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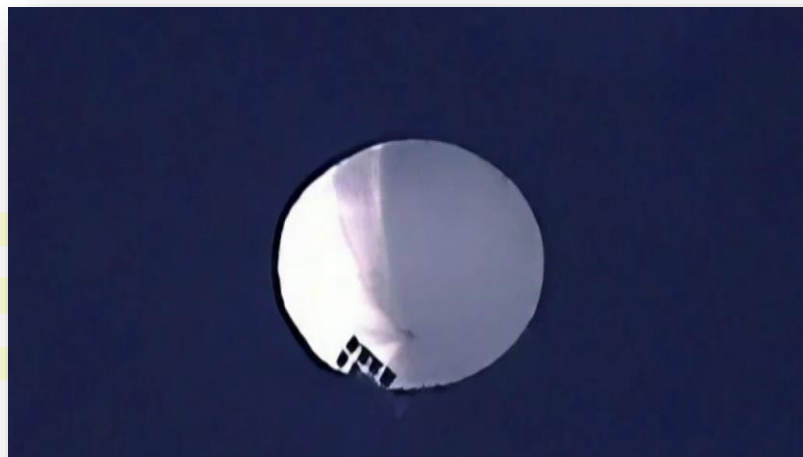
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'Spy Balloon' Latest Flashpoint Between USA & China

Why In The News?

- **Chinese-American Relations** Took A Nosedive At The Weekend When The US Destroyed A **Suspicious 'Spy' Balloon** Launched From Beijing. China Said It's "**Strongly**" Discontented With The **US Downing Of Its Balloon** And Reserves The Right To Any Necessary Reaction To The Incident.

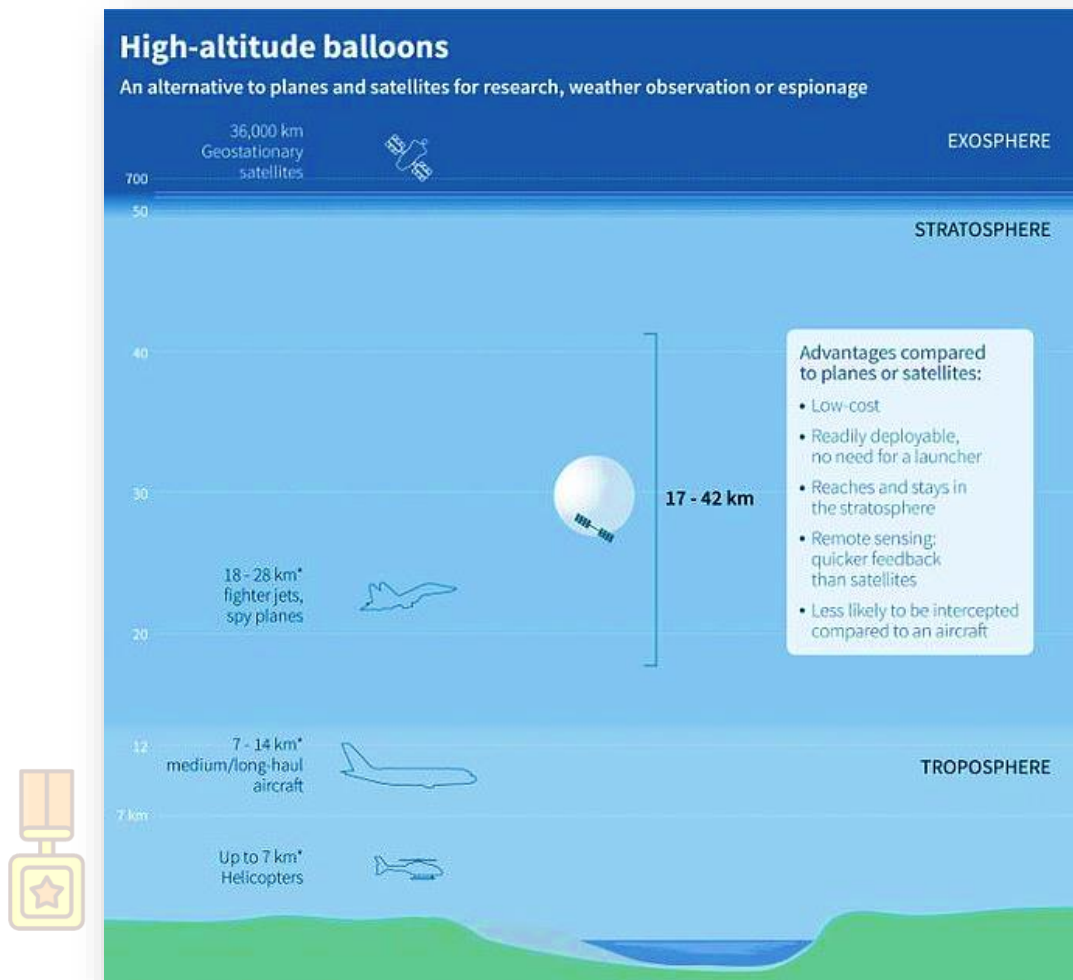


Responses From USA & China

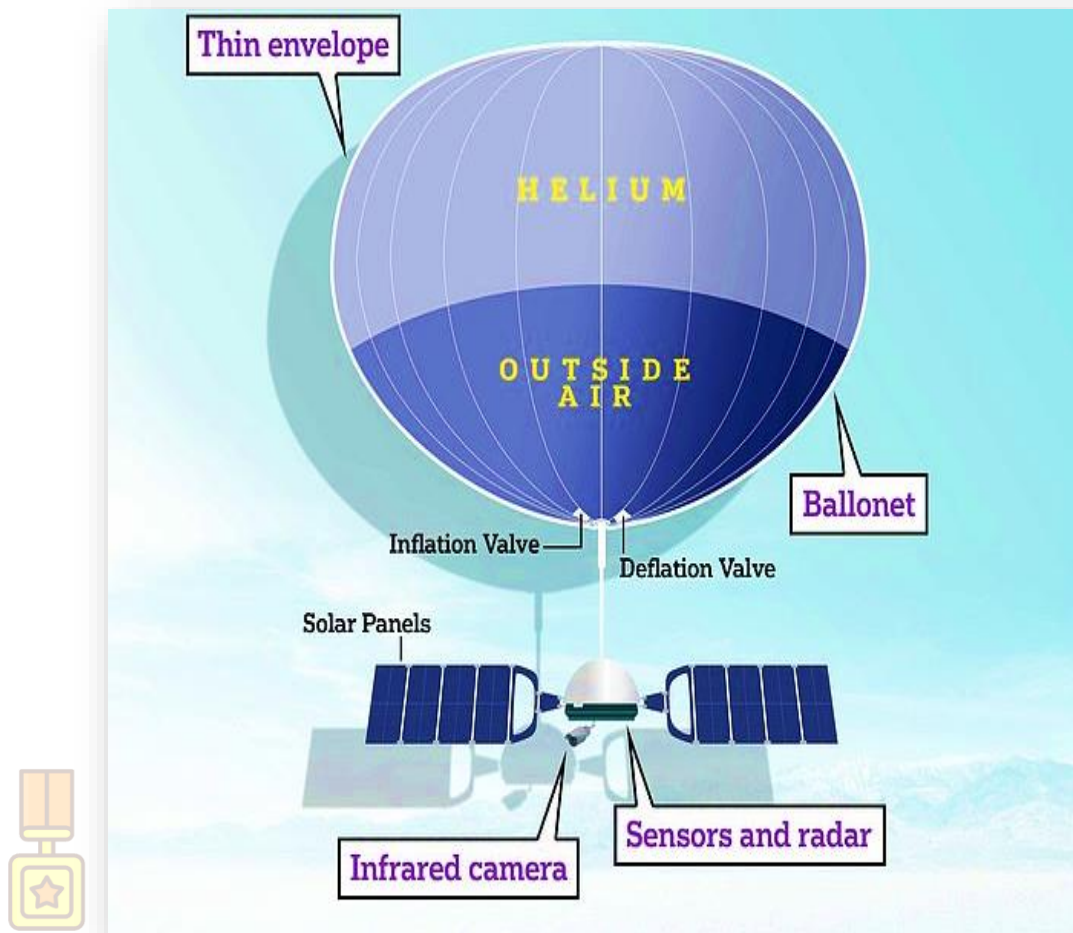
- **China Claimed Ownership** Of The Balloon And Insisted It Was An **Unmanned Weather Surveillance Aircraft** That Had Veered Off Course, But The US Remains Unconvinced.
- **US Officials** Have Said It Was Being **Used For Surveillance & Intelligence Collection**, Although **Did Not Pose 'A Military Or Physical Threat'**.

How Does A Spy Balloon Work?

- Spy Balloons Are **Huge, High-altitude Balloons**, Each Around The Size Of Three Buses, That Are **Used As Surveillance Devices**. They Provide An **Alternative Surveillance Option To Satellites** At A Higher Altitude In **Low-Earth Or Medium-Earth Orbit**.

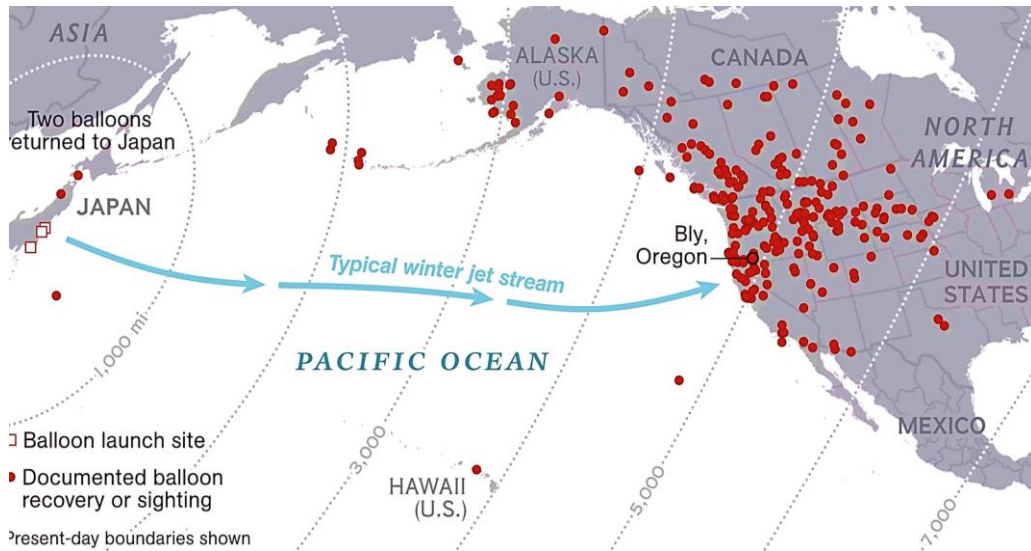


- These Spy Balloons Have **High-tech Equipment** Attached, Including **Cameras And Sensors**.
- Spy Balloons Contain Gas Such As **Hydrogen And Helium** That Aid Them In Float With The Wind.
- Typically Operate **Higher Than Commercial Airplanes** Or Even Fighter Jets And Spy Planes.
- The Surveillance Balloons Are Equipped With **Cameras, Sensors, And Radars**, Which Point Down At The Ground, All **Powered By Attached Solar Panels**.
- **Sophisticated Cameras** Allow Them To Take Photographs Of What's Down On The Earth's Surface, Potentially With Powerful Zoom Capabilities.
- It's Even Likely These Cameras Can See Outside Of The **Visible Part Of The Electromagnetic Spectrum**, Such As **Infrared**, Letting Them Observe At Night. These Come At Much **More Flexibility** Than Conventional Commercial Devices Used For Surveillance.



History Of Spy Balloons

- Balloons Used For Surveillance Aren't New And Primitive Ones Date Back Centuries, As Far Back To The Late 18th Century.
- In **1794, The French Used Manned Air Balloons** To Observe The Enemy During The **Battle Of Fleurus**, But They Came Into Greater Use In **World War II**.
- During The Conflict, **Japan Launched Thousands Of Hydrogen Balloons Carrying Bombs**, And Hundreds Ended Up In The US And Canada. Most Were Ineffective, But **One Was Lethal**; In **May 1945, Six Civilians Died** When They Found One Of The Balloons On The Ground In Oregon, And It Exploded.



The Repercussions

- The Balloon First Entered **US Airspace Over Alaska On January 28**, Before Drifting Over Canada And Then Back Into The US. A **US F-22 Fighter Jet** Shot Down The Balloon Over The Atlantic Off **South Carolina** On Saturday, A Response China Described As An **'Obvious Overreaction'**.
- The Hunt Is Now On By US Authorities To **Find The Remaining Fragments Of The Balloon**, Which Could Reveal More About Its Capabilities. The Incident Prompted **Secretary Of State Antony Blinken** To **Postpone His China Visit Next Weekend** Meant To Thaw Relationships And Find Common Ground.
- The Relationship Between The **US And China** Have Been Tense In Recent Times, With Issues Ranging From **Taiwan And The South China Sea** To **Human Rights In China's Western Xinjiang Region** And **The Clampdown On Democracy Activists In Hong Kong**.



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