

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7981>



USA-China

A Chinese Spy Balloon Shot Down Foreshadows Future Conflicts

- IV Online magazine - 2023 - IV577 - February 2023 -

Publication date: Thursday 9 February 2023

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights
reserved

A Chinese surveillance balloon floating across the United States from Alaska to South Carolina last week became the symbol of the increasing inter-imperialist rivalry between the United States and China. The U.S. military shot down the balloon, over the Atlantic Ocean, leading the Chinese government to express its "strong dissatisfaction and protest" over what it called the American "use of force to attack a civilian unmanned airship used for research." At the same time, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponed a planned visit to Beijing.

The balloon, 90-feet wide, its electronic equipment powered by solar panels, was one of a fleet of such balloons used by China to spy on other countries. This was not a unique event. There have been 20 to 30 such global balloon flights in the last decade and another was flying at the same time in February over Latin America, according to the U.S. Defense Department.

The balloon floating in the jet stream at 60,000 feet was spotted by civilians over Montana at the beginning of the month, leading immediately to demands that it be shot down, but President Biden hesitated to do so, he said, while it might harm civilians. Republicans seized the opportunity to attack Biden. "The China balloon flying over the U.S. is a direct assault on our national sovereignty," tweeted Texas Governor Greg Abbott on February 3. "Biden's refusal to stop it is a dereliction of duty. From flying balloons to open borders, Biden has no regard for our national security and sovereignty."

For some time the United States government has seen China as the greatest threat to its security, as it reiterated in a national security report on April last year, though it stopped short of predicting a military conflict. The report sees China as a greater threat than Russia, Iran, or North Korea, because of its push for "global power." The report says, "China increasingly is a near-peer competitor, challenging the United States in multiple arenas — especially economically, militarily and technologically — and is pushing to change global norms."

In June of this year, NATO also named China in its "Strategic Concept" paper. "China is substantially building up its military forces, including nuclear weapons, bullying its neighbors, threatening Taiwan ... monitoring and controlling its own citizens through advanced technology, and spreading Russian lies and disinformation," said NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. "China is not our adversary, but we must be clear-eyed about the serious challenges it represents."

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation recently announced, "The counterintelligence and economic espionage efforts emanating from the government of China and the Chinese Communist Party are a grave threat to the economic well-being and democratic values of the United States." In January the FBI raided a Chinese police station in Brooklyn used to spy on Chinese in the United States. Officials in Canada, Ireland, and the Netherlands have told China to shut down its police operations in their countries.

The friction between the two nations has grown as China created and militarized new islands in the South China Sea, violated international human rights norms in its suppression of democracy in Hong Kong and of the Uighur people in Xinjiang, and threatened Taiwan.

The United States has long been the world's dominant imperial power, having the largest economy and spending the most on its military. The U.S. GDP is 23.32 trillion dollars compared to China's 17.73 trillion. According to the Institute for Policy studies, "The United States still makes up the lion's share, with its \$801 billion in 2021 representing 39

A Chinese Spy Balloon Shot Down Foreshadows Future Conflicts

percent of the world's military spending. That's more than the next nine countries combined," one of which is China. The U.S. has encouraged Japan to arm itself and used the Russian war on Ukraine to strengthen NATO. One doesn't need a spy balloon to see conflict on the horizon.

6 February 2023

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.