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Phil Mattingly

Biden says US-China relations have not taken a hit in wake of spy balloon shoot down

Байден каже, що американсько-китайські відносини не постраждали після збиття шпигунської повітряної кулі

Президент Джо Байден заявив у новому інтерв'ю, що нещодавно піднята китайська повітряна куля-шпигун, яка перетинала континентальну частину США, не зашкодила двостороннім відносинам між двома країнами.

«Ідея збити повітряну кулю, яка збирає інформацію над Америкою, і це погіршує відносини?», - про це Байден сказав Джуді Вудрафф із телеканалу

PBS NewsHour у широкомасштабному інтерв'ю через день після свого другого звернення до народу. «Я чітко дав зрозуміти Сі Цзіньпіну, що ми будемо повністю конкурувати з Китаєм, але ми не шукаємо конфлікту. Так було досі», - зазначив Д. Байден. Відповідь Байдена знаменує собою другий випадок цього тижня, коли він намагається применшити ефект того, що офіційні особи США вважали «нахабним» актом Пекіна, який відправив повітряну кулю для збору розвідувальної інформації в кілька штатів США - з ознаками того, що вона шуршала над ключовими військовими об'єктами.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/08/politics/biden-us-china-spy-balloon/index.html>

[President Joe Biden](#) said in a new interview that the [recently recovered Chinese spy balloon](#) that traversed the continental US did not damage bilateral relations between the two countries.

“The idea shooting down a balloon that’s gathering information over America and that makes relations worse?” Biden told PBS NewsHour’s Judy Woodruff in a wide-ranging interview a day after [his second State of the Union address](#).

“I made it real clear to Xi Jinping that we’re going to compete fully with China, but we’re not looking for conflict. That’s been the case so far.”

Biden’s response marks the second time this week that he’s sought to downplay the effect of what US officials deemed [a “brazen” act](#) by Beijing to send an intelligence gathering balloon across several US states – with signs it loitered over key military installations.

Biden, who [ordered the US military](#) to shoot down the balloon over open water last week, said he has not spoken to the Chinese leader since the balloon was spotted. But he pointed to continued contacts between officials in his administration and their Chinese counterparts.

US officials registered their objections to Chinese officials while the balloon was in flight. They also communicated with Chinese officials after the balloon was shot down, according to senior administration officials.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken [postponed a high-stakes trip](#) to Beijing due to the balloon incursion, undercutting a key element of Biden's first face-to-face meeting with Xi in November. That meeting was designed to cool tensions that had been rising between the two powers throughout Biden's opening weeks in office, with Blinken's follow-up visit to China considered the next marker in the effort.

Biden administration officials have stressed that the meeting was not canceled, but instead delayed until a later date. That date has not yet been set.

Asked by CNN this week if US officials had any indication as to why China would commit such an overt act, Biden laughed off the question. "They're the Chinese government," he said.

Biden administration officials have maintained they were able to move quickly to mitigate any intelligence collection capacity of the balloon and have countered that they will end up benefiting from the [ability to collect information about the balloon](#) and Chinese intelligence capabilities, both during its flight and in the recovery of its wreckage from the Atlantic Ocean.

That hasn't quieted the political storm the event created.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise's office said the chamber will vote Thursday on a resolution "condemning the Chinese Communist Party's use of a high-altitude surveillance balloon over United States territory as a brazen violation of United States sovereignty."

Republicans have criticized Biden for waiting several days before shooting the balloon down, and Sen. Marco Rubio said on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday that the president waiting to tell Americans about the balloon was [a "dereliction of duty."](#)

Biden told Woodruff that "the idea that it was a dereliction of duty is a bizarre notion."

"China knows exactly what the deal is with us," he continued.

But the president did appear to question China's strength – specifically in what has been a fragile economic moment for the country.

“He has an economy that's not functioning very well,” Biden said.

And he detailed a telling observation he shared with Xi last year as US officials warned China not to provide military support to Russia in its invasion of Ukraine.

“Everybody assumed that China would be all in with Russia in Ukraine. They're not all in,” Biden said. “As a matter of fact I called him this summer to say, this is not a threat, just an observation: Look what's happened to Russia. Six hundred American corporations have pulled out of Russia, from McDonald's to Exxon. And I said, ‘You've told me all along that the reason why you need a relationship with the United States and Europe is so they invest in China.’ I said, ‘Who is gonna invest in China if you engage in the same kind of deal? You'll notice there's not been much going on there.’”

When asked about Biden's remarks at a news briefing Thursday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning called them “irresponsible.”

This story has been updated with additional details.