

# CHINESE BALLOON OVER THE UNITED STATES

s 47E(d)

Key points:

s 47E(d)

. The United States brought down the balloon in a safe manner in US territorial waters.

s 33(a)(iii)

. Appreciate US efforts to manage this issue in a careful and measured way.

s 33(a)(iii)

Are there relevant Questions on Notice?: No

Contact officer s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Date submitted: 15/02/2023

## *US action against Chinese balloon*

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- appreciate US efforts to manage this issue in a careful and measured way, bringing down the balloon safely in its own territorial waters.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- . Appreciate US efforts to manage this issue in a careful and measured way
  - bringing down the balloon safely in its own territorial waters.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

### ***US shooting down unidentified objects***

- We are aware of US and Canadian announcements about the shooting down of three unidentified objects across US and Canadian airspace and remain in close touch with relevant authorities in both countries
  - the US assess these high-altitude balloons did pose a risk to civil aviation
  - we note that President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau have said they authorised these actions to protect their airspace.

### **Background**

#### ***US Military action against Chinese balloon***

At 0641 Sunday 5 February AEDT, the US military downed a high-altitude balloon originating from China off the coast of South Carolina within US territorial waters. The balloon had been tracking across Canada and the United States for several days, including above sensitive US military facilities.

Following the action, US Defense Secretary Austin issued a statement:

*This afternoon, at the direction of President Biden, U.S. fighter aircraft assigned to U.S. Northern Command successfully brought down the high-altitude surveillance balloon launched by and belonging to the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the water off the coast of South Carolina in U.S. airspace. The balloon, which was being used by the PRC in an attempt to surveil strategic sites in the continental United States, was brought down above U.S. territorial waters. On Wednesday, President Biden gave his authorization to take down the surveillance balloon as soon as the mission could be accomplished without undue risk to American lives under the balloon's path. After careful analysis, U.S. military commanders had determined downing the balloon while over land posed an undue risk to people across a wide*

*area due to the size and altitude of the balloon and its surveillance payload. In accordance with the President's direction, the Department of Defense developed options to take down the balloon safely over our territorial waters, while closely monitoring its path and intelligence collection activities. This action was taken in coordination, and with the full support, of the Canadian government. And we thank Canada for its contribution to tracking and analysis of the balloon through NORAD as it transited North America. Today's deliberate and lawful action demonstrates that President Biden and his national security team will always put the safety and security of the American people first while responding effectively to the PRC's unacceptable violation of our sovereignty.*

The Pentagon said on 3 February it had reports of a second balloon transiting Latin America which the United States assessed as a Chinese surveillance balloon.

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### ***US shooting down unidentified objects in US and Canadian airspace***

The United States subsequently shot down three additional unidentified objects:

- on 10 February at 1.45pm ET within US sovereign airspace over US territorial water off the northern coast of Alaska
- on 11 February in Canadian territory in close coordination with Canadian authorities
- on 12 February at 2.42pm ET in US airspace over Lake Huron in the State of Michigan.

US Department of Defense statement on 12 February:

Today at 2:42 p.m. ET, at the direction of President Biden, and based on the recommendations of Secretary Austin and military leadership, an F-16 fired an AIM9x to successfully shoot down an airborne object flying at approximately 20,000 feet altitude in U.S. airspace over Lake Huron in the State of Michigan. Its path and altitude raised concerns, including that it could be a hazard to civil aviation. The location chosen for this shoot down afforded us the opportunity to avoid impact to people on the ground while improving chances for debris recovery. There are no indications of any civilians hurt or otherwise affected. North American Aerospace Defense Command detected the object Sunday morning and has maintained visual and radar tracking of it. Based on its flight path and data we can reasonably connect this object to the radar signal picked up over Montana, which flew in proximity to sensitive DOD sites. We did not assess it to be a kinetic military threat to anything on the ground, but assess it was a safety flight hazard and a threat due to its potential surveillance capabilities. Our team will now work to recover the object in an effort to learn more.

US Department of Defense statement on 11 February:

Following a call between the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States, President Biden authorized U.S. fighter aircraft assigned to North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) to work with Canada to take down a high-altitude airborne object over northern Canada today. NORAD detected the object over Alaska late Friday evening. Two F-22 aircraft from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska monitored the object over U.S. airspace with the assistance of Alaska Air National Guard refueling aircraft, tracking it closely and taking time to characterize the nature of the object. Monitoring continued today as the object crossed into Canadian airspace, with Canadian CF-18 and CP-140 aircraft joining the formation to further assess the object. A U.S. F-22 shot down the object in Canadian territory using an AIM 9X missile following close coordination between U.S. and Canadian authorities, to include a call today between Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and Minister of Defence Anita Anand. As Canadian authorities conduct recovery operations to help our countries learn more about the object, the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be working closely with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

US Department of Defense press briefing on 10 February (excerpt):

So first of all, to add to information already provided earlier by the White House, at the direction of the President of the United States, fighter aircraft assigned to U.S. Northern Command successfully took down a high altitude airborne object off the northern coast of Alaska at 1:45 pm Eastern Standard Time today within U.S. sovereign airspace over U.S. territorial water.

On February 9, North American Aerospace Defense Command detected an object on ground radar and further investigated and identified the object using fighter aircraft. The object was flying at an altitude of 40,000 feet and posed a reasonable threat to the safety of civilian flight.

*U.S. Northern Command is beginning recovery operations now. U.S. Northern Command's Alaska Command coordinated the operation, with assistance from the Alaska Air National Guard, Federal Aviation Administration, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.*

*We have no further details about the object at this time, including any description of its capabilities, purpose, or origin. The object was about the size of a small car, so not similar in size or shape to the high altitude surveillance balloon that was taken down off the coast of South Carolina on February 4.*

#### ***Response by China on three unidentified objects in US and Canadian airspace***

During China's regular Foreign Ministry press conference, Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said (13 February) 'we have made it clear time and time again that the entry of the Chinese civilian unmanned airship into US airspace was a purely unintended, unexpected and isolated event, caused by force majeure'. When asked if the other three flying objects in US and Canadian airspace also belong to China, Spokesperson Wenbin said (13 February) 'I do not have anything on that. We believe that no irresponsible comments should be made when there is no clear evidence. And we are absolutely opposed to made-up stories and smears against China.'

s 22(1)(a)(ii)