escalation that is putting us all in danger.

By Robert Barwick, Australian Alert Service, 22 July 2020

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