

8 February 2024

## NAADSN Ideas Series

# **Balloons, NORAD, and the Defence of North America: Reflections on the February 2023 Incidents Concerning High-Altitude Objects in North America**

Nicholas Glesby and Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer

This NAADSN Ideas Series event recognized the one-year anniversary of NORAD detecting, tracking, and ultimately shooting down four high-altitude objects over North American airspace from 4-12 February 2023. The first object, which was attributed to a Chinese surveillance program and characterized as a surveillance balloon, flew over Alaska, Canada, and the continental United States before being shot down over the coast of South Carolina on 4 February. The second, third, and fourth objects, whose debris were never recovered but were eventually linked to civilian hobbyist clubs, were shot down over Alaska, the Yukon, and Lake Huron on 10, 11, and 12 February, respectively.

These incidents renewed public attention to the defence and security of Canada and the United States. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), which is responsible for the aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning of Canada and the continental United States, entered was drawn into the spotlight of political decision-makers and the public, even though it traditionally “flies beneath the political radar”<sup>1</sup> in all but times of crisis. However, erroneous assessments and poorly-explained references of which country was responsible for downing which object, despite NORAD operating exactly as it is mandated and designed to do, sowed confusion and misunderstanding.

In an era of tense geopolitics, the participants in this discussion emphasized that Canada and the United States need to better coordinate their strategic communications so that our adversaries do not exploit mixed messaging to advance their interests. The series of balloon incidents also highlighted the need for the Canadian public to better understand the changing defence and security landscape and institutions responsible for North American safety. The panelists articulated the importance of talking about defence and security with Canadians, including the binational nature of NORAD, the importance of our relationship with the United States, the need for internal government actors to work together in a more integrated manner to break down information stovepipes, and for coordinated communications between Ottawa and Washington to show a unified North American position.

This Activity Report summarizes the various presenters remarks. Dr. Andrea Charron and Dr. James Fergusson spoke about NORAD's role and response during the series of incidents. Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Master Corporal John Mitchell of the Dawson patrol in 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Rangers Patrol Group (1CRPG) discussed the on-the-ground perspective of the search for the object in the Yukon. Dr. Marc Lanteigne and Nicholas Glesby offered their analysis on the Chinese and Canadian media commentary and coverage. The video link can be accessed [here](#).

## NORAD's Role and Response

***Dr. Andrea Charron, Ph.D. – University of Manitoba, NAADSN Co-Lead***

The North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) agreement<sup>2</sup> did exactly what it should do in the case of several air-breathing threats. American and Canadian assets (personnel and airframes) are allowed to cross over into each other's territory. If an air object needs to be engaged and ultimately defeated ("shot down"), there are very clear procedures that must be followed. If the incident is in Canadian jurisdiction, the National Command Authority (NCA) who is the Prime Minister, must give permission for action in Canadian airspace. If it is in the United States, the NCA is vested with Secretary of Defense, who, likewise, must give permission. After permission is granted, whose assets actually do the business of defeating the air object is really a matter of geography, how quickly assets can get to the location, and what capabilities are on board.<sup>3</sup>

The high-altitude Chinese air object ultimately shot down on 4 February 2023 raises three questions for NORAD, the US regional Combatant Commands (USNORTHCOM and INDOPACOM)<sup>4</sup> and other government departments like Transport Canada. There are significant discussions about NORAD modernization that focuses on new technology, especially over-the-horizon (OTH) radar systems that are coming online. However, questions about Command and Control (C<sup>2</sup>) seams between Canada and the United States and between the militaries and other government departments and agencies, such as a strategic approach to air tasking orders, and the various organizations and authorities which are responsible for dealing with air objects, need to be studied further. First, referring to the Chinese high-altitude object as a balloon suggests innocuous capabilities. The Chinese air object had considerable surveillance capabilities having travelled over the Pacific before entering North American airspace. How many allies or other US Combatant Commands (especially Indo-Pacific Command) actually saw this air object, knew the direction of travel, and either did not think or did not know to inform NORAD or USNORTHCOM?

Second, within Canada and the United States, air objects that are travelling at a particularly high-altitude (such as 60,000 feet) and already within North American airspace, or are travelling at a slow speed, is a challenge for warning systems such as radars to pick up. What happens when air objects are at a certain altitude? NORAD discusses air and space, with an ill-defined altitude of aerospace (which exists between the domains). What are the command authorities when air objects are at a particular space? Canada and the United States likely differ

with respect to the mandate of these command authorities in aerospace, but NORAD manages and exercises those differences.

Finally, is there a plan in the future to deal with, by all accounts, balloons that do not pose an imminent threat to commercial air traffic? All four air objects, including the three hobbyist balloons, were defeated by A9-X sidewinder missiles (approximately \$500,000CA each). These missiles are an expensive defeat mechanism choice, and this is before considering the costs of scrambling fighter jets and personnel. In the future, and with the benefit of hindsight knowing that the three hobbyist balloons were not a threat, benign air-objects raise questions about the role of other government departments and other defeat options. Should we be improving education around responsibilities of hobbyists and citizens if they are going to launch drones or balloons? Now that Cube Satellites (CUBESAT)<sup>5</sup> are readily available and easily accessible for relatively little money, we should expect that air, aerospace, and space are going to become more congested. Do Canada and the United States have a plan going forward to deal with these sorts of air objects?

***Dr. James Fergusson, Ph.D. – Centre for Defence and Security Studies, NAADSN Fellow***

The balloon incidents across North America from 4-12 February 2023 already have been assigned to the dustbin of history. This scenario has faded from the public conscience, but not for NORAD. The media in both Canada and the United States used a momentary event to generate interest before the incident slipped out of the public spotlight and disappeared - notwithstanding key points others have made about what they should be paying attention to. Key questions raised in reference to the Canadian military and NORAD are their desire to raise the profile of NORAD the balloon incident to educate Canadian citizens, in particular, about the important role that NORAD played detecting and defeating all four balloons.

NORAD and the Canadian government missed an opportunity to exploit Canada's crucial involvement in these missions as evidence of Canada's commitment to North American defence and security. The way that it was presented in the media and public domain, largely driven by the US Secretary of Defense saying that this was an American operation with US assets and reporting it as such, caused some confusion about Canada's role.<sup>6</sup> The Government of Canada was not forceful in communicating to the public that this was a binational effort through NORAD, in which Canada is a full and equal partner. NORAD itself did not exploit this to raise its profile with the public and practitioner communities. As the saying goes, all news is good news when it comes to achieving your objectives. NORAD and Canada failed take advantage of this opportunity.

The Canadian and American publics still have not heard about exactly what capabilities the Chinese balloon had, with the other three rarely mentioned in the media, public, or through official government communications. It has never been clear as to why the Yukon and Lake Huron balloons were not found or the outcome of the searches never communicated. Additionally, the steps that NORAD has taken to avoid a similar incident in the future is not clear. Much of this information resides in the classified realm, and will remain there for some time, but is still important to discuss the incident in the public domain. These balloons were high-altitude and moving slowly, not the typical sort of object that NORAD early warning systems and radars look for (i.e. missiles, jets, and bombers).

What has NORAD done in the aftermath of these incidents? How NORAD has responded to these threats, given that high-tech issues dominate their planning attention and broader discussion around NORAD Modernization? This concern has not been publicized. This is disconcerting given that NORAD is not on the public agenda, nor is the important role that NORAD plays in continental defence. It should be a priority for decision-makers in both capitals. This incident was not effectively capitalized upon, leveraged, or exploited to increase a better understanding of NORAD. Instead, the preference was to make this incident go away as quickly and quietly as possible. It is possible that the failure to detect the balloons sooner, and the corresponding embarrassment of having not done so, is the reason why both governments, and particularly NORAD, have chosen to not discuss the balloon incidents afterwards. This could and should have been used much better to raise NORAD's important role in defending North America amongst the public and government officials.<sup>7</sup>

## The Yukon Balloon Incident: Putting the Response in Context

**Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Ph.D. – Trent University, NAADSN Lead**

*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.*

Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, 11 February 2023<sup>8</sup>

On 11 February 2022, an F-22 from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in Alaska downed a high-altitude balloon over the Yukon, about 160 km east of the Alaska border. This was one of four high-altitude aerial objects that NORAD shot down in North America early that month, representing the first kinetic action that the binational command had taken in defence of the continent. This action was directed by Canada's Minister of National Defence and Chief of the Defence Staff. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) led the ensuing search effort, with coordination by Public Safety Canada and assistance from Canadian Special Operations Command (CANSOFCOM) and Yukon-based Canadian Rangers, that encompassed a large portion of the Yukon between Dawson City and Mayo. The US military, FBI, and US Coast Guard also participated. The search was



eventually called off on 17 February after snowfall made it difficult to locate debris and the risks were determined to outweigh the benefits.

The object over the Yukon, which NORAD had tracked across Alaska and into Canadian airspace, was reported by *The Wall Street Journal* as a “small metallic balloon with a tethered payload”<sup>9</sup> also flying at about 40,000 feet. I have seen no evidence indicating that the object was perceived to pose a kinetic military threat to North America, although some Canadian commentators immediately tied it to the Chinese surveillance balloon. The low altitude made it a flight safety hazard for civilian aircraft, however, and the object could have offered an adversarial actor with a surveillance capability (akin to worries about the massive balloon shot down over the Atlantic).

In any case, NORAD identified a location to shoot down the object which would minimize the risk to the civilian populace in the Yukon. Pursuant to the NORAD agreement, both Canada and the United States made a joint decision to shoot down the balloon. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told the public that he had directed NORAD to deploy American and Canadian aircraft. Both countries scrambled fighter aircraft, and whichever arrived there first would take it down. In this case, freezing rain delayed the departure of CF-18s from Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Cold Lake,<sup>10</sup> so a USAF F-22 shot down the object in Canadian airspace, about 160 km from the Canada-US border between the Yukon communities of Dawson City and Mayo, at 1:41 p.m. local time on 11 February.<sup>11</sup> It used a short-range, system-guided AIM-9X Sidewinder air-interceptor missile<sup>12</sup> - more costly (at about \$400,000) than using guns, but more reliable.<sup>13</sup>

On the evening of 11 February, Minister of National Defence Anita Anand told reporters that the “small, cylindrical object” which NORAD had tracked over the central Yukon was smaller but “potentially similar” to the surveillance balloon that the U.S had intercepted off the east coast the week before. Flying at an altitude of approximately 40,000 feet, it “posed a reasonable threat to the safety of civilian flight.” She noted that “we have no further details about the object at this time, including any description of its capabilities, purpose, or origin.” Anand emphasized that she had spoken with Yukon Premier Ranj Pillai “and conveyed that we’ll continue to work hand in hand with the Territory,” and that she would “continue reaching out to Indigenous peoples potentially affected by this incident to provide information and updates as needed, out of respect for reconciliation.” She also preemptively addressed questions about why a US fighter shot down the balloon, explaining that “Canada and the United States continue to work together through the bi-national command of NORAD to defend our two nations, and I will recognize again the importance of this extremely close relationship we have with the United States.”<sup>14</sup>

The next day, following a briefing from the U.S. National Security Council, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told the press that the Americans believed that both the Yukon and Alaska objects were balloons.<sup>15</sup> White House spokesperson John Kirby stated that they were considering that the balloon, as well as other balloons shot down during the same time period, were “tied to commercial or research entities and therefore totally benign” but were shot down “out of an abundance of caution.” He emphasized that they did not pose “any direct threat to people on the ground”, but were destroyed “to protect our security, our interests and flight safety.”<sup>16</sup>

Canadian messaging was less certain. An anonymous Canadian official told *The Globe and Mail* that the object was believed to be a surveillance balloon of Chinese or Russian origin.<sup>17</sup> Before leaving on a pre-scheduled trip to Whitehorse on 11 February, Trudeau “declined to speculate about its nature or purpose” but noted that a Canadian recovery team had headed into the central Yukon to find the third flying object. “There is still much to know about it,” Trudeau acknowledged in his brief comments to reporters. “That is why the analysis of this object is going to be very important.”<sup>18</sup> Two days later, the prime minister told reporters that the four mysterious flying objects brought down over North America over the preceding week “may be somehow related to one another,” and that his meetings with CAF and RCMP personnel in the Yukon left him with “reason to believe it’s not a coincidence that the four objects have been spotted over such a short time period.” He suggested that, “obviously, there is some sort of pattern in there. The fact we are seeing this in significant degree over the past week is a cause for interest and close attention, which is exactly what we’re doing.”<sup>19</sup>

The RCMP officially led subsequent search efforts to find the debris over a search area that spanned 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> of “treacherous ... rugged mountain terrain with a very high level of snowpack.”<sup>20</sup> MGen Paul Prévost, Director of Staff with the Strategic Joint Staff in Ottawa which provides situational awareness and decision support to the CDS,<sup>21</sup> told the House of Commons Committee on National Defence on 17 February:

This is going to be a difficult operation. For the one over Lake Huron, which is the third of the small objects that were shot down, the U.S. Coast Guard was in charge of that operation, and they’ve ceased their recovery effort, given the small chance of finding anything there. The other ones in Alaska and Yukon are fairly up north in very difficult terrain, with lots of snow. The one in Yukon specifically landed in mountainous terrain with about a metre to a metre and a half of snow. Picture an object falling from 20,000 feet into that snow.

We’re doing everything we can right now. I can tell you that we have about 130 members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and right now, I’m answering for the RCMP. Unfortunately, they couldn’t meet us today. It’s their operation, but we’re supporting the RCMP in this one. There are 130 members of the Canadian Armed Forces there, and we have multiple platforms. The first part is to find what we can by aerial search. We had a CP-140 on site, and we now have a Hercules, a Cormorant, a Cyclone and three Griffons. If we ever find something, we also have a task force of about 70 members, mainly from the special forces but also working with the Canadian Rangers, who would be able to find their way to what we call the “find area” to extract it.<sup>22</sup>

The Canadian Armed Forces assisted with the search and recovery efforts, but military resources represented the bulk of practical capability on the ground. Reports and press releases indicate that CAF support included elements from CANSOFCOM – the details of which are understandably classified – as well as personnel from Joint Task Force North (including its small detachment in Whitehorse), Ranger Instructors from 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1CRPG headquarters) in Yellowknife, and Canadian Rangers from the Yukon – and the Dawson patrol in particular. The RCAF Air Task Force consisted of a Hercules transport aircraft, two Twin Otter transport aircraft, a C-17 transport aircraft, a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter, and a Cormorant search and rescue helicopter.<sup>23</sup>

# ACTIVITY REPORT



Stories on the ground recount how people in Whitehorse knew the military had arrived in large numbers when Tinder “lit up like a Christmas tree.” The Whitehorse Cadet Training Centre, which has been the subject of rumours about divestiture for years, proved valuable in accommodating the forces who flew up and who essentially took over the camp. This is a strong example of why it is valuable to have even a modest military footprint all across Canada. Conversations also highlighted how different actors within the CAF pushed in – and pushed out – other subject matter experts. While I will not delve into details, this warrants serious analysis and reflection on how information is shared within the CAF, as well as friction over who should be taking the lead on coordinating what or coordinating with key partners. CBC North intimated in some of its coverage that the RCMP and CAF butted heads, but I do not have any inside knowledge about this.

I have learned, however, that there was also limited communication with Yukoners – including the Canadian Rangers – to make them aware that something was going on and, in the case of the Rangers, that they might be called upon to assist. Several people told me how they learned that something strange was going on when they could not fly out of Dawson because the authorities closed down the airspace around the town – a precautionary measure that was entirely appropriate but came with no public explanation. Local Rangers called up 1CRPG headquarters in Yellowknife to find out more information, but secrecy meant that not much could be passed along. Fortunately a Ranger Instructor was in the Yukon supporting the Rangers on Exercise Tay Naydan (the annual Ranger training activity that supports the Yukon Quest) and he coordinated a response team with local Rangers in Dawson.

It is also telling that the Rangers in Dawson quickly identified the CAF people who arrived in town – even when they did not announce their presence to the Rangers – because they know their home community. The Rangers provided substantive help with ensuring accommodations for visiting personnel, as well as identifying places on a map and feasible routes to access them. The Rangers expressed to me how impressed they were with the professionalism and intelligence of the southern personnel who came to Dawson, but they wished that they had received more notification so that they could have prepared to head out in their capacity as guides and enablers. As a lesson for future operations of this nature, DND/CAF might think about how it can share more timely information with the Rangers, without jeopardizing operational security.

Perhaps most significantly, I have heard various stories about the lack of proactive engagement with Yukon First Nations. The land claims contain provisions about the CAF and notification and access to Indigenous lands for military operations pursuant to the *National Defence Act*.<sup>24</sup> In any case, relationships are essential. It appears that DND officials in Ottawa were confused about which First Nations should be contacted (and particularly those upon whose lands the military would be operating), meaning delays in communications as they sought out the information from territorial sources. This fed uncertainty amongst Yukoners. Roberta Hager, deputy chief of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in Mayo, explained how hearing about the object being shot down was “quite concerning.” “What can you do when things come out of the sky, right? You don’t have anything to protect you ... And we really never got any kind of alert or, you know, like saying to be aware of anything,” she said. Given that community members are often out on the land, she noted that it was “a potential safety concern.”<sup>25</sup>

# ACTIVITY REPORT



On 14 February, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun along with the Dawson City-based Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in Old Crow, Yukon, issued a statement saying they'd had discussions with federal and territorial officials about the incident. Based on these interactions, the First Nations called for a "collaborative process to be formalized for any matters of Arctic sovereignty and security." The emphasized that "it is imperative the North Yukon First Nations are consulted in all matters that affect our people, lands, waters and skies."<sup>26</sup> These statements echoed calls by Yukon First Nation leadership in November 2022, when Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Regional Chief Kluane Adamek and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Roberta Joseph both testified before the Senate Committee on National Defence and Security and lamented how their people had been left out of national security discussion involving the North. "Our lack of inclusion to date has been an oversight, and we ask for this to be rectified," Chief Joseph testified. "It is not acceptable that we may face military and/or other security forces coming into our communities without input from us as First Nation governments. We have seen in the past what can occur when there is military intervention and a security presence on our lands and in our community without our implicit permission."<sup>27</sup> For her part, Chief Adamek insisted that the principles of the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) "must apply as Canada moves forward on NORAD modernization," and "Canada needs to bring direct outreach to First Nations to safely address their security and safety concerns for both the land and people that come with an increased military presence."<sup>28</sup>

On a positive note, I also heard how the southern-based CAF elements that deployed to the Yukon quickly learned that they had a lot to learn – and they quickly came to highly value and respect Canadian Ranger knowledge. It was an epiphany for the southern personnel operating around Dawson to understand how the Rangers could really help them to get to a location quickly. This helps to dispel the myth of the Rangers as a symbolic or "token" military force, which some media commentators perpetuate based upon a deliberate mischaracterization of their role and capabilities.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of locating the debris, the balloon was shot down over a remote location to minimize the risk to people, which made it difficult to find. The USAF could not provide a precise location, and Minister Anand told the news media that the debris was "in a remote location northeast of Dawson City, in complex alpine terrain that is prone to challenging northern weather conditions."<sup>30</sup> Almost immediately, officials cautioned that, due to the vastness and harsh conditions of the central Yukon, it was possible that the object would not be located. This proved prescient.

In any case, the Rangers advised that there was significant risk associated with pushing by snowmobile into the area where the balloon likely went down. The military decided that the risk of trying to prosecute a search versus the probability of the balloon actually representing a foreign threat did not warrant continuing the effort. On 17 February, the RCMP issued a press release noting that it had decided to discontinue the search efforts in the Yukon. A search of the "highest probability area" had not located any debris. "Given the snowfall that has occurred," the police explained, "the decreasing probability the object will be found and the current belief the object is not tied to a scenario that justifies extraordinary search efforts." The RCMP thanked "the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP members, the Yukon community and Indigenous Communities that have supported this effort."<sup>31</sup>



I also love how the Rangers and the other CAF personnel who had been sent to Dawson took advantage of the opportunity to conduct some training together after the search efforts ended. And I have heard lots of eagerness on both sides to work together in the future.

So what was it? The most compelling theory is that the balloon belonged to the Northern Illinois Bottlecap Balloon Brigade, a hobby club that launches inexpensive hydrogen-filled balloons, typically inflated to about three feet in diameter and sent to float at high latitude with a GPS tracker and antenna. One of its pico balloons (call sign K9YO) had been in the air for 124 days and was making its seventh circumnavigation of the globe when it sent its last transmission from close to Hagemester Island, off the southwest corner of Alaska, before it was projected to float over the Yukon. “They may have been able to set a new distance record if it hadn’t been shot down by a missile,” Steve Trimble of *Aviation Week* reported. “Nobody really knew this hobby was out there,” he said. “I don’t think NORAD understood it.” Trimble also noted that the remains of a pico balloon would be nearly impossible to recover. “I mean, the winds are going to take the little fragments who knows where, and it’s not big to begin with,” he explained. “So you’re never going to see this stuff again.”<sup>32</sup>

So what are key takeaways?

Beyond the Yukon, Northern leaders cited the incident as an example of the interplay between security, sovereignty, and consultation. Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeeagok said in a statement on 13 February that the balloon incident “highlights the need for Northerners to be fully involved in discussions surrounding Arctic security.” Nunavut Senator Dennis Patterson recalled the Operation Morning Light and the descent of the nuclear-powered Soviet satellite Cosmos 954 into the Northwest Territories in 1978,<sup>33</sup> insisting that the recent “incursions remind us that we’re vulnerable” and should serve as a “wake-up call to beef up surveillance capabilities in the North” as “the gateway to North America.”<sup>34</sup> The was a common theme at the time of the incident, with one commentator suggesting that “the Chinese spy balloon represents the latest provocation in a relationship that has profoundly deteriorated in recent years as Beijing thumps its chest on the world stage. ... The balloons may be bemusing. But they’ve also served as an important reminder that Canadian sovereignty and security is not to be taken for granted. Our politicians and defence policymakers know this.”<sup>35</sup>

Following NORAD’s shooting down of the balloon over the Yukon in February 2023, Chief Adamek urged DND to formalize communications and collaboration with Yukon First Nations. “I am pleased to hear that Minister Anand contacted the affected Yukon First Nations about the ongoing military actions on their traditional territories,” he stated. “I was, however, disappointed that these conversations did not happen sooner – in response to several requests from Yukon First Nations to discuss Arctic sovereignty and northern defence concerns with the minister – and only after a critical military situation.” An AFN Yukon Press release noted that the organization’s leaders “have pressed for Yukon First Nations to be actively involved in northern security matters,” including through more formalized relationships and communications protocols with Yukon First Nations. They also called for “an immediate meeting with the Minister to discuss regional priorities and approaches.” Chief Adamek explained that ““Yukon First Nations set the path for working collaboratively with Canada through *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*,” a landmark document written by the Yukon First

Nations in 1973. “As we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this document, I urge the federal government to heed its message when it comes to matters of national security: ‘there must be two-way communications between us.’”<sup>36</sup>

Testimonies by politicians, military leadership, and senior civil servants before House of Commons standing committee on national defence in early March 2023 clarified various issues, explained the risk assessment process, and also identified areas for improvement. Deputy Minister of National Defence Bill Matthews explained that, when faced with uncertainty, “you do not necessarily want your adversaries to know what you know.” “Given that there was no (physical) threat” to Canadians or to North Americans, he questioned “the value of going public with information earlier.” For her part, Minister Anand noted that NORAD would review its protocols for detecting smaller airborne objects and discern ways to strengthen and modernize communication-sharing between decision-makers. Gen Wayne Eyre, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), also reinforced that NORAD typically focused on protecting North American airspace from fast-moving aircraft and missile threats, and the appearance of slow-moving objects like balloons presented an opportunity to improve and broaden its priorities. MGen. Darcy Molstad, the acting commander of Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) when the unidentified objects were detected and shot down, affirmed that Canada’s military aircraft were “more than capable” to shoot down the balloon that the “first, best shot” protocol reflected NORAD’s collaborative approach. “That’s what we’re driving towards with our allies and our partners in a conflict situation,” he explained. “We want the best sensor and the best shooter to be able to take action for best effect.”<sup>37</sup> The responses to the balloon incursions “highlight the efficacy and continued importance of our binational military command with the United States through NORAD,” Anand affirmed. They also revealed concerns about “evolving threats Canada faces here at home in a world defined by strategic competition and uncertainty”<sup>38</sup> – and the paramountcy of positive relationships and timely communications to reassure Canadians that they are protected and respected.

## The Yukon Balloon Incident: A Local Perspective

***Master Corporal John Mitchell, 1 Canadian Rangers Patrol Group, Dawson City***

*\*These remarks do not reflect the official position of the 1 Canadian Rangers Patrol Group or the Canadian Armed Forces.*

Looking at these events from the local perspectives of both the Rangers and the community, there was an underestimation from the people the Rangers dealt with on regional considerations, such as the weather, terrain, and access which vary across the three territories. There is also a tendency of Southerners to paint the entire Arctic north of 60 degrees latitude one homogenous colour of white paint. It is not so.

The Arctic varies from north to south, from east to west, but also a lot seasonally. This changes the whole dynamics of operations from boats and canoes, to skidoos and all-terrain vehicles, or to on-foot. These are some considerations which have to be carefully assessed. The limitations in the Yukon include the size of the

# ACTIVITY REPORT



community, the infrastructure available or not available, resources, and the access changes seasonably. Having this incident happen up here has different impacts at the municipal and territorial levels. Case in point was the NOTAM (a notice containing information essential to personnel concerned with flight operations but not known far enough in advance to be publicized by other means), which closed down access to local airspace, and we as locals did not know what was happening. Rental vehicles available in both Dawson City and Whitehorse were being blocked off and many hotels were full, as this incident took place in the middle of three or four conferences that were being held. This is another example of the limited resources available to Canadian Armed Forces response teams.

In the smaller communities, these sort of responses cannot help but to change the dynamic of the communities, especially in the winter. Rangers possess local knowledge of the land they live on and in their communities. You may want to cut down the number of Air Force people you brought, because you can probably count the number of McDonald's on one hand! Similarly, the RCMP better bring their own doughnuts or let us know when to start baking. We do not have similar amenities as Southern Canada, like 24-hour gas stations or places for accommodations and housing. The use of the Rangers in this is not just limited to operations on the land, they are the fixers in the community who know where everything is or how to get a gas station open. On the land, they offer the obvious: all-weather capability, knowledge of the land, and operational skills. We don't survive in the bush, we live in the bush – and that is a major difference.

This sort of information is available directly through Ranger headquarters in the community capture sheets, which is the first place you should call in a crisis rather than arriving and being amazed and awestruck at all the Rangers in red sweatshirts and hoodies who come out of the woodwork. Half of the people who arrived in Dawson City in search for the object did not know who or what the Rangers were. An additional operational thought is that the Rangers need to be used differently in situations like this. I explained that we need to be considered as a tool: you fire, you correct en route, and we follow up with more. We cannot afford to burn daylight or waste operational windows in a time of crisis. In reality, the response from the local patrol was excellent. We were looking at less than four hours to get an operational team prepared and ready to go into an area of operation 200 miles from Dawson, with additional personnel standing up behind them to move in alongside the Army. Furthermore, you cannot paint the North the same all the way across it, both in terms of the land and in the capabilities of Ranger patrols. You need to understand the diversity and be prepared to plan and execute operations accordingly.

## Explaining Commentary in Chinese and Canadian Media

**Dr. Marc Lanteigne, Ph.D. – UiT - The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, NAADSN Coordinator**

There have been predictable commentaries in the Chinese media one year on about the main balloon incident, meaning the first case which was ascertained to have been caused by China, and how the United States, and North Americans overall, reacted to it. The initial responses from the Chinese media posited that the reporting of the incident in North America and Europe, which characterized the first balloon as a device to conduct espionage, was a complete fabrication by the American government, and an exercise in narrative building. The Chinese Foreign Ministry insisted on multiple occasions that this was a civilian unmanned airship that, regrettably, due to ‘force majeure’ and unforeseen westerly winds, was blown considerably off course.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the Chinese press argued that the United States greatly overreacted to the incursion by shooting it down.<sup>40</sup>

Since the affair, China’s main state-sponsored media outlets including the *People’s Daily*, *Xinhua*, and the nationalist *Global Times* further developed the narrative that the civilian airship, as it was called, simply went off course and that the United States overplayed the issue while trying to score international and domestic political points as well as constructing another facet of the ‘China Threat.’<sup>41</sup> Coverage in China also strongly implied that the affair further underscored that American and Canadian militaries were, for all intents and purposes, “trigger happy” and using force when it was unnecessary, at least partially to make a political statement.<sup>42</sup>

Other points made in the Chinese media were that the United States was exercising blatant double standards. Beijing, demonstrating a “whataboutism” approach, made unsubstantiated claims that several American balloons had been deployed throughout Chinese airspace a year prior to the incident. This was never confirmed.<sup>43</sup> Political cartoons in the Chinese media poked fun at the American military running away from an innocuous balloon, while other editorials characterized Washington as demonstrating a “bossy demeanor.”<sup>44</sup> There was also the assumption that the United States was seeking to deflect from its own domestic problems and strategic shortcomings by playing up the incident. Additionally, a Chinese narrative also appeared around the assertion that the US was trying to shift media spotlight away from the East Palestine, Ohio rail derailment and the ensuing political fallout.<sup>45</sup> In short, China unleashed a flood of attempts at deflection across many different platforms.

Although the Chinese media tried to stick to those specific viewpoints, there was also discussion afterwards about how the United States and China could repair the diplomatic damage from the incident, with the idea that this damage was entirely the fault of Washington – completely flipping the narrative on its head. These calls in the Chinese media included the perceived need or the United States and its allies, including Canada, to behave in a calm and rational fashion, that North American policymakers should practice “strategic prudence,” and that both Ottawa and Washington needed to understand the “big picture.” In short, the argument was that the complexity of China-US relations is so intense that this one incident should not be allowed to derail already difficult diplomatic ties.<sup>46</sup>



The affair demonstrated that both the Chinese government and the country's media are becoming less restrained in adopting a zero-sum stance to the country's strategic relations with the West, and that Beijing continues to seek ways of painting the United States and its fellow NATO members as revisionist actors seeking to overturn international stability.<sup>47</sup> Rather, Chinese narratives insist that their country is the defender of stability and the status quo. The balloon incident of February 2023 was only the latest in a series of incidents in which this narrative has been nurtured and perpetrated.

***Nicholas Glesby – Trent University, NAADSN Administrator***

The Canadian media coverage of the four incidents of high-altitude objects in North American airspace required further analysis due to confusion over NORAD's role in defeating the Chinese surveillance balloon (the first object) and what are retrospectively understood as hobbyist balloons for weather gathering (the final three objects). I gathered approximately 250 articles from Canadian news media between 27 January 2023 (when the Chinese surveillance balloon was first picked up on radar)<sup>48</sup> and 30 January 2024 that appeared in business dailies and current affairs databases, using the parameters "NORAD and Balloons" and "NORAD and Objects." There were only three brief Department of National Defences news releases between 2 and 10 February 2023, the initial crisis and response window.<sup>49</sup> I used the keywords "binationalism," "risk," and "modernization" to measure how these incidents were both communicated to the public, and how NORAD's role was communicated by decision-makers and described by the press.

This was a generational moment for NORAD as it was thrust into the public spotlight for the first time since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11). However, misinformation and accusations,<sup>50</sup> particularly around the role of US airframes and personnel in defeating (shooting down) the balloon over the Yukon, were at play. This is exploitable by our adversaries to undermine public cohesion and resilience. These incidents also represent the first time in NORAD's history that the binational command actually shot down an object over North American airspace, although the National Command Authorities (NCAs) – the Prime Minister of Canada and Secretary of Defense of the United States – have previously authorized NORAD to exercise its aerospace control mission, most notably on 9/11.

The first keyword of 'binationalism' was mentioned only 17 times across the 250 articles and explained, rather simplistically, by Prime Minister Trudeau as "doing things together over North America."<sup>51</sup> Binationalism involves closer levels of integration than bilateralism, with the "principles of parity and equality of each country" and actions are "based on common goals and objectives with mutual respect."<sup>52</sup> In a NORAD context, this means that service members capabilities are considered national force assets and seamlessly move physically between Canada and the United States – this includes the command arrangement so that an American can command Canadian troops stationed in Canada assigned to NORAD, and vice versa. Canadians and Americans assigned to NORAD defend the continent, not just their respective state. This form of binationalism and defence cooperation first dates back to Recommendation 53/1 of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD).<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, NORAD is rarely referred to as binational directly by editors or journalists. The term ‘joint’ is used far more often to describe NORAD (89 times compared to just 17 for binational). Joint is used in descriptive phrases such as the “joint US-Canadian air surveillance and defence organization”<sup>54</sup> or “joint U.S.-Canada military command.”<sup>55</sup> Precision in describing these terms is important for two reasons. First, joint has different meanings in civilian and military contexts. Joint is typically understood as two governments working together. However, in military parlance, joint refers to two services (i.e. Air Force and Navy) operating together, with the term ‘combined’ used to describe two nations working together.<sup>56</sup> Second, in an increasingly geopolitically tense world, there needs to be greater understanding of how institutions and agreements have historically protected North America as political and public attention returns to strengthening our collective military capabilities.

Additionally, the term ‘joint’ may also serve as reason why there was confusion over the movement of airframes and personnel, again, primarily with the Yukon high-altitude object. If the binational nature of NORAD and the Canada-US defence relationship writ large was better understood by more Canadians, it is possible that some confusion and discord over how NORAD works would be lessened.<sup>57</sup>

The keyword ‘risk’ was mentioned 68 times and used to describe three distinctions when calculating how to remove the objects from North American airspace. The first distinction was by decision-makers as the rationale for both not shooting the initial Chinese surveillance balloon down over population centres, and then later shooting down the three high-altitude objects. The initial concern relative to the Chinese balloon was based off risk for civilian life and ground infrastructure, which was likely a strategic tactic that allowed Canadian and Americans to collect intelligence on the balloon’s origin, capabilities, and intent first (a Pentagon spokesperson in June 2023 stated the balloon did not collect nor transmit data while over the United States).<sup>58</sup> Additional concerns were based off the risk to commercial airline traffic, as the balloon (the size of multiple school buses)<sup>59</sup> was flying above 60,000 feet, with the other objects in the 20-40,000 foot range (a commercial airliner typically flies between 30 and 40,000 feet).

The second distinction of ‘risk’ was that it was often used to describe the general geopolitical situation and North America’s defence gaps and vulnerabilities, with some commentators criticizing that Canadians had become comfortable under the “American security umbrella” and fail to realize the full extent of current threats posed by Russia and China. The understanding that Canada is no longer a “fireproof house far from any flammable materials,” as Senator Dandurand famously quipped in 1924,<sup>60</sup> must be placed in the context of Russia’s brutal, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Invoking the Russian threat shored up political support for Ukraine and brought the continental defence and security discussion into public consciousness. The balloon incidents had the same potential.

The third distinction was that both political leaders and government officials described the balloon and subsequent three objects did not pose “imminent risk.”<sup>61</sup> This description was likely an effort to calm any speculation that the balloon actively collected or transmitted data, information, or intelligence, or that it carried a kinetic payload. Some American reports (not included in the data scrape) from April and December 2023 state that the balloon was able to transmit imagery and send signals intelligence back to Beijing.<sup>62</sup> The Pentagon denied these reports<sup>63</sup> and General Glen VanHerck, the commander of NORAD / US Northern Command,

explained that the US was able to censor signals and protect sensitive sites.<sup>64</sup> Due diligence and assertion in a complex security environment must be grounded in evidence and fact, to avoid provoking unintended reactions or escalation.

The third keyword ‘modernization’ was mentioned 56 times in the articles collected. Experts, officials, practitioners, and interviewers used this term to reinforce the importance of joint commitments by the governments of Canada and the United States to NORAD. (Canada had committed \$38.6 billion, plus the F-35 replacements, at the time of our workshop).<sup>65</sup> US decision-makers highlighted that the balloon incidents reinforced a need for “continued investment” in modernizing NORAD’s early-warning radar systems.<sup>66</sup> General VanHerck stated that the gaps in coverage from the North Warning System (NWS) left him with a “domain awareness gap,” owing to both technological shortcomings and limited information sharing.<sup>67</sup> This is especially pertinent as another US Combatant Command (presumably Indo-Pacific Command, based off flight patterns) knew of the Chinese surveillance balloon but did not share that information before the balloon was picked up by radar systems off the west coast of Alaska on 27 January.

In the United States, the explanations of the events as they unfolded were left in the hands of officials with direct access to or the Secretary of Defense (Pat Ryder, the Pentagon spokesperson), access to the the President (John Kirby, the spokesperson for the National Security Council), or VanHerck himself. In Canada, the Minister of National Defence released three brief statements, and Prime Minister Trudeau held a press conference in Whitehorse (in which he incorrectly linked the Chinese origin and responsibility for the first object to the latter three). Otherwise, the media had no opportunities to ask questions or ascertain new information from Canadian officials. The linking of the Chinese surveillance balloon to the latter three was especially problematic in that the Canadian government never officially corrected the prime minister’s mischaracterization of their origins (which only became clear in subsequent testimony before parliamentary committees). These observations underscore the importance of coordinated messaging by Canada and American officials so that a cohesive and united North American response is communicated to dispel misinformation, correct adversarial disinformation, and reinforce the vital role that NORAD has in protecting the skies and seas of our shared continent.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> For more, see: Andrea Charron and James Fergusson, “Out of Sight, out of Mind: NORAD vis-à-vis CANUS politics,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 26, no. 2: 137-151.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, *Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the North American Aerospace Defense Command E105060*, 28 April 2006, <https://www.treaty-accord.gc.ca/text-texte.aspx?id=105060>.

<sup>3</sup> See: Andrea Charron, “NORAD’s value is on full display as flying objects shot down over North America,” *The Conversation*, 13 February 2023, <https://theconversation.com/norads-value-is-on-full-display-as-flying-objects-shot-down-over-north-america-199829>.

<sup>4</sup> Government of the United States, “Combatant Commands,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, <https://www.defense.gov/About/combatant-commands/>.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada, “CubeSats in a nutshell,” *Canadian Space Agency*, 6 May 2022, <https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/satellites/cubesat/what-is-a-cubesat.asp>.

# ACTIVITY REPORT



<sup>6</sup> Government of the United States, “Statement From Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, 4 February 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3288535/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii/>.

<sup>7</sup> For further analysis by Dr. Charron and Dr. Fergusson about NORAD in the aftermath of these incidents, see: Andrea Charron and James Fergusson, “Discovering NORAD,” *Wilson Center*, 14 March 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/discovering-norad>.

<sup>8</sup> US Department of Defense Press Release, “Statement on Today’s Actions by North American Aerospace Defense Command,” 11 February 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3295989/statement-on-todays-actions-by-north-american-aerospace-defense-command/>.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Lubold and Paul Vieira, “Flying Object Shot Down Over Canada on Orders of Biden and Trudeau,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2023, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/flying-object-shot-down-over-canada-on-trudeaus-orders-a9e638e9?mod=hp\\_lead\\_pos1](https://www.wsj.com/articles/flying-object-shot-down-over-canada-on-trudeaus-orders-a9e638e9?mod=hp_lead_pos1).

<sup>10</sup> Sean Boynton, “Canadian jets did not take down object over Yukon due to weather delays: military chief,” *Global News*, 7 March 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9534121/chinese-spy-balloon-anand-eyre-committee/>.

<sup>11</sup> Evidence presented to House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN), 7 March 2023, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/NDDN/meeting-52/evidence>.

<sup>12</sup> “AIM-9X Sidewinder Air-to-Air Missile, USA,” *Airforce Technology*, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/aim-9x-sidewinder-air-to-air-missile/>.

<sup>13</sup> Colleen Long, Lolita Baldor, and Zeke Miller, “US jets down 4 objects in 8 days, unprecedented in peacetime,” *Associated Press*, 12 February 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/biden-politics-charles-schumer-jake-sullivan-china-acc1a333326c50ee9649760c569c300f>. See also Dario Leone, “Here’s why the USAF F-22 used the AIM-9X rather than the gun to shoot down the Chinese spy balloon,” *Aviation Geek Club*, 14 February 2023, <https://theaviationgeekclub.com/heres-why-the-usaf-f-22-used-the-aim-9x-rather-than-the-gun-to-shoot-down-the-chinese-spy-balloon-and-why-the-sidewinder-dont-need-to-see-something-hot-in-order-to/>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/02/minister-anandprovides-an-important-national-security-update.html>. On Canada and the US as “premier partners” in the Arctic, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Rob Huebert, “Premier Partners: Canada, the United States and Arctic Security.” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20/3 (2014): 320-33.

<sup>15</sup> Colleen Long, Lolita Baldor, and Zeke Miller, “Sen. Schumer says 2 downed objects believed to be balloons,” *Associated Press*, 12 February 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/biden-politics-charles-schumer-jake-sullivan-china-acc1a333326c50ee9649760c569c300f>.

<sup>16</sup> Max Matza, “Chinese balloon sensors recovered from ocean, says US,” *BBC News*, 14 February 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64633705>.

<sup>17</sup> Erin Anderssen and Steven Chase, “U.S. shoots down flying object over Lake Huron as Canada works to recover wreckage in Yukon,” *Globe and Mail*, 13 February 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230213034412/https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadian-team-working-to-retrieve-and-analyze-object-shot-down-over/>.

<sup>18</sup> Anderssen and Chase, “U.S. shoots down flying object.”

<sup>19</sup> John Paul Tasker, “Trudeau says flying objects brought down over the past week may be linked,” *CBC News*, 13 February 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-identified-objects-1.6746708>.

<sup>20</sup> RCMP spokesman Sean McGillis quoted in Sam Cambal, “White House defends decision to shoot down flying objects,” *BBC*, 13 February 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64632378>.

<sup>21</sup> DND, Strategic Joint Staff placemat (2022), <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/reports/2022/placemat-sjs.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> MGen Paul Prévost to NDDN, 17 February 2023, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/NDDN/meeting-51/evidence>

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Otis, “What we know about the search for two flying objects shot down over Yukon and near Ontario,” *CTV News*, 13 February 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/what-we-know-about-the-search-for-two-flying-objects-shot-down-over-yukon-and-near-ontario-1.6272475>.

<sup>24</sup> See appendices in P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Situating the Yukon in Canadian Defence and Security* (Peterborough: NAADSN, April 2024), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2024apr-Lackenbauer-Yukon-defence-security.pdf>.



<sup>25</sup> CBC News, “Search for ‘suspected balloon’ has people talking in nearby Mayo, Yukon,” 15 February 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/mayo-yukon-suspected-balloon-search-1.6750138>.

<sup>26</sup> CBC News, “Search for ‘suspected balloon.’”

<sup>27</sup> Chief Robert Joseph testimony to Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs (SECD), 28 November 2022, 20:25, <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/Sen/Committee/441/SECD/20EV-55858-E>.

<sup>28</sup> Chief Kluane Adamek testimony to SECD, 28 November 2022, 20:27, <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/Sen/Committee/441/SECD/20EV-55858-E>.

<sup>29</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “‘Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada’s North’: Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 19/2 (2018): 158-192, <https://jmss.org/article/view/62819>.

<sup>30</sup> Dana Hatherly, “Canadian officials looking for correlation in recent pattern of aerial objects — including 1 shot down over the Yukon,” *Yukon News*, 14 February 2023, <https://www.yukon-news.com/local-news/canadian-officials-looking-for-correlation-in-recent-pattern-of-aerial-objects-including-1-shot-down-over-the-yukon-7004208>.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2023/yukon-search-debris-suspended>.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Trimble, “Hobby Club’s Missing Balloon Feared Shot Down By USAF,” *Aviation Week Network*, 16 February 2023. See also <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/02/17/illinois-hobbyist-balloon-missing-yukon/>. Given its small size and lack of perceived risk to aircraft, the hobby club had registered the pico balloon with the Federal Communications Commission but not the Federal Aviation Administration. Bill Chappell and Becky Sullivan, “‘Did an F-22 shoot down an Illinois hobby group’s small radio balloon?’” *NPR*, 18 February 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Ryan Dean and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “A Northern Nuclear Nightmare? Operation Morning Light and the Recovery of Cosmos 954 in the Northwest Territories, 1978,” in *Nuclear Histories of Canada*, eds. Susan Colbourn and Timothy Sayle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 181-206; and Ryan Dean and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds. *Operation Morning Light* (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute on Government, Arctic Operational History Series vol. 3, 2018), <https://operationalhistories.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Operational-Histories-03-Operation-Morning-Light.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> CBC News, “Search for ‘suspected balloon.’”

<sup>35</sup> Shachi Kurl, “The spy balloon carries a down-to-earth message about defence,” *Regina Leader Post*, 18 February 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Yukon Region, “Regional Chief Adamek Calls for Enhanced Collaboration with Yukon First Nations on Northern Defence,” 14 February 2023, reproduced in *Windspeaker*, <https://windspeaker.com/news/opinion/discussion-northern-defence-arctic-sovereignty-should-have-begun-long-object-shot-down>. See also “Adamek calls on DND for enhanced collaboration with First Nations,” *Whitehorse Star*, 14 February 2023, <https://www.whitehorsestar.com/News/adamek-calls-on-dnd-for-enhanced-collaboration-with-first-nations>.

<sup>37</sup> Boynton, “Canadian jets did not take down object.”

<sup>38</sup> Anand to NDDN, 7 March 2023, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/NDDN/meeting-52/evidence>.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning’s Regular Press Conference on February 6, 2023,’ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202302/t20230206\\_11020388.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202302/t20230206_11020388.html); ‘Foreign Ministry Spokesperson’s Remarks on the Unintended Entry of a Chinese Unmanned Airship into US Airspace Due to Force Majeure,’ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, 3 February 2023, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/202302/t20230203\\_11019484.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202302/t20230203_11019484.html).

<sup>40</sup> Jiang Xinyu, “‘无人飞艇’事件：一个美国热衷政治操弄的鲜活案例，[‘Unmanned Airship’ Incident: A New Case of American Political Manipulation,],” *Thinktank China*, 3 March 2023, [http://www.china.com.cn/opinion/think/2023-03/03/content\\_85141623.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/opinion/think/2023-03/03/content_85141623.htm);

Zhang Zhixin, ‘击落飞艇凸显美对华政策为国内政治所裹挟,’ [‘The shooting down of the airship highlights that American policy towards China is a threat to domestic politics,]’ *China.com.cn*, 8 February 2023, [http://www.china.com.cn/opinion2020/2023-02/08/content\\_85094274.shtml](http://www.china.com.cn/opinion2020/2023-02/08/content_85094274.shtml). ‘外交部：美国在世界上放飞了多少间谍侦测飞艇气球，美方自己心里很清楚,’ [‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The United States itself knows very well how many spy detection airship balloons the US has released around the world’] *Global Times / Huanqiu*, 13 February 2023, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/4Bgb4njgwRB>.

# ACTIVITY REPORT



<sup>41</sup> 'Uterior motives behind #US political farces on 'Spy #balloon' - Facts Tell,' *CGTN*, 1 March 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjn0eVzQoDg>.

<sup>42</sup> 'Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on February 13, 2023,' *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202302/t20230213\\_11024546.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202302/t20230213_11024546.html).

<sup>43</sup> Daisuke Wakabayashi and Claire Fu, 'China Says U.S. Regularly Sends Balloons Into Its Airspace', *The New York Times*, 13 February 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/13/world/asia/china-us-balloons-airspace.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Jin Yongming, 'Opinion: US Shooting Down Airship a Blatant Provocation,' *China Daily*, 5 February 2023, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202302/05/WS63df185ba31057c47ebacf49.html>.

<sup>45</sup> '拜登为什么强调“不会道歉”?' ['Why did Biden Emphasize "No Apology"'], *Sina.com*, 17 February 2023, <https://news.sina.cn/gj/2023-02-18/detail-imyhcnpm2320838.d.html>.; *Twitter*, 14 February 2023, [https://twitter.com/SpokespersonCHN/status/1625493956502097922?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Cwtwtrm%5E1625493956502097922%7Ctwgr%5E8d7b6d025a0c6312e0813eedf5b1d9575dd56847%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fd-34990518951826052225.ampproject.net%2F2402080818000%2Fframe.html](https://twitter.com/SpokespersonCHN/status/1625493956502097922?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Cwtwtrm%5E1625493956502097922%7Ctwgr%5E8d7b6d025a0c6312e0813eedf5b1d9575dd56847%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fd-34990518951826052225.ampproject.net%2F2402080818000%2Fframe.html).

<sup>46</sup> Zhang Tengjun and Nie Weixi, 'Lessons to Learn in Order to Prevent another 'Balloon' Incident,' *Global Times*, 1 February 2024, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202402/1306531.shtml>. '中国驻美使馆：中美关系不应因“流浪气球”随风逐流,' ['Chinese Embassy in the United States: Sino-American Relations Should not Drift with the Wind because of "Wandering Balloons"'], *Sohu.com*, 18 February 2023, [https://www.sohu.com/a/642456201\\_115510](https://www.sohu.com/a/642456201_115510).

<sup>47</sup> '外交部：所谓“修正主义大国”的帽子扣不到中国头上' ['Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The So-Called "Revisionist Power" That Hat Cannot be Placed on China's Head,' *Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China*, 4 June 2019, [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-06/04/content\\_5397211.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-06/04/content_5397211.htm).; 'NATO is pushing the Russia-Ukraine conflict toward a 'world war', *Global Times*, 4 February 2024, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202402/1306652.shtml>.

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Ritchie, "Outgoing NORAD commanders says Canada, U.S. too slow to adapt to threats," *The Associated Press*, 21 December 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/outgoing-norad-commander-says-canada-u-s-too-slow-to-adapt-to-threats-1.6696512>.

<sup>49</sup> See the three press releases here: 1) Government of Canada, "Statement on High Altitude Surveillance Balloon," *Department of National Defence*, 2 February 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/02/statement-on-high-altitude-surveillance-balloon.html>.; 2) Government of Canada, "Statement from the Minister of National Defence," *Department of National Defence*, 4 February 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/02/statement-from-the-minister-of-national-defence.html>.; 3) Government of Canada, "Statement from the Minister of National Defence," *Department of National Defence*, 10 February 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/02/statement-from-the-minister-of-national-defence0.html>.

<sup>50</sup> For example of the reactions by MP James Bezan and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, see quotes in in: Daniel Otis, "Why wasn't the suspected Chinese spy balloon shot down over Canada?" *CTV News*, 6 February 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/why-wasn-t-the-suspected-chinese-spy-balloon-shot-down-over-canada-1.6262580>.

<sup>51</sup> Lee Bertiauhme, "Canadian jets still waiting for advanced missiles U.S. used to destroy flying objects," *The Associated Press*, 13 February 2023, <https://ottawa.citynews.ca/2023/02/13/canadian-jets-still-waiting-for-advanced-missiles-us-used-to-destroy-flying-objects-6531757/>.

<sup>52</sup> Lee Botts and Paul Muldoon, *Evolution of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 188-189, 198-199, 2005.; Lee Botts and Paul Muldoon, "Using the Boundary Waters Treaty for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Revitalizing the Great Lakes Governance Regime," *The Wayne Law Review* 54, no. 4 (2008): 1558.

<sup>53</sup> For more on the PJBD, see: Nicholas Glesby, "The Canada-US Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD): An examinations of its advice outcomes legacy, 1940-2023," an unpublished thesis at the University of Manitoba, <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/items/1a0e01f0-fe34-41f8-8468-66feff0690a0>.

<sup>54</sup> Mia Rabson, "U.S. downs fourth flying object: Norad operation over Lake Huron," *The Canadian Press*, 13 February 2023, <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/2023/02/12/object-destroyed-over-yukon-a-day-before-pm-scheduled-to-visit-whitehorse>.

<sup>55</sup> Lee Berthiaume, "Biden visit puts Canadian defence spending, Norad modernization back under microscope," *The Canadian Press*, 22 March 2023, <https://www.ipolitics.ca/news/biden-visit-puts-canadian-defence-spending-norad-modernization-back-under-microscope>.

<sup>56</sup> Andrea Charron, "The Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD): How Permanent and Joint? Celebrating 80 Years of Cooperation," *Centre for Defence and Security Studies*, 25 February 2020, p.7, [https://umanitoba.ca/arts/sites/arts/files/2022-07/The-Permanent-Joint-Board-on-Defence-final-workshop-report\\_2020.pdf](https://umanitoba.ca/arts/sites/arts/files/2022-07/The-Permanent-Joint-Board-on-Defence-final-workshop-report_2020.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Government of the United States, "Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder Holds a Press Briefing," *U.S. Department of Defense*, 29 June 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3444912/pentagon-press-secretary-air-force-brig-gen-pat-ryder-holds-a-press-briefing/>.

<sup>59</sup> "Remarks by President Biden on the United States' Response to Recent Aerial Objects," *The White House of Joe Biden*, 16 February 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/02/16/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-united-states-response-to-recent-aerial-objects/>.

<sup>60</sup> Senator Raoul Dandurand in an Address to the League of Nations, 2 October 1924. Reprinted in: Walter A. Riddell (ed.), *Documents on Canadian Foreign Policy, 1917-1939*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), 464.

<sup>61</sup> U.S. downs 'object' over Alaska near Canadian border: Drama came just hours after meeting of defence ministers

<sup>62</sup> Natasha Bertrand, "Chinese spy balloon was able to transmit information back to Beijing," *CNN*, 3 April 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/03/politics/chinese-spy-balloon/index.html>.

<sup>63</sup> "Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder Holds a Press Briefing."

<sup>64</sup> Courtney Kube and Carol E. Lee, "U.S. intelligence officials determined the Chinese spy balloon used a U.S. internet provider to communicate," *NBC News*, 28 December 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/us-intelligence-officials-determined-chinese-spy-balloon-used-us-inter-rcna131150>.

<sup>65</sup> Government of Canada, "Announcement regarding the F-35 acquisition," *Department of National Defence*, 9 January 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/01/announcement-regarding-the-f-35-acquisition.html>.

<sup>66</sup> See Secretary Austin's quote in: James McCarten, "U.S. downs new 'object' off Alaskan coast, not far from Canadian border: White House," *The Associated Press*, 11 February 2023, <https://halifax.citynews.ca/2023/02/11/us-downs-new-object-off-alaskan-coast-not-far-from-canadian-border-white-house-6523677/>.

<sup>67</sup> See Commander Van Herck's quote in: Ritchie, "Outgoing NORAD commanders says Canada, U.S. too slow to adapt to threats."