

United States Senate

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
JUDICIARY
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

February 7, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

In the wake of the week-long voyage of the high-altitude Chinese surveillance balloon over the continental United States, I write today regarding your administration's unacceptable response to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) blatant exhibit of espionage over United States airspace.

On Wednesday, February 1, eyewitness accounts in Montana reported a mysterious object in the sovereign airspace of the United States. It was not until Thursday, February 2—after these reports emerged—that your administration finally decided to make the American public aware of the spy balloon. However, the public now knows that the Chinese surveillance balloon was first discovered over U.S. airspace in Alaska on Saturday, January 28.

As you know, Tennessee is home to U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy assets. Your administration's lack of immediate action allowed the Chinese surveillance balloon to potentially collect valuable national security information and spy on American military assets for an entire week. Not only does this inaction pose a direct and enduring national security threat to our nation, but it also instills in the American public a lack of confidence in your administration's ability to display strength and transparency when dealing with the CCP.

Furthermore, the CCP continues to work nonstop to expand its reach and power through President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative, Confucius Institutes, purchasing of American farmland, and TikTok. Beijing will stop at nothing to maintain its grip on power, including destroying Hong Kong's autonomy and seeking to take control of Taiwan.

Your delayed response in notifying the American people also begs the following questions that I request are addressed in the upcoming classified briefing to the Senate:

1. Would you have publicly disclosed the spy balloon had eyewitness accounts not emerged?
2. Would Secretary Blinken have postponed his trip to China had the public not found out about the spy balloon?
3. Do you agree that China purposely timed this balloon to coincide with your administration's trip?

4. Can you provide a comprehensive overview of national security intelligence and military assets the spy balloons may have been able to access while it was in the air?
5. What actions will your administration take to prevent further acts of espionage within our airspace?

Considering the pressing threat that the CCP poses, the security of our nation must be your top priority. It is also critical that your administration be transparent with the American people.

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator