The People’s Republic of China (PRC) and its ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have deceived the world about the coronavirus since its appearance in late 2019. In this situation brief, the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation compares the timeline and facts with China’s ongoing disinformation campaign about the coronavirus’ origins, nature, and spread. This brief also demonstrates how the World Health Organization (WHO) has promoted and helped legitimize China’s false claims.

The consequences of China’s deception and the WHO’s credulity are now playing out globally. It is normally difficult to assign culpability to governments and organizations charged with ensuring public health in any pandemic, but the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is materially different. The denial of information, outright fabrications, and disregard for human life—both within and outside of China’s borders—is so shocking and pervasive that the contracting of the virus by millions worldwide and the resultant death toll was not only foreseeable but entirely avoidable.

If the Chinese Communist Party had taken early steps to warn the world instead of covering up its spread, and if the WHO had simply questioned or cautioned against China’s assertions, the harm would have been significantly reduced. Instead, the PRC’s actions and WHO’s inaction precipitated a pandemic, leading to a global economic crisis and a growing loss of human life.

As a matter of justice, and to prevent future pandemics, the PRC must be held accountable through demands for economic reparations and other sanctions pertaining to human rights. China should also be suspended from full membership in the WHO and the WHO, which U.S. taxpayers fund annually, must be subject to immediate investigation and reform. Media organizations reporting on the claims of China and WHO regarding the pandemic without scrutiny or context must be cautioned against misleading the public.

Communist regimes have been responsible for the death of more than 100 million worldwide, according to global experts. The final human toll of the current pandemic cannot yet be determined, but those who have perished and will perish from the novel coronavirus must be included in that count—victims of the Chinese Communist Party and its willful disregard for both human life and its own international legal obligations.
China’s Early Deception (November – Mid-January)

The world first learned about a mysterious pneumonia-like virus in Central China in mid-December 2019, when a 57-year-old merchant at a seafood market reported feeling ill and visited a clinic. On January 9, 2020, the virus was identified by PRC authorities as “a new type of coronavirus” (SARS-CoV-2).

But recent reporting indicates that the first case was recorded in Wuhan, China, on November 17, 2019—a fact still not acknowledged by the PRC. Despite readily available information and a rapidly spreading outbreak, it took more than two months for the PRC to inform the world that the coronavirus was being transmitted among humans, which the regime finally admitted on January 20. The PRC knew about human-to-human transmission by late December, yet ordered the evidence destroyed. Such information was vital to preventing the global pandemic.

Chinese Communist Party Chairman Xi Jinping stated on February 3 that he “made requests for prevention and control of the new coronavirus pneumonia” in early January, but the evidence indicates that by then, the PRC had deliberately prevented the dissemination of knowledge necessary to stop the illness from spreading. Notably, the CCP took early measures to silence individuals in China’s scientific and health communities from publicizing information about the disease. These actions delayed the world’s understanding of—and response to—the novel illness.

The PRC simultaneously prevented outside health experts from the United States and the WHO from independently verifying data about the health situation in Wuhan. The simplest explanation for these actions is that the PRC was covering up a major outbreak which was an embarrassment to the communist leadership. The CCP has a long record of misleading the international community on health matters, most notably with previous outbreaks of SARS and AIDS.

Through the middle of January, Chinese state-run media claimed that the virus was containable. Yet other actions indicate the PRC already knew otherwise. Beginning that same month, the PRC activated a predatory global campaign to acquire medical supplies and equipment from North America and Europe for urgent shipment to China—a sign that the virus was spreading faster than Chinese authorities acknowledged. Special attention was given to personal protective equipment such as respiratory masks and gloves, meaning the PRC knew that the coronavirus...
The WHO was also aware of human-to-human transmission at an early date. Taiwan highlighted this concern to the agency on December 31. The next day the WHO asked China for more information, but on January 14 the WHO was still reporting that “preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission.”

At no point has the WHO criticized China for refusing to let it verify the PRC’s data or for pilfering global medical supplies. Instead, the WHO quickly praised China in glowing terms, even saying they were “reassured of the quality of the ongoing investigations and the response measures.” The WHO also repeated the PRC’s claim that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission despite doctors contracting the coronavirus from patients. The WHO maintained its position about the unverified or limited nature of human-to-human transmission until January 23—three days after the PRC admitted the fact.

China Creates A Global Pandemic
(Mid-January – Mid-March)

By the time Chinese officials acknowledged that the coronavirus spread between humans—a fact they already knew—it had already made its way across Asia and to Europe and North America. The reported number of infected people in the PRC also increased rapidly during this time. But China’s tally of infections and deaths were severely under-counted, as the PRC continued to crack down on free speech and prevent independent medical investigations. This further lulled the world into a false sense of security.

PRC oppression significantly increased beginning in late January. It detained and disappeared independent Chinese journalists, expelled foreign journalists, and shut down the internet in certain areas, according to netizens. State censors were simultaneously given more powers to remove more content from the internet. The CCP made every available effort to hide what was happening not only in Wuhan, but across China.

Many Chinese citizens risked their lives exposing the lies of the Communist regime. In late January and early February, Citizen journalist Chen Qiushi and salesperson Fang Bin published dozens of YouTube videos documenting images of the ongoing investigations and the response measures. The WHO also repeated the PRC’s claim that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission despite doctors contracting the coronavirus from patients. The WHO maintained its position about the unverified or limited nature of human-to-human transmission until January 23—three days after the PRC admitted the fact.

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in Wuhan: long lines outside of hospitals, grieving families, and body bags. “In front of me is the virus. Behind me is China’s legal and administrative power,” Qiushi said in one video a week before his disappearance on February 6. Fang described himself as “a person, just an ordinary person, a silly person who lifted the lid for a second.” He has not been heard from since his last video, posted February 9.

In conjunction with its domestic cover-up, the CCP began a global disinformation and propaganda campaign. From February onward, Chinese communist officials accused the United States of initially spreading the virus and intentionally planting it in Wuhan. The PRC also began shipping faulty medical supplies and equipment to foreign countries, including some whose medical resources it had already hoarded. Despite contributing to the mounting global crisis by withholding vital information about the coronavirus, the PRC nonetheless sought to benefit from it geopolitically and financially.

During this time, the WHO continued to tout Chinese efforts and spread erroneous data. WHO officials praised PRC transparency and cooperation in late January, even though a WHO team was not allowed into Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak, until late February. Its refusal to question PRC actions likely delayed the WHO’s declaration of a global pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Reality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11, 2020</td>
<td>Wuhan Municipal Health Commission: “At present, no medical staff infection has been found, and no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission has been found.”</td>
<td>WHO: “Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in Wuhan, China.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 14, 2020</td>
<td>Wuhan Municipal Health Commission: “Existing survey results show that clear human-to-human evidence has not been found, and the possibility of limited human-to-human transmission cannot be ruled out, but the risk of continued human-to-human transmission is low.”</td>
<td>WHO China office: “Not enough is known to draw definitive conclusions about how it is transmitted, the clinical features of the disease, the extent to which it has spread, or its source, which remains unknown.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 20, 2020</td>
<td>CCP acknowledges that human-to-human transmission is occurring.</td>
<td>WHO downgrades number of deaths from previous day’s statement, but admits “at least some human-to-human transmission of #nCoV2019. Infections among health care workers strengthen the evidence for this.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 23, 2020</td>
<td>Chinese authorities frantically shut down Wuhan and cancel New Year celebrations. “Strictly implement emergency response requirements, enter into a state of war and implement wartime measures to resolutely curb the spread of this epidemic.”</td>
<td>Tedros: “This is an emergency in China, but it has not yet become a global health emergency. At this time, there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission outside China.”</td>
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</table>
pandemic until March 11, 2020, by which point it was far too late for most nations to effectively protect their citizens.

The WHO has continued to accept and repeat China’s claims, but others have begun to recognize the truth. On March 26, Peter Navarro, White House Trade Advisor stated that Beijing “did not tell us early to mid-December that there was a crisis of human-to-human transmission with a new novel coronavirus. That has set the world back six weeks.”31 Dr. Deborah Birx of the White House Coronavirus Taskforce stated on March 31 that experts modeling the virus spread “were missing a significant amount of the data” from China, and, most notably, on April 2, The New York Times reported that the Central Intelligence Agency had warned the White House since early February that PRC officials had been “lying about infection rates, testing, and death counts.”24

China Flouts International Commitments (Ongoing)

China is a signatory to the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR). Articles 6 and 7 of the IHR specifically require member states to notify the WHO—within 24 hours of assessment—of any events which may constitute a “public health emergency of international concern.” Failing to disseminate credible information about infectious diseases is a violation of the IHR.25

The PRC is guilty of violating the IHR because it failed to notify the WHO about the outbreak of the virus in November and December. It also silenced Chinese doctors who spoke publicly about it and refused offers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control to visit Wuhan on January 6 and delayed offers of epidemic investigation assistance from the WHO.26 The Chinese Communist Party refused to cooperate with international partners and willfully perpetrated a cover-up from the start—even though it meant violating its treaty obligations.
The CCP has continued to undercount—likely dramatically—the number of cases in Wuhan, even claiming no new cases for multiple days in a row during mid-March. Such claims are challenged by a number of eyewitness Chinese accounts of overburdened funeral homes, extrajudicial killings, and the continued crackdown on the free flow of information. Several factors point to continued PRC misinformation:

1. **New cases have not been reported.** Local residents report this, and health professionals have described political pressure to report good news and not to admit new likely COVID-19 patients to hospitals.  

2. **Chinese test kits are notoriously unreliable.** At least three European countries have stopped using imported Chinese tests, which have error rates as high as 80 percent.

3. **Asymptomatic patients are not counted.** PRC documents say that asymptomatic infection is not considered as a confirmed case, contrary to global standards.

4. **Medical teams were called back to Wuhan.** A much-touted medical team withdrawal has been quietly paused, without satisfactory official explanation.

5. **Large numbers of funerary urns.** Local funeral homes are receiving 2,500-plus cinerary caskets a day, even though the total official PRC death count in Wuhan is 2,531. Daily incineration volume has been four to five times higher than usual.

6. **High volume of untested coronavirus victims.** An unverified number of patients with coronavirus symptoms have died and their bodies incinerated without testing.

**Misinformation praised as “cooperation and transparency”:**

- **Jan. 22, 2020**  
  Vice Minister of China’s National Health Commission: “We will disclose information on the outbreak in a timely, open and transparent manner, objectively reporting outbreak developments.”

- **Jan. 30, 2020**  
  CCP Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian quotes WHO: “China is committed to combating the transmission of the virus & has demonstrated cooperation with other countries. Its actions helped prevent the spread of coronavirus to other countries.”

- **Jan. 23, 2020**  
  Tedros: “I would like to thank the Government of the People's Republic of China for its cooperation and transparency.”

- **Jan. 30, 2020**  
  Tedros: “I was in China just a few days ago, where I met with President Xi Jinping. I left in absolutely no doubt about China’s commitment to transparency, and to protecting the world’s people.”

- **Jan. 6, 2020**  
  CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield officially offers to send a CDC team into China but is denied permission to enter the country.

- **Jan. 12, 2020**  
  Shanghai Public Health Clinical Centre publishes the virus’ genome sequence on open platforms. The CCP closes it the next day for “rectification,” hindering its COVID-19 research.

- **Jan. 26, 2020**  
  Chinese social media platform WeChat enforces CCP Criminal Law Amendment (9): “Those who seriously disrupt the social order shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment, detention or control.”

- **Feb. 11, 2020**  
  CDC Principal Deputy Director Dr. Anne Schuchat: “We absolutely assume that the reported cases are an underestimate.”
The WHO remains silent on these issues. Nor has it pointed out the PRC’s apparent violations of the 2005 International Health Regulations. Instead, the WHO has repeatedly praised the PRC’s “transparency”—even though the Chinese Communist Party has deceived and dissembled at every stage and is still doing so. A timeline of pandemic events published by the WHO on April 8, 2020 omits many of the incriminating facts contained in this situation brief and demonstrates the continued efforts of the WHO leadership to participate in the CCP’s coverup.

China Lied, People Died

The Chinese Communist Party’s deception has had a terrible human cost, with more than 100,000 global deaths and counting. Entire countries are shut down and economies are contracting, pointing to a global crisis that will likely outlive the pandemic itself. According to a study by the United Kingdom’s University of Southampton, if Beijing had acted three weeks earlier, the number of COVID-19 cases could have been reduced by 95 percent, and its geographic spread would have been severely limited—thereby preventing a pandemic.35

The CCP has criticized the United States’ political system as incapable of having an efficient response, even though the U.S. has been the top single-country donor to China in its efforts to counter the spread of COVID-19 and has provided essential support to the WHO, including a higher level of funding than from any other country. In addition to the $400 million contributed by the U.S. to the WHO in 2019,36 the United States also made $274 million of emergency funds available to 64 countries to assist in their pandemic responses.

To counter U.S. leadership, the PRC has attempted to shift blame and shore up its own international standing. Notably, the PRC has also lied about the origin of the virus, with senior CCP officials and state-controlled media outlets claiming that the U.S. Army is responsible for the coronavirus.37

The PRC is also engaged in a global propaganda campaign to provide medical aid to countries suffering from a pandemic that the PRC precipitated. Indeed, the CCP has portrayed itself as the global savior during the pandemic. Yet its so-called “facemask diplomacy” has resulted in the shipment of thousands of defective supplies around the world. Many countries including the Czech Republic, Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey, Australia, and the Philippines have recalled hundreds of thousands of faulty respiratory masks and testing kits imported from China. Far worse, China continues to deprive the international community of its most important asset to respond to and stop the spread of the virus—accurate information.

The World Health Organization has praised China’s aid campaign, despite evidence of its delivery of faulty equipment. Once again, it is echoing the PRC’s line of propaganda, giving it global credibility instead of the criticism it deserves.

Policy Recommendations

Many experts recommend greater engagement or cooperation with the PRC to address the current pandemic and to prevent similar crises in the future, but this approach...
ignores the clear record of the Chinese Communist Party as dangerously irresponsible and a threat to U.S. and global health and safety, as well as prosperity. This has been true for more than 40 years; the coronavirus pandemic is merely the latest proof. U.S. policy must be formulated in light of this pattern of behavior.

As for the WHO, it has served as a “useful idiot” that repeats CCP propaganda without question. Not only has this diminished its credibility, it has helped cause the pandemic that is wracking the world. It appears unlikely that the WHO will ever acknowledge China’s culpability in the coronavirus pandemic—much less its own.

The situation demands a strong and principled response. U.S. officials should pursue the following policy objectives:

- The U.S. should work to suspend the PRC from full membership in the WHO. Treating the PRC as an equal partner in safeguarding world health made the WHO captive to the PRC and less able to accomplish its mission.
- The U.S. should work toward Taiwan’s admission to the WHO as a counterbalance to the PRC. Taiwan has proven to be one of the most responsible countries in responding to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The U.S. and other countries should explore using legal means to hold the PRC accountable for violating its treaty obligations and seek reparations for economic damages incurred as a result of the pandemic.
- The U.S. should cooperate with other countries to demand an independent investigation into the outbreak of the virus in Wuhan, China.
- The White House should form an inter-agency office specifically to deal with PRC and CCP propaganda and influence operations.

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**PRC/CCP CLAIMS**

**WHO STATEMENTS**

**REALITY**

**Virus containment:**

**Feb. 19, 2020**
Amb. Sun Weidong: “We are doing everything we can, leaving no stone unturned, in our efforts to contain and mitigate this epidemic on the land of 9.6 million square kilometers of China.”

**Feb. 22, 2020**
Amb. Liu Xizoming: “I think the whole world should appreciate what China has done.”

**Feb. 19, 2020**
Tedros: “Outside China […] we have not yet seen sustained local transmission.”

**Feb. 24, 2020**
Tedros: “For the moment, we are not witnessing the uncontrolled global spread of this virus.”

**Feb. 7, 2020**
U.S. State Department sends 17.8 tons of donated medical supplies and $100 million to China to “contain and combat” outbreak. Just over 7 weeks later, *The New York Times* reports over 3,400 deaths in the U.S. due to coronavirus.

**Feb. 14, 2020**
Outbreak of coronavirus in northern Italy worsens, with officials announcing 14 confirmed cases.

**Feb. 19, 2020**
Number of South Korean coronavirus cases double in a day.
### Virus origin blame game:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 5, 2020</td>
<td>CCP Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian: “COVID-19 is our common enemy. Don’t understand why some think anyone should apologize. The WHO has said many times that stigma is more dangerous than the virus itself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 12, 2020</td>
<td>CCP Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian: “It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 9, 2020</td>
<td>Chinese Ambassador to U.S. acknowledges the propaganda war taking place about the origin of the virus. Says in an interview with Axios, “How can we believe all these crazy things?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 19, 2020</td>
<td>China announces it will expel three Wall Street Journal staff members in retaliation for the headline of their column “China is the Real Sick Man of Asia.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 4, 2020</td>
<td>CCP state media Xinhua threatens U.S., saying if China imposes restrictions on pharmaceutical exports, the U.S. will be “plunged into the mighty sea of coronavirus.”</td>
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### Claims of victory over epidemic:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 10, 2020</td>
<td>President Xi visits Wuhan to declare victory over the virus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 28, 2020</td>
<td>WHO Report: “General Secretary Xi Jinping personally directed and deployed the prevention and control work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 9, 2020</td>
<td>Tedros: “Of the four countries with the most cases, China is bringing its epidemic under control.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 11, 2020</td>
<td>WHO declares coronavirus a pandemic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 19, 2020</td>
<td>Local doctor says the number of coronavirus patients in Wuhan was manipulated in preparation for President Xi’s visit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRC/CCP CLAIMS

Mar. 18, 2020
CCP Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Suang boasts deliveries of medical supplies from China to various countries: “We also support countries’ procurement of medical supplies made in China. Our local governments, enterprises and civil institutions also made donations to other countries.”

Mar. 19, 2020
Tedros: “We have a list of agreed suppliers in China now, and they have permission to export to WHO. We’re now finalizing the arrangements.”

Mar. 20, 2020
Tedros: “We have now identified some producers in China who have agreed to supply WHO. [...] WHO can only buy or recommend kits that have been evaluated independently, to ensure their quality.”

WHO STATEMENTS

Mar. 18, 2020
Global Times: “The COVID-19 situation in the U.S. is also getting increasingly serious and the demand for China-made medical materials, machines and drugs are increasing as well. China has shown its willingness to provide help to the U.S., but politicians in Washington D.C. continue to pass the buck to China.”

REality

Mar. 19, 2020
Czech authorities reportedly seize over 700,000 masks and respirators in a warehouse owned by member of United Front Work Department. Some of the boxes were labelled as “aid” from China to Italy. The shell company that owned the masks was attempting to sell to Czech citizens at a premium.

Mar. 20, 2020
Hospitals in Czech Republic stop using any of the 150,000 rapid test kits purchased by China after finding they had a failure rate of up to 80%.

Mar. 21, 2020
Laboratories in Spain report that the rapid test kits purchased by China only had a sensitivity rating of 30%, far below the minimum requirement of 80%.

Mar. 27, 2020
Turkey announces they will stop using test kits recently imported from China after finding they are not accurate.

Mar. 28, 2020
Dutch Ministry of Health orders a recall of around 600,000 masks out of a shipment of 1.3 million from China after they failed to meet safety standards.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Mar. 19, 2020</strong></th>
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<th><strong>WHO STATEMENTS</strong></th>
<th><strong>REALITY</strong></th>
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<td>CCTV: “With no new cases in Wuhan, the Chinese mainland on Wednesday reduced the increase in domestic transmissions to zero, according to the National Health Commission. The mainland now faces a greater threat of infections imported from overseas.”¹¹²</td>
<td>Tedros: “You cannot fight a fire blindfolded. And we cannot stop this pandemic if we don’t know who is infected.”¹¹³</td>
<td>Wuhan doctor tells reporters his hospital was under pressure from the central government to report no cases and refuse to admit new virus patients.¹¹⁵</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Mar. 16, 2020</strong></td>
<td>China claims no new domestic cases:</td>
<td><strong>Mar. 19, 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mar. 20, 2020</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mar. 16, 2020</strong></td>
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<td>Tedros: “For the first time, China has reported no domestic cases—an amazing achievement.”¹¹⁴</td>
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<td><strong>Mar. 23, 2020</strong></td>
<td>Wuhan’s health commission announces asymptomatic cases are being isolated in quarantine centers but not included in the public tally of confirmed cases, even if they tested positive.¹¹⁶</td>
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<td><strong>Mar. 26, 2020</strong></td>
<td>White House Trade Advisor Peter Navarro: “The Chinese did not tell us early to mid-December that there was a crisis of human to human transmission with a new novel coronavirus. That has set the world back six weeks.”¹¹⁷</td>
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<td><strong>Mar. 26, 2020</strong></td>
<td>China bars entry of all foreigners.¹¹⁸</td>
<td><strong>Mar. 22-27, 2020</strong></td>
<td>Seven Wuhan funeral homes hand out the cremated remains of around 500 people to their families every day, suggesting far more people died than ever made the official statistics.¹²¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mar. 26, 2020</strong></td>
<td>China bars entry of all foreigners.¹¹⁸</td>
<td><strong>Mar. 30, 2020</strong></td>
<td>U.S. intelligence report concludes China concealed the extent of the coronavirus outbreak.¹²²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mar. 26, 2020</strong></td>
<td>China bars entry of all foreigners.¹¹⁸</td>
<td>Tedros: “I sent a tweet with a single word: humility. Some people asked me why. COVID-19 is reminding us how vulnerable we are, how connected we are and how dependent we are on each other.”¹²⁰</td>
<td>Deborah Birx, State Department immunologist advising the White House: “The medical community interpreted the Chinese data as: ‘This was serious, but smaller than anyone expected,’ because I think probably we were missing a significant amount of the data.”¹²¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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¹¹² Delivery of thousands of urns to Wuhan mortuaries calls into question China’s coronavirus reporting. (Caixin)


