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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Tuesday, July 20 2021|

# Catastrophic floods leave over 120 dead in western Europe, many more still miss-

BRUSSELS/BERLIN/GENEVA, July 16 (Xinhua) -- Devastating flash floods due to intense rainfalls have swept through several western European countries in the past few days, killing more than one hundred and causing damages.

Some countries in Western Europe received up to two months worth of rainfall in two days, with Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg strongly affected, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported on Friday.

In parts of western and southern Germany, towns and communities were hit by catastrophic flash floods after heavy and continuous rainfall this week.

As of Friday afternoon local time, the death toll climbed to 103 in the country, with many more people still missing, according to local authorities. The federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate were hit particularly hard, with 43 people and 60 people killed respectively.

A large number of people are still missing. The district of Ahrweiler alone currently estimates about 1,300 missing people, while around 3,500 are being treated in care facilities.

Germany's Ministry of Defence has issued a military disaster alert on Friday, deploying more than 850 soldiers for rescue work and the number is increasing.

"Extreme precipitation such as the heavy rains that flooded parts of western Germany this week is likely to become more frequent due to global warming," said German expert Stefan Rahmstorf, head of Earth System Analysis at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK).

In Belgium, a national day of mourning has been set for July 20 for the victims of the severe weather in recent days. Twenty-one people died and 18 were reported missing on Friday after flash floods that saw rivers burst their banks in the south and east of the country.

In the town of Verviers, near the city of Liege, disastrous floods submerged the city center, upturning cars and damaging homes and shops along the high street.



The heavy downpours in the Belgian provinces of Luxembourg, Namur, Liege and Limbourg match what climate models predict for when the Earth warms up, suggesting direct links with global warming, the Belgian weekly Le Vive reported on Friday.

In neighboring Netherlands, 10,700 people have been evacuated in Venlo in the north of the southern Dutch province of Limburg on Friday, as a precaution due to the high water level and the fear of flooding.

The Dutch government has formally assessed the flood in Limburg as a disaster, allowing victims to obtain clarity about whether their damage will be reimbursed by the government if their insurance does not cover it.

Dutch King Willem-Alexander visited the city and called the situation in Limburg "heartbreaking."

In Switzerland, maximum flood warnings have been issued in central parts of the country due to persistent rainfall. As of Friday, Lake Lucerne, Lake Thun and Lake Biel have remained at the highest flood

Aerial photo taken on July 17, 2021 shows a flooded area in Roermond, Limburg, a province in the southeastern part of the Netherlands. Devastating flash floods due to intense rainfalls have swept through several western European countries in the past few days, killing more than one hundred and causing damages. The Dutch government has formally assessed the flood in Limburg as a disaster, allowing victims to obtain clarity about whether their damage will be reimbursed by the government if their insurance does not cover it. (Jelle Aerts/Lofi-original/Handout via Xinhua)

warning level (5) after continued and intense rainfall throughout the week.

The Swissinfo website reported that the major cities such as Basel and Bern are also facing high flood risks, with the River Aare reaching a flow rate of 540 cubic meters per second, nearing the 600 level recorded in the major floods of 2005.

France's meteorological service warned on Friday that the continuous rainfall is soaking the soil, putting France at risk of flooding. Currently, 13 provinces in northern and eastern France have been placed on orange alert for floods.

The European Union's Civil

Protection Mechanism has been activated to tackle the heavy floods

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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

## CORONAVIRUS DIARY 07/19/2021



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# Tony Hu's Sze Chaun Cuisine Comes To Texas



The very first Lao Sze Chaun restaurant opened in 1998 in Chicago's Chinatown. The owner and chef Tony Hu strongly prides himself on providing transitional Sichuan cuisine with high quality ingredients. In 1999, his restaurant was recognized by The Chicago Tribune as "one of the best" recovering, and therefore, a rating that was considered a

prominent accomplishment for Chinese restaurants.

Today, Tony Hu has opened his first restaurant in Katy, Texas. Many Chinese community leaders were in attendance and joined him at his grand opening and warmly welcomed him to Texas.

Over the last several centuries, Chinese cuisine was brought to

the world by many Chinese immigrants. Of course, in North America the Chinese restaurants do not only provide delicious food, but the dining experience also represents Chinese culture.

Before I came to America, I had been reading restaurant stories written by Dr. Ling Chao. His book mentioned the interesting stories of

how young students worked in the restaurants. After many of us came to America, many of us had similar experiences.

Today we have 11,000 people moving to Texas every day. Never before has the economy boomed like it is going today. Housing is in high demand and many new businesses are moving to Texas.

We all welcome Tony and his first restaurant in Katy. He said many

more will come.

We are so proud of him. His is the immigrant success story representing many of us who came over here to work very hard and make big contributions to our country.

Texas is the land of opportunity and many Asian-Americans chose it as their new home. We appreciate the opportunity in this country and we love our nation.



## Southern DAILY Make Today Different

## Editor's Choice



Director Julia Ducournau, Palme d'Or award winner for the film "Titane", poses at a photocall after the closing of the Cannes festival. REUTERS/Sarah Meyssonnier



Trash, including bottles and barrels, is pictured following heavy rainfalls in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany. REUTERS/Wolfgang Rattay



A girl poses for a photo in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ricardo Arduengo



Lorena Garcia, 23, carries her two-year-old son Wilder, who was found alone in June near a cargo truck that carried dozens of migrants making their way through Veracruz state to the U.S. border with Mexico, while he plays with his aunt as they leave the Directorate of Children, Adolescents and Family (DINAF), in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. REUTERS/Jose Cabezas



Horses climb a hillside that was burned by the Chuweah Creek Fire as wildfires devastate Nespalem in eastern Washington state. REUTERS/David Ryder



Three women stand on a sidewalk in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ricardo Arduengo

Scientists Believe The Army's Vaccine May Combat Deadly Variants And Even Future Pandemics

Army's Own Vaccine That Could Fight COVID Variants Begins Human Trials



Soldiers prepare to administer the COVID-19 vaccine at Fort Hood, Texas, on Feb. 20, 2021. (Photo/Staff Sgt. Daniel Herman/Army)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

As more than 100 million Americans were needed and inoculated against COVID-19 with doses produced by pharmaceutical powerhouses like Pfizer and Moderna, a scrappy team of scientists in an Army lab just outside the nation's capital quietly continued manipulating proteins, testing monkeys and working to conceive a vaccine of the future.

The product born of their experience, reason and labor was injected into its first human test subject on Tuesday.

"We want to win this battle, but we also want to win the long war," said Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, who leads the vaccine effort as director of the emerging infectious diseases branch of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Once the virus was sequenced in January 2020, he and his then modest team of 10 strategized and took on a blistering 24/7 effort, whittling a selection of two dozen prototypes down to a single vaccine candidate within six months.

Over the last decade Modjarrad also led the Ar-

my's vaccine efforts for Ebola and the Zika virus and was principal investigator of its campaign against MERS, a disease itself caused by a coronavirus. And though WRAIR is the oldest biomedical research institute within the Department of Defense, the emerging infectious diseases branch is still young.



Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad sits at his desk adorned with a 3-D model of the vaccine he co-invented. Modjarrad is the director of the emerging infectious diseases branch of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). (Photo Matt Seyler, ABC

News)  
 "We're not Apple now -- we're Apple 40 years ago, in the garage," Modjarrad said with a laugh.  
 Despite the frantic pace, Modjarrad -- who co-invented WRAIR's eventual vaccine candidate -- knew it wouldn't be the first to the public.  
 "This one takes a little bit longer in designing and then manufacturing," he said.  
 From the beginning his focus was on next-generation threats, ones that could be thriving in unknown bat caves as you read this sentence, waiting to make contact and proliferate inside humans.  
 "Even though we got the (available vaccines) within a year, how many hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. and how many millions of people globally lost their lives before the vaccine was even available?" Modjarrad asked ABC News' Bob Woodruff during an exclusive visit to the lab last week. "We want to get to a point where the vaccine is already out there -- maybe already in people's arms -- before the next variant, next stream, next species of coronavirus occurs."



The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), founded in 1893, is located in Silver Spring, Md. (Photo/Matt Seyler/ABC News)

The three vaccines already authorized for use in the U.S. work by feeding the body genetic instructions to create the spike protein that is found on the surface of the virus. Once the body creates the protein, the immune system is alerted and begins forming antibodies. It's a safe way of triggering a similar immune response as one a person would have after contracting the actual virus.

The WRAIR vaccine skips both the instruction and creation steps, bringing the already-formed spike protein straight into the arm along with an immune-boosting ad-

juvant compound, quickly starting the antibody response.

And unlike other protein-based vaccines being tested, the WRAIR candidate presents virus-looking nanoparticles, each with a consistent array of 24 spike proteins arranged in small bouquets of three protruding from a ferritin base.

"There's a lot of theories as to why something presented in this fashion gives such a good immune response, but in some ways you can see it looks like a virus as well," Modjarrad said. "So it has some properties that educate the immune response in a way that it gives you a very strong, but also a broad response."

Test results with thousands of mice and dozens of monkeys have been promising.



A researcher works on coronavirus vaccine development at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Silver Spring, Md., April 28, 2020. (photo/Matt Seyler/ABC News)

"We think (other) vaccines are probably going to be protective against new variants, but they might be decreased in their protection," Modjarrad said. "What we've seen with our vaccine so far in animals ... is that the vaccine is not decreased in effectiveness against those variants at all. And it is effective against other coronaviruses like SARS-1. So what we have developed now is starting to look like a pan-SARS vaccine ... and we're going to start testing everything in between."

If successful in clinical trials, WRAIR's vaccine could become common among the U.S. population, possibly as a booster for already-vaccinated people.

Being a military lab, practicality was a primary design concern, which could incidentally give their product global appeal. In particular, it is highly stable and doesn't require special freezing. "That means you can put it in a cooler on the back of a motorcycle in the Amazon or the Sahara or wherever, and that vaccine should still be OK," Modjarrad said.

But the "if" remains. Though the WRAIR scientists brim with confidence in conversation, they are soberly aware that their product has yet to be

proven in humans.  
 "They have some very early data to suggest in the laboratory that the immune response evoked by this vaccine will cover a variety of different strains," said Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of preventative medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. "Whether that translates actually into protection in people against the variety of strains -- that remains to be determined. Long journeys, first steps."



Cpt. Aaron Sanborn, RN, (far right), discusses the vaccination process with Francis Holinaty (left) during the first day of the vaccine entering clinical trials at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research's Clinical Trials Center, April 6, 2021. (Photo/Walter Reed Army Institute of Research)

On Tuesday, retired Army Col. Francis Holinaty stepped up to be the first to be injected in WRAIR's Phase 1 trial.

"Over my 30-year career I have served in many places around the world in many different operational settings, some more arduous than others, some more hazardous than others," Holinaty said. "And one day I'm on the Metro, and it's almost as if it was fate -- I just looked up and I saw a poster, and I saw Walter Reed, and it took me a while to process what this poster was saying. And when it dawned on me that they were trying to do a trial for the COVID-19, I saw this as another opportunity to just serve."

Holinaty can't be sure whether he received a dose of the vaccine or a placebo, but said afterward that he felt fine. He wanted people to know that there are many ways to fight the pandemic.

"You don't have to be in the military, you don't have to be a first responder, but you can help all," he said. "And if you have a calling to help people this is just one of the ways you can do it." (Courtesy abcnews.go.com)

Swine Flu Virus With Human 'Pandemic Potential' Found In Pigs In China



The new flu strain is similar to the swine flu that spread globally in 2009

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A swine flu virus emerged recently in China and is carried by pigs, but can infect humans, it has been reported. The researchers are concerned that it could mutate further so that it can spread easily from person to person, and trigger a global outbreak.

While it is not an immediate problem, they say, it has "all the hallmarks" of being highly adapted to infect humans and needs close monitoring.

As it's new, people could have little or no immunity to the virus. The scientists write in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that measures to control the virus in pigs, and the close monitoring of swine industry workers, should be swiftly implemented.

**Pandemic threat**  
 A bad new strain of influenza is among the top disease threats that experts are watching for, even as the world attempts to bring to an end the current coronavirus pandemic. The last pandemic flu the world encountered - the swine flu outbreak of 2009 - was less deadly than initially feared, largely because many older people had some immunity to it, probably because of its similarity to other flu viruses

that had circulated years before.



Nasal swabs from more than 30,000 pigs in China over 7 years found an increase in an avianlike influenza virus that has swapped genes from several strains.

That virus, called A/H1N1pdm09, is now covered by the annual flu vaccine to make sure people are protected. The new flu strain that has been identified in China is similar to 2009 swine flu, but with some new changes.

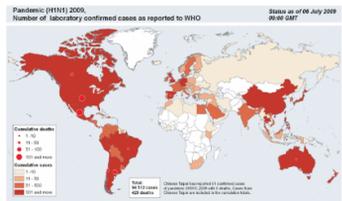
So far, it hasn't posed a big threat, but Prof Kin-Chow Chang and colleagues who have been studying it, say it is one to keep an eye on.

**How worried should we be?**  
 The virus, which the researchers call G4 EA H1N1, can grow and multiply in the cells that line the human airways. They found evidence of recent infection in people who worked in abattoirs and the swine

industry in China when they looked at data from 2011 to 2018.

Current flu vaccines do not appear to protect against it, although they could be adapted to do so if needed. Prof Kin-Chow Chang, who works at Nottingham University in the UK, told the BBC: "Right now we are distracted with coronavirus and rightly so. But we must not lose sight of potentially dangerous new viruses."

While this new virus is not an immediate problem, he says: "We should not ignore it." A World Health Organization spokeswoman said: "Eurasian avian-like swine influenza virus are known to be circulating in the swine population in Asia and to be able to infect humans sporadically. Twice a year during the influenza vaccine composition meetings, all information on the viruses is reviewed and the need for new candidate vaccine viruses is discussed. We will carefully read the paper to understand what is new."



"It also highlights that we cannot let down our guard on influenza; we need to be vigilant and continue surveillance even during the COVID-19 pandemic." (Courtesy <https://www.bbc.com/>)

What the world doesn't need now is a pandemic on top of a pandemic. But a new finding that pigs in China are more and more frequently becoming infected with a strain of influenza that has the potential to jump to humans has infectious disease researchers worldwide taking serious notice. When multiple strains of influenza viruses infect the same pig, they can easily swap genes, a process known as "reassortment." The new study, published today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, focuses on an influenza virus dubbed G4. The virus is a unique blend of three lineages: one similar to strains found in European and Asian birds, the H1N1 strain that caused the 2009 pandemic, and a North American H1N1 that has genes from avian, human, and pig

influenza viruses.

The G4 variant is especially concerning because its core is an avian influenza virus—to which humans have no immunity—with bits of mammalian strains mixed in. "From the data presented, it appears that this is a swine influenza virus that is poised to emerge in humans," says Edward Holmes, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Sydney who studies mixed in. "Clearly this situation needs to be monitored very closely."



As part of a project to identify potential pandemic influenza strains, a team led by Liu Jinhua from the China Agricultural University (CAU) analyzed nearly 30,000 nasal swabs taken from pigs at slaughterhouses in 10 Chinese provinces, and another 1000 swabs from pigs with respiratory symptoms seen at their school's veterinary teaching hospital. The swabs, collected between 2011 and 2018, yielded 179 swine influenza viruses, the vast majority of which were G4 or one of five other G strains from the Eurasian avianlike lineage. "G4 virus has shown a sharp increase since 2016, and is the predominant genotype in circulation in pigs detected across at least 10 provinces," they write. Sun Honglei, the paper's first author, says G4's inclusion of genes from the 2009 H1N1 pandemic "may promote the virus adaptation" that leads to human-to-human transmission. Therefore, "It's necessary to strengthen the surveillance" of pigs in China for influenza viruses, says Sun, also at CAU.



Influenza viruses frequently jump from pigs to humans, but most do not then transmit between humans. Two cases of G4 infections of humans have been documented and both were dead-end infections that did not transmit to other people.

"The likelihood that this particular variant is going to cause a pandemic is low," says Martha Nelson, an evolutionary biologist at the U.S. National Institutes of Health's Fogarty International Center who studies pig influenza viruses in the United States and their spread to humans. But Nelson notes that no one knew about the pandemic H1N1 strain, which jumped from pigs to people, until the first human cases surfaced in 2009.

"Influenza can surprise us," Nelson says. "And there's a risk that we neglect influenza and other threats at this time" of COVID-19.

The new study offers but a tiny glimpse into swine influenza strains in China, which has 500 million pigs. While Nelson thinks the predominance of G4 in their analysis is an interesting finding, she says it's hard to know whether its spread is a growing problem, given the relatively small sample size. "You're really not getting a good snapshot of what is dominant in pigs in China," she adds, stressing the need for more sampling in the nation's pigs.

In addition to stepping up surveillance, Sun says it makes sense to develop a vaccine against G4 for both pigs and humans. Webster says at the very least, the seed stock to make a human vaccine—variants of a strain that grow rapidly in the eggs used to make a flu vaccine—should be produced now. "Making the seed stock is not a big deal, and we should have it ready," Webster says. (Courtesy <https://www.sciencemag.org/>)