

Balloon shootout: Pretext for war with China

written by Chris Fry
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White House, Congress and Pentagon whip up war hysteria against Chinese weather balloon. Photo: publicdomainpictures.net

A stealth F22 fighter, costing some \$350 million, managed to shoot down its first

aircraft on February 4, a large Chinese balloon off the South Carolina coast. The People's Republic of China (PRC) stated that it was a weather research device and apologized that it inadvertently passed over U.S. territory because of unexpected wind currents.

But the Biden administration, the Congress, and the Pentagon launched a full-scale tirade, accusing China of using balloons to spy on nuclear missile silos, intercept messages, and, most importantly, "violating U.S. sovereignty." The corporate media has whipped up a frenzied campaign of mass hysteria.

Of course, every country, particularly the U.S., proclaims the right to conduct reconnaissance of other countries' weapons systems that target them. China has more than 500 satellites circling the planet, which obviously makes balloon surveillance superfluous. But no country conducts more aggressive spying on countries than U.S. imperialism, which it combines with its regime change strategy to overturn governments that it is unable to bend to its will.

One could easily go onto the internet to find the location of the Montana missile base. And no balloon could possibly find the location of any of the nuclear missile-carrying submarines the U.S. has stationed around the world underwater. But global warming is a threat to every nation and its people, large and small. Scientific study of weather conditions in the upper atmosphere is vital to our understanding of the causes and pace of this danger.

The Pentagon and the White House declared that this was a "spy" balloon by noting that it had solar panels and several antennae. Would not a weather balloon carry that same equipment? It should be [noted](#) that the government has not released details of the remains of the destroyed balloon. And with the shooting down of two more "mysterious" devices over Alaska and Canada on February 10 and 11, the debris has not yet been found, and the "threat" posed remains a mystery:

As with the object that Mr. Biden ordered shot down near Alaska on Friday, officials said they had yet to determine just what had been blasted out of the sky over the Yukon, which borders Alaska.

On February 12, an F16 fighter jet shot down a fourth unknown “cylindrical object” over Lake Huron.

Congress: Balloon means inflate the war budget to threaten China

With the right-wing takeover of the House of Representatives, imposing budget cutbacks and austerity on the workers and oppressed communities is their top priority. But they are using this balloon incident to make it clear that there will be no reduction in military spending. On the contrary, they now call for massive increases for the war industry, already fattened by the proxy war in Ukraine directed against Russia. As a February 12 [article](#) from The Hill reported:

“The entire civilized world should recognize that communist China is probably the greatest threat we’ve ever faced, more severe than Soviet Russia was because of its economic integration into the West,” said Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) after receiving a briefing from senior administration officials on the spy balloon. “We should take every step we can to try to reduce our dependency on China [and] try to build stronger military deterrence against them.

“I do not think that we should be talking about cutting the defense budget at all right now. If anything, substantial defense increases,” he said.

So, it is clear that it will be social programs like education, health care, mass transit, housing, even Social Security and Medicare that will be put on the chopping block to feed the war machine.

Biden and Pentagon ramp up military threat against China

Since taking office two years ago, Biden has escalated the trade war against the People's Republic of China, increasing the rate of inflation imposed on working families. With this new contrived "spy balloon crisis", Biden has imposed new sanctions on several Chinese companies.

When the balloon's presence was first announced, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken canceled a high-level meeting with Chinese officials that was designed to "reduce tensions" and open "lines of communications." Instead, the White House chose this moment to send Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to cement a new agreement with the Marcos regime in the Philippines, allowing the Pentagon to use that country's military bases, particularly those close to the island of Taiwan. As a January 31 Rappler newsletter [article](#) explained:

Austin's visit also seeks to tackle ways to "modernize" the two countries' 76-year-old alliance to address new and emerging threats, including China's continued assertion of its expansive claims in the South China Sea.

Similar new military agreements have already been secured with Japan, which for 50 years occupied Taiwan and, in WW2, killed more than 14 million people, mostly civilians. Pentagon generals have let loose a barrage of threatening rhetoric. Air Force General Minihan told his troops to expect war with the PRC to break out in 2025 and that "unrepentant lethality matters most - aim for the head."

Not to be outdone, an Army major general [told](#) a reporter from Military Times on February 9 that:

U.S. treaty allies such as the Philippines, Japan, and Australia, among others, "have shown that they will band together, that they will not stand for aggression from these nations that have decided they want to change the world order out here," Maj. Gen. Joseph Ryan said.

On February 16, Malaysia Now [reported](#) that the U.S., Britain, and Australia are holding intense three-week-long “Red Flag” fighter aircraft drills in the Nevada desert directed against China:

The U.S., Britain and Australia carried out joint air drills on Wednesday over the Nevada desert and beyond as part of an effort to simulate high-end combat operations against Chinese fighter aircraft and air defenses.

U.S. Air Force Colonel Jared J Hutchinson, commander of the 414th Combat Training Squadron that runs Red Flag, said the annual drills were not tied to any recent events. On Saturday, a U.S. fighter jet shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon off the coast of South Carolina, hiking tensions.

“[China is] just the pacing challenge that we train so that we’re ready... We think that if we’re ready for China, we’re ready for anybody,” Hutchinson said, citing U.S. policy.

The Detroit News [reported](#) on February 12 that the U.S. Navy and Marines are engaging in war drills in the South China Sea:

Beijing – The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are holding joint exercises in the South China Sea at a time of heightened tensions with Beijing over the shooting down of a suspected Chinese spy balloon.

The 7th Fleet based in Japan said Sunday that the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier strike group and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit have been conducting “integrated expeditionary strike force operations” in the South China Sea. It said exercises involving ships, ground forces and aircraft took place Saturday but gave no details on when they began or whether they had ended.

The U.S. military exercises were planned in advance. They come as already tense relations between Washington and Beijing have been exacerbated by a

diplomatic row sparked by the balloon, which was shot down last weekend in U.S. airspace off the coast of South Carolina.

In the midst of all of this, it must be remembered that Biden was a [supporter](#) of the Bush doctrine of “preemptive strike” and the Iraq war. And the “balloon attacks” narrative should remind all of the Gulf of Tonkin phantom attack, which was used by the Johnson Administration to send in massive numbers of U.S. troops into Vietnam and escalate the war.

U.S. wants war now to head off peace agreement between Taiwan and the PRC

On February 10, the South China Morning Post [reported](#) that:

Taiwan’s main opposition party, the Kuomintang [KMT], should work with Beijing to defend their decades-old political consensus stating that there is only one China, a top mainland leader in charge of cross-strait policy has said.

The comments from Wang Huning, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee – Beijing’s top decision-making panel – and deputy head of the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs, came as he met Andrew Hsia Li-yan, a KMT vice-chairman currently leading a delegation to the mainland.

“On the basis of reinforcing the political foundation of the ‘1992 consensus’ and opposing ‘Taiwan independence’, the Chinese Communist Party and Kuomintang should deepen political trust, maintain interaction in a constructive manner and strengthen cooperation and exchanges,” Wang told Hsia at Friday’s meeting, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Wang was referring to a broad understanding reached between Communist Party and KMT negotiators in 1992, which stated there is only one China – in defining cross-strait relations. But this consensus was rejected by Tsai Ing-wen,

leader of Taiwan's independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, when she won the 2016 presidential race. Ties across the Taiwan Strait have deteriorated since then, with Tsai now in the final year of her second and last term.

The article goes on to note the improved chances of the anti-independence KMT party winning the 2024 Taiwan presidential election:

The visit by the KMT delegation, which will also include trips to Shanghai, Chongqing and Chengdu, comes after the KMT scored a notable victory in Taiwan's local elections last November. The win has boosted hope among KMT supporters that the party would stand a better chance of regaining power in next year's presidential election. Cross-strait relations had warmed considerably during the eight-year term of Tsai's predecessor, the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou.

Peace negotiations and a conflict resolution would be great news to the mainland and Taiwan Chinese residents, but it would put a dagger in the heart of U.S. imperialism's war plans. That is what makes the current period so dangerous.

The U.S. war strategy against the PRC has depended on provoking China to launch a quite justified but costly war to recover its Taiwan province. If the anti-independence KMT party takes power in Taiwan and reopens negotiations with the PRC, then the U.S. "defend independent Taiwan" strategy goes up in smoke.

That is why the Biden administration is trying to find any pretext, even as absurd as a weather balloon, to spark a war with China before the current pro-independence regime in Taiwan is kicked out next year.

The progressive and anti-war movements must be made aware of this danger. The think tank Center for Strategic Studies issued a [report](#) on a study of a war scenario:

In most scenarios, the United States/Taiwan/Japan defeated a conventional amphibious invasion by China and maintained an autonomous Taiwan. However, this defense came at high cost. The United States and its allies lost dozens of ships, hundreds of aircraft, and tens of thousands of servicemembers. Taiwan saw its economy devastated.

Further, the high losses damaged the U.S. global position for many years.

Only a strong mass movement, such as the one that sprang up before the U.S. war against Iraq in 2003, can have any hope to help prevent this war from happening.

U.S. imperialism, with the economic and political crises at home and abroad, is in a far weaker position now than it was in 2003. A united, militant movement in the streets can stop this war in its tracks!

Source: [Fighting Words](#)

