

Coronavirus: China Continues to Flood the World with Defective Medical Supplies

by **Soeren Kern**

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Translations of this item:

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- More than a dozen countries on four continents have recently disclosed problems with Chinese-made coronavirus tests and personal protective equipment. The problems range from test kits tainted with the coronavirus to medical garments contaminated with insects.
- Chinese authorities have refused to take responsibility for the defective equipment and in many instances have cast blame on the countries that purchased the material. They have also called on nations of the world to stop "politicizing" the problem.
- Slovakian Prime Minister Igor Matovič disclosed that more than a million coronavirus tests supplied by China for a cash payment of €15 million (\$16 million) were inaccurate and unable to detect Covid-19. "We have a ton of tests and no use for them," he said. "They should just be thrown straight into the Danube."
- U.S. Senator Kelly Loeffler from Georgia accused China of holding up shipments of test kits: "Testing is core to opening our country back up. I'm concerned that China's holding up test kits. They're playing games with trade policy to prevent us, the United States, from getting the testing that we need."
- "[W]e should not lose sight of the foundational strategic challenge confronting the West in the emerging post-globalization era: We are in a long twilight competition with the Chinese communist regime, a struggle we cannot escape, whether we like it or not." — Andrew Michta, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.



More than a dozen countries on four continents recently disclosed problems with Chinese-made coronavirus tests and personal protective equipment. The problems range from test kits tainted with the coronavirus to medical garments contaminated with insects. Defective Chinese face masks, purchased by Spain's Ministry of Health, were distributed to hospitals and nursing homes across the country, and more than 100 healthcare workers who used them tested positive for Covid-19. Pictured: A shipment from China of 8.6 million protective face masks and 150 tons of sanitary equipment arrives at Paris-Vatry Airport in France, on April 19, 2020. (Photo by Francois Nascimbeni/AFP via Getty Images)

Gatestone Institute recently **reported** that millions of pieces of medical equipment purchased from China by European governments to combat the coronavirus pandemic are defective and unusable.

Since that report, more than a dozen countries on four continents have disclosed problems with Chinese-made coronavirus tests and personal protective equipment. The problems range from test kits tainted with the coronavirus to medical garments contaminated with insects.

Chinese authorities have refused to take responsibility for the defective equipment and in many instances have cast blame on the countries that purchased the material. They have also called on nations of the world to stop "politicizing" the problem — at the same time that Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Communist Party have sought to **leverage** the pandemic to assert a claim to global leadership.

Spain, the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis in Europe, has experienced the greatest number of problems with medical equipment purchased from China.

After the epidemic hit Spain, the Spanish government **purchased** medical supplies from China in the amount of €432 million (\$470 million). Chinese vendors demanded they be paid up front before making any deliveries. It now appears that much of the material being supplied by China is substandard.

In late March, for instance, the Spanish Ministry of Health **revealed** that more than a half million coronavirus tests it had purchased from a Chinese vendor were defective. The tests, manufactured by Shenzhen Bioeasy Biotechnology, a company based in China's Guangdong Province, had an accurate detection rate of less than 30%. Bioeasy had **claimed**, in writing, that its tests had an accurate detection rate of 92%.

After the swindle made international headlines, Bioeasy agreed to replace the tests. On April 21, however, the Spanish newspaper *El País* **reported** that all 640,000 replacement tests were also useless. The Spanish government is now seeking a refund.

The Chinese Embassy in Madrid **blamed** the Spanish government for purchasing the tests from an unauthorized vendor. Bioeasy, apparently, does not have a license to sell coronavirus tests. Spain, however, has also reported problems with material purchased from vendors that *are* authorized by the Chinese government.

On April 15, Spain's Ministry of Health **recalled** 350,000 so-called FFP2 masks after laboratory tests determined that they were substandard. The defective masks were manufactured by Garry Galaxy Biotechnology, a company included on the Chinese government's list of approved manufacturers of personal protective equipment. FFP2 masks are required to filter at least 94% of aerosols, but those delivered to Spain filtered only between 71% and 82% of aerosols.

The defective masks were purchased by the Spanish Ministry of Health and distributed to hospitals and nursing homes across the country. After the defective masks were recalled, more than a hundred healthcare workers who had used them **tested positive** for coronavirus disease (Covid-19).

In the northeastern Spanish region of Catalonia, local health officials on April 18 **recalled** 180,000 Covid-19 antibody tests — also known as serological tests — because of their low rate of detection. The tests, produced by the Chinese manufacturer Guangzhou Wondfo Biotech, were purchased by the central government in Madrid and distributed to regional health authorities to detect Covid-19 in two priority groups: healthcare personnel and elderly people in nursing

homes. The Wondfo tests **reportedly** gave negative results to people who had previously tested positive for Covid-19, and also failed to distinguish between two types of antibodies, including those that confer immunity.

In the eastern city of Alicante, the General Hospital **recalled** 640 disposable medical garments after one of the boxes from China contained cockroaches. The hospital **said** that it had received a total of 3,000 garments in 75 boxes and that it found two insects inside one of the boxes. It added that given the shortage of medical supplies, the garments would be sterilized, not destroyed.

Other countries — in Europe and beyond — have also criticized the quality of Chinese medical supplies:

- **Australia.** On April 1, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) **reported** that the Australian Border Force (ABF) had seized nearly one million Chinese-made faulty face masks and other protective clothing that was exported to Australia to help halt the spread of coronavirus. The material was valued at A\$1.2 million (US\$760,000). "We started seeing this stuff arriving roughly three weeks ago when news of the pandemic was really taking off," an ABF official **told** ABC. "The dodgy material is coming via air cargo because there is a backlog of sea freight at Australian ports."
- **Austria.** On April 6, the Ministry of Economic Affairs **confirmed** that 500,000 masks ordered from China for use in South Tyrol were "completely unusable" because they did not meet safety standards: "The result of the quality control check showed that the masks do not meet an FFP standard. When putting on the masks, it is impossible to obtain a tight fit in the area of the chin and cheeks." Minister of Economics Margarete Schramböck **complained** that international providers of the urgently needed FFP2 and FFP3 masks had not delivered the required quality in nine out of ten cases. On April 9, Austrian media **reported** that the defective mask problem was far greater than initially thought. The Austrian Red Cross ordered 20 million masks from the same Chinese manufacturer that made the defective masks for South Tyrol.
- **Belgium.** On March 31, the University Hospital of Leuven **rejected** a shipment of 3,000 masks from China because the equipment was substandard.
- **Canada.** On April 7, the City of Toronto **recalled** more than 60,000 surgical masks made in China. The masks, valued at more than \$200,000, were provided to staff at long-term care facilities. Toronto health authorities were

investigating whether caregivers were exposed to Covid-19 while wearing the equipment. The masks represented around 50% of Toronto's inventory of surgical masks, **according** to Matthew Pegg, Toronto's fire chief and general manager of emergency management.

- **Czech Republic.** On March 23, the Czech news site *iRozhlas* **reported** that 300,000 coronavirus test kits delivered by China had an error rate of 80%. The Czech Ministry of Interior had paid \$2.1 million for the defective kits.
- **Finland.** On April 10, the Managing Director of Finland's National Emergency Supply Agency, Tomi Lounema, **resigned** after he admitted to spending €10 million (\$11 million) on defective protective equipment **from** China.
- **Georgia.** On March 27, Health Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze **cancelled** an order for 200,000 coronavirus tests manufactured by the China-based Shenzhen Bioeasy Biotechnology Company. The move came after Spain **reported** that 640,000 tests that it purchased from the company were defective. She **said**: "Georgia had a contract with this company, but today it has been canceled. The money has not been transferred. We are negotiating with another company and at first, they will send two thousand tests. If the reliability of those is approved by us, we will purchase an additional quantity."
- **India.** On April 16, the Mumbai-based *Economic Times* **reported** that 50,000 pieces of personal protective equipment donated by China were defective and unusable.
- **Ireland.** On April 6, the Health Service Executive (HSE) **revealed** that a large portion of the €200 million delivery of personal protective equipment supplied by China was found to be unusable for health care workers. The HSE **told** the Chinese company responsible for the delivery that unless the quality of the equipment being sent is guaranteed, there will not be any more deals between the two nations with regards to PPE. The government said that it was seeking a refund.
- **Malaysia.** On April 16, Malaysian authorities **approved** the use of coronavirus test kits from South Korea after similar kits from China were **found** to be defective. A senior official in the Ministry of Health, Noor Hisham Abdullah, **said** that the accuracy of the Chinese tests was "not very good." He **expressed** optimism over the South Korean tests: "Now that we have a test kit that is fast, portable and is cheap, that will make the difference."

- **Netherlands.** On March 28, the Netherlands **recalled** 1.3 million face masks produced in China because they did not meet the minimum safety standards for medical personnel. The so-called KN95 masks are a less expensive Chinese alternative to the American-standard N95 mask, which currently is in short supply around the world. The KN95 does not fit on the face as tightly as the N95, thus potentially exposing medical personnel to the coronavirus.
- **Philippines.** On March 29, the Department of Health **apologized** for comments it made a day earlier that two batches of coronavirus test kits provided by China were substandard. Undersecretary for Health Maria Rosario Vergeire had **said** that kits made by Chinese manufacturers BGI Group and Sansure Biotech were only 40% accurate in diagnosing Covid-19 and that some of them would have to be discarded. The Chinese Embassy in Manila **rejected** those accusations and claimed that the kits complied with standards established by the World Health Organization. "The Chinese Embassy firmly rejects any irresponsible remarks and any attempts to undermine our cooperation in this regard," a spokesman **tweeted**.
- **Slovakia.** On April 1, Prime Minister Igor Matovič **disclosed** that more than a million coronavirus tests supplied by China for a cash payment of €15 million (\$16 million) were inaccurate and unable to detect Covid-19. "We have a ton of tests and no use for them," he **said**. "They should just be thrown straight into the Danube." China **accused** Slovakian medical personnel of using the tests incorrectly.
- **Turkey.** On March 27, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca **said** that Turkey had tried Chinese-made coronavirus tests but authorities "weren't happy about them." Professor Ateş Kara, a member of the Turkish Health Ministry's coronavirus task force, **added** that the batch of testing kits were only 30 to 35% accurate: "We have tried them. They don't work. Spain has made a huge mistake by using them."
- **United Kingdom.** On April 6, the London-based newspaper *The Times* **reported** that 17.5 million coronavirus antibody tests supplied by China were defective. The Chinese manufacturers of the tests **blamed** British officials and politicians for misunderstanding or exaggerating the utility of the tests. The British government, which **reportedly** paid at least \$20 million (£16 million) for the tests, said that it was seeking a refund. Meanwhile, other coronavirus tests destined for the UK were found to be **tainted** with coronavirus.

- **United States.** On April 17, the director of the Missouri Department of Public Safety, Sandy Karsten, **revealed** that 3.9 million KN95 masks manufactured in China were defective. The State of Missouri had **signed** a \$16.5 million contract with an unidentified vendor for the masks and paid half in advance. The vendor is **refusing** to return the \$8.25 million. Missouri Governor Mike Parson **said**: "We got cheated here in this state and we are going to go out there and try to get our money back and hold people accountable." In neighboring Illinois, Governor J.B. Pritzker **said** that the state had spent \$17 million on KN95 masks that may be unusable: "You know things come in shipments of a million — you can't go through one mask at a time and so you try to take samples from the shipments that come in, make sure you got what you are paying for." In Washington State, 12,000 coronavirus testing kits produced in China were **recalled** after some of them were found to be contaminated with the coronavirus.

On March 30, China **urged** European countries not to "politicize" concerns about the quality of medical supplies from China. "Problems should be properly solved based on facts, not political interpretations," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

On April 1, the Chinese government reversed course and **announced** that it was increasing its oversight of exports of coronavirus test kits made in China. Chinese exporters of coronavirus tests must now obtain a certificate from the National Medical Products Administration (NMPA) in order to be cleared by China's customs agency.

On April 16, the *Wall Street Journal* **reported** that millions of pieces of medical equipment destined for the United States were being held in warehouses in China due to the new export restrictions imposed by the Chinese government. "We appreciate the efforts to ensure quality control," the U.S. State Department **said**. "But we do not want this to serve as an obstacle for the timely export of important supplies."

U.S. Senator Kelly Loeffler from Georgia **accused** China of holding up shipments of test kits: "Testing is core to opening our country back up. I'm concerned that China's holding up test kits. They're playing games with trade policy to prevent us, the United States, from getting the testing that we need."

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the flaws of globalization by laying bare how the West has allowed itself to become dangerously dependent on Communist

China for the supply of essential health care and medical products.

Andrew Michta, Dean of the College of International and Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, [explained](#):

"The Wuhan Virus and the attendant misery that the Chinese communist state has unleashed upon the world (very much including its own people) has laid bare a core structural flaw in the assumptions underpinning globalization. It turns out that the radical interweaving of markets — which was supposed to lead to the 'complex interdependence' that international relations theorists have been predicting for the better part of the century would lead to an increase in global stability... has instead created an inherently fragile and teetering structure that is exacerbating uncertainty in a time of crisis....

"If there is any good to come from the devastating impact on our nation of this pandemic brought about by the Chinese communist regime through its malice and incompetence, it will be the likely demise of enthusiasm for globalization as we know it across the West. After three decades of intellectual gymnastics aimed at convincing Americans that the off-shoring of manufacturing and the attendant deindustrialization of the country are good for us, the time has come for a reckoning.

"Since the end of the Cold War, Western elites seem to have been in thrall to the idea that various 'natural forces' in the economy and politics were propelling us forward to a digitally interconnected brave new world, one in which traditional considerations of national interest, national economic policy, national security, and national culture would soon be eclipsed by an emergent peaceful global reality. This virus crisis is a wake-up call, and while some argue we are waking up too late to effectively counter current trends, my money is on the ability of the American people to rally in a crisis and on the resilience of Western democratic institutions.

"Today, while battling the Wuhan Virus consumes the attention of our government agencies and health care systems, we should not lose sight of the foundational strategic challenge confronting the West in the emerging post-globalization era: We are in a long twilight competition with the Chinese communist regime, a struggle we cannot escape, whether we like it or not. Now is the time to wake up, develop a new strategy for victory, and to move forward."

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