

Efforts Underway to Retrieve Suspected Chinese Spy Balloon in the US



The US military has been searching for remnants of a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon shot down by an Air Force fighter jet on Saturday. The balloon was first detected near Alaska last week before being shot down off South Korea. The US military, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, and US Northern Command commander stated that the Navy is working to recover the balloon and its payload. At the same time, the Coast Guard provides security for the search area. If recovered successfully, the US could gain insight into China's spying capabilities, but US officials have downplayed the balloon's impact on national security. China has protested the US response as an "obvious overreaction." Since the counter-move by Beijing will likely be carefully calculated to avoid further straining the already tense relations between the two countries.

Republican lawmakers criticized President Joe Biden for waiting several days to shoot down the balloon, accusing him of showing weakness toward China and trying to keep the breach of US airspace undisclosed. However, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's decision to wait, stating that it protected civilians from any potential debris that may have fallen to Earth.

The Pentagon will be briefing senators on the balloon and Chinese surveillance on February 15. Meanwhile, Republican Mike Turner, the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee chairman, believes China was using the balloons as weapons and missile defense systems. At the same time, Republican Marco Rubio, the Senate Intelligence Committee vice chair, stated that China was trying to send a message that it could enter US airspace.

The former president, Donald Trump, and his former national intelligence director, John Ratcliffe, denied Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's assessment that similar balloons had transited the US during Trump's presidency. However, Michael Waltz confirmed Austin's statement, stating that the Pentagon had notified Congress that Chinese balloons had been spotted near the US multiple times during Trump's tenure.

In conclusion, the incident involving the Chinese surveillance balloon has once again highlighted the strained relations between the US and China and has sparked debates among lawmakers and the public. The outcome of the Pentagon's search for the balloon may shed further light on the situation and provide a clearer understanding of the implications of this latest development in the ongoing US-China relationship.

REFERENCES:

U.S. military says it is searching for remnants of Chinese spy balloon