

What's the significance of the 'spy balloon' incident?

written by Gary Wilson
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Protesters rally outside Philippine military headquarters.

While an alleged "spy balloon" dominates the news, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin was just in the Philippines to announce the expansion of U.S. bases in

anticipation of war with China over Taiwan.

On Feb. 2, General Austin spoke at a news conference at the Philippine military headquarters in Manila. U.S. troops, ships, and aircraft will be stationed in nine military bases in the Philippines, including a base on the Philippines' most northern island, about 118 miles from Taiwan. This puts the U.S. military in place for a rapid operation in Taiwan.

"This is a big deal," Austin said. "This is a very big deal."

Outside the Philippine military headquarters, dozens of protesters opposed to the U.S. military occupation rallied with chants of "U.S. troops out now" and "Down with U.S. imperialism."

As to the weather balloon, what is significant is not its presence. There have been three or more other times [in the last few years](#) that Chinese weather balloons have flown over the U.S., but none of them were reported in the news at the time.

This time the Pentagon announced the balloon's presence "on an espionage mission." The Pentagon managed the daily news reports, not the White House or the State Department. The generals were in charge. It was war propaganda.

All the news coverage in the U.S. called it a spy craft, never a weather research balloon, as China said.

According to [a Politico report](#), Defense Secretary Austin, U.S. Northern Command Chief Gen. Glen VanHerck, and Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Mark Milley were in charge, giving orders (called "recommendations" in the report) to the White House and the State Department as well as dictating the news reports.

One result was that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken canceled his trip to Beijing for high-level diplomatic talks, which was to be the first secretary of state

visit since Michael Pompeo's belligerent confrontation in October 2018.

Blinken's trip had become a focus of war hawks in Congress. Republican senators led by Marco Rubio from Florida signed an open letter to Blinken demanding that the trip be a confrontation with China, particularly focusing on Taiwan.

Signers of the letter, in addition to Rubio, were Senators Chuck Grassley, Bill Cassidy, Eric Schmitt, Dan Sullivan, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Rick Scott, Marsha Blackburn, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Pete Ricketts, John Hoeven, and Bill Hagerty.

Not that the Biden administration hasn't followed or even escalated the anti-China policies of the Trump administration. In December, Biden approved \$180 million in arms to Taiwan. Biden extended the ban on telecommunications equipment from China's Huawei Technologies and ZTE. And the Biden administration instituted comprehensive restrictions on selling semiconductor chips and manufacturing equipment to China.

Air Force general says war

The Pentagon has been aggressively raising the threat levels.

In a memo dated Feb. 1 but leaked several days earlier, a four-star Air Force general instructed units under his command to begin concrete preparations for war with China that he predicted would come by 2025. Gen. Mike Minihan heads the U.S. Air Mobility Command.

Minihan's memo seems to echo Air Force General Jack Ripper, a character from the 1964 movie "Dr. Strangelove" who orders his command wing to launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union.

Minihan lays out a nine-point plan as "preparation for the next fight."

“I hope I am wrong,” he commented after the memo was made public. “My gut tells me we will fight in 2025.”

Michael McCaul, the new chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the most powerful figure in the House on foreign policy, said on Fox News: “I hope he’s wrong as well. I think he’s right, though, unfortunately.”

That’s a war threat.

Japan and Australia

On Jan. 13, Japan’s prime minister, Fumio Kishida, met with Biden at the White House, the [New York Times reports](#), “to work together to transform Japan into a potent military power to help counterbalance China and to bolster the alliance between the two nations so that it becomes the linchpin for their security interests in Asia.”

Washington and Tokyo are deliberately undermining the basis for diplomatic ties with China — the One China policy recognizing Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan.

“We have to protect Taiwan,” Japan’s deputy defense minister, Yasuhide Nakayama, said in 2021.

Japan had seized Taiwan in 1895, the beginning of Japan’s colonial empire in Asia.

The U.S. has secured military alliances with Japan and the Philippines that makes a north-south arc around Taiwan. A third treaty ally, Australia, is being equipped with nuclear-powered submarines by the U.S. and Britain to operate in the South China Sea. “Attack submarines are a big deal, and they send a big message,” the [New York Times reported](#) when the fleet of submarines were announced in 2021.

Today, the U.S. is the primary armaments manufacturer and exporter worldwide. Almost 40% of all armaments production in the world is in the U.S. The military industry is the core of manufacturing in the U.S., estimated to be more than 60% of all industrial production and supply in this country.

The military escalation against China was begun by the Trump administration. It should not be forgotten that Donald Trump was, first and foremost, an operative of the military-industrial complex. His cabinet and staff came from Raytheon and Boeing, as well as a slew of U.S. Army officers – generals and colonels. U.S. military expansion increased under Trump.

Trump was the “cheerleader for U.S. arms exports.” He touted it as “making America great.” The New York Times cheered, too, saying that Trump had revived manufacturing in the U.S.

The weapons industry, of course, directly arms the military for the purpose of expansion and conquest of the world. But arms exports are another way to conquer. A country that adopts U.S. weapons and equipment puts itself under the control of the U.S. systems.

The industrial half of the military-industrial complex drives the arms buildup. It is they who are most in need of expanding the military. The military expansion is the expansion of business.

General Carl Von Clausewitz famously said: “War is the continuation of politics by other means.” And politics is concentrated economics, as V.I. Lenin pointed out. The politics producing this war buildup are the economic interests of big business.

