

# US briefed 40 nations on China spy balloon incident

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**Online Desk:** The United States held briefings in Washington and Beijing with foreign diplomats from 40 nations about the Chinese spy balloon that entered the US airspace in late January, a senior administration official and diplomats have said. US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman on Monday briefed nearly 150 foreign diplomats across 40 embassies, the official said, while in Beijing the US embassy gathered foreign diplomats on Monday and Tuesday to present US findings about the balloon. “We want to make sure that we are sharing as much as we can with countries around the world who may also be susceptible to these types of operations,” the senior administration official said.

Sherman’s briefing was first reported by the Washington Post. The US State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The appearance of the Chinese balloon over the United States last week caused political outrage in Washington and prompted US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to cancel a trip to Beijing that both countries had hoped would patch their frayed relations. Blinken would have arrived in Beijing on Sunday. A US Air Force fighter jet shot down the balloon off the South Carolina coast on Saturday, a week after it first entered US airspace. China has said it was a weather balloon that had blown off course into US airspace and was an “unexpected, isolated incident”. It condemned the shoot-down and accused the United States of overreacting.

The State Department also sent US missions around the world information about the balloon incident to share with allies and partners, the official added. In the briefings in Beijing, the United States presented information to demonstrate that the balloon, which entered US airspace in the last days of January and flew over US military sites, was not a weather research balloon as Beijing said but an airship that was used for espionage, said diplomats in Beijing who attended the discussions. Washington said the balloon was controlled by the Chinese military, the People’s Liberation Army.

The diplomats at the Beijing briefing said they were told that the solar panels on the balloon meant that it needed more power than a weather balloon, and that its flight path did not conform with natural wind patterns. US officials have said the balloon was equipped with rudders and propellers. “Based on the US briefing, our own understanding about such balloons and the fact that China has so far refused to name the company or entity that owns this balloon, we find it hard to believe it is a civilian weather balloon,” said a Beijing-based Asian defence diplomat.

The information was similar to what Pentagon has shared with reporters since the weekend, saying the balloons were part of a Chinese aerial fleet that has also violated the sovereignty of other countries. The Washington Post reported that although analysts still don’t know the size of the balloon fleet, one US official said there have been “dozens” of missions since 2018 and that the balloons use technology provided by a private Chinese company.