



## Biden's Failure to Shoot Down Balloon over U.S. Was a Major Win for China

### Description

**On February 2, it was revealed by NBC News that the United States was tracking a huge Chinese balloon that traveled over the Aleutian Islands and western Canada, only to hover over 150 Minuteman III ICBM silos deployed around Malmstrom Air Force Base in central Montana for an extended period of time. The Chinese government claimed that the stratospheric balloon was a civilian airship, designed primarily for meteorological and weather research, that was blown off course. But the Pentagon disputed that explanation, saying it intentionally flew over sensitive U.S. military sites. It has since been revealed that the airship entered U.S. airspace on January 28 over Alaska and was spotted over Montana on January 31. The White House reportedly attempted to conceal this unprecedented intrusion of a Chinese military balloon into U.S. airspace from both the U.S. Congress and the public, which weren't informed about it until it was sighted by the public days later.**

This Chinese military airship was more alarming than the previous ones because it loitered over sensitive U.S. nuclear weapon sites. The Pentagon claims that, once the balloon was detected, measures were taken to prevent the balloon from transmitting any intelligence information gleaned from its proximity to the ICBM silos back to China. The Pentagon further revealed that the balloon was maneuverable and capable of changing the direction it was while moving.

### Biden's Baffling Response

Despite informing the public that the Chinese balloon did not pose a threat to Americans, the Biden administration responded by canceling Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's planned trip to Beijing indefinitely. For its part, the U.S. Department of Defense scrambled F-22 fighters to intercept the balloon over Montana in case the orders were given to shoot it down with air-to-air missiles. The planes, however, were ordered to stand down. Days later, on February 4, a U.S. F-22 fighter shot down the balloon using an air-to-air missile off the coast of South Carolina after it had circumnavigated the entire continental United States over the course of a week. The Pentagon reports it is attempting to salvage the remains of the balloon to help determine its true mission, find out what it was carrying, and determine what intelligence it may have relayed to China before it was downed.



President Joe Biden subsequently stated that he ordered it shot down on February 1 as soon as safely possible. However, in the latest sign that the Biden administration is not serious about defending the United States of America which they have sworn to protect, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley—who infamously told his Chinese equivalent, General Li Zuocheng, that he would warn him if the United States were about to attack the People's Republic of China—and General VanHerck, who serves as the commander of NORAD, reportedly advised Biden not to shoot it down until it had finished circumnavigating the continental United States. Their reported rationale was that it would pose an undue risk of civilian casualties from its debris—even when it was flying above central Montana, one of the least populated areas of the country.

This decision has to be considered a significant win for Beijing on the international stage and a missed opportunity to demonstrate America's resolve in responding to Chinese threats against our own homeland. China's prestige received a huge boost as Biden made the decision not to shoot down a Chinese airship the size of three school buses while it was flying over the continental United States. If we had sent a U.S. airship over China, Beijing would have most assuredly shot it out of the sky long before it crossed into Chinese airspace.

Congressional Republicans, led by Sen. Josh Hawley, are understandably calling for an immediate congressional investigation into Biden's "baffling response" to this Chinese provocation in allowing a massive Chinese military airship to invade U.S. airspace and fly over the American homeland over the course of a one-week period. The Biden administration should have treated this Chinese airship like we would treat a Chinese nuclear bomber attempting to fly over our territory: warning Beijing to turn it around or we would destroy it. Shooting it down over Alaska would have sent a message to Beijing that the United States will not tolerate such potentially serious threats in our own airspace any more than they would if we did the same thing to them.

### **What Could Have the Balloon Done?**

While it claimed the balloon did not pose a security threat and recommended Biden not to shoot it down until it was over the Atlantic Ocean, the Pentagon later revealed that the balloon was equipped with "a technology bay" with advanced sensor equipment and an estimated payload of several hundred pounds. This would provide the balloon, or a similar vehicle, with the capability to carry weapons of mass destruction. Such a huge Chinese airship would serve as a useful platform for a super Electromagnetic (EMP) weapon or high-yield nuclear weapon that could have killed tens of millions of Americans. On the less destructive side of things, the balloon could have perhaps carried some kind of jamming device that could potentially interfere with our nuclear command and control systems. The FBI previously identified such a device in Washington DC, believed to be capable of disrupting nuclear launch orders.

In addition, Beijing likely used the balloon to engage in strategic signaling: a warning to the United States not to interfere if a Chinese invasion of Taiwan were to happen later this year. If not, China would not hesitate to strike the U.S. homeland with nuclear and super EMP weapons, which could destroy our great nation.

No one can claim that this sort of threat was unforeseen. In a 2008 report, the Congressional EMP Commission warned that a comprehensive nationwide EMP attack could be conducted on the United States by means of such a stratospheric balloon. Likewise, the American Leadership & Policy



Foundation indicated in a 2015 report that such a thing was possible. Paul Bedard explained in a Washington Examiner column:

High-altitude balloons, such as the one China has floated over mountain state military bases this week, are considered a key “delivery platform” for secret nuclear strikes on America’s electric grid, according to intelligence officials. The threat of balloon-launched electromagnetic pulse attacks was warned about by a congressional EMP commission and inside the military several years ago. In a 2015 report for the American Leadership & Policy Foundation, Air Force Maj. David Stuckenberg, one of the nation’s leading EMP experts, wrote extensively about the threat balloons carrying bombs pose to national security. “Using a balloon as a WMD/WME platform could provide adversaries with a pallet of altitudes and payload options with which to maximize offensive effects against the U.S.,” he wrote in the report. “There is nothing to prevent several hundred pounds of weapons material from being delivered to altitude,” he added. On Friday, he told [the Washington Examiner], “China’s recent balloon flyover of the United States is clearly a provocative and aggressive act. It was most likely a type of dry run meant to send a strategic message to the USA. We must not take this for granted.”

China came close to being in a position to pull this off. On February 3, Brigadier General Patrick S. Ryder, the Department of Defense’s press secretary, stated in an official press conference that the balloon was continuing to move eastward and fly over strategic U.S. military bases. He also revealed that it was flying over Missouri at the center of the United States, which is the optimal location to execute a super EMP attack on the U.S. homeland.

The balloon needn’t have carried an EMP weapon to have been effective either. Modern-day nuclear weapons can be easily miniaturized to weigh less than 200 pounds each. In fact, [the smallest U.S. tactical nuclear weapons dating from the late 1950s](#) weighed a mere fifty-six pounds. If armed with a nuclear weapon, such an airship could even be used to execute a decapitation strike on Washington DC, taking out America’s top political and military leadership in a single blow. Similarly, if it were armed with a biological weapon such as weaponized anthrax, the balloon could have been utilized to rain anthrax spores over the United States, affecting millions of Americans with a 90 percent kill rate. Yet another possibility is that the balloon could have been carrying a dirty radiological bomb, whose effects could be spread over a populated area.

## **The Fallout**

All of these possibilities provide a compelling rationale for Biden to have ordered the airship shot down as soon as it began flying over the Aleutian islands on January 28, rather than one week later after it had crossed the entire country.

Ironically, the United States and Canada conducted Operation Noble Defender on Jan 15 through 31 to demonstrate the joint abilities of the U.S. and Canadian Air forces to defend our joint airspace. The Chinese balloon crossed over western Canada and Alaska during the last four days of this exercise, effectively highlighting major vulnerabilities in our air defense systems as well as the unwillingness of U.S. political and military leaders to act.

The failure to defend U.S. airspace from an unarmed Chinese balloon begs the question of how Washington would respond if the PRC revealed that the airship was, in fact, carrying weaponry.



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