

U.S. NEWS



A sailor prepares material recovered in the Atlantic from a suspected Chinese spy balloon that was shot down earlier this month.

# Flying Objects' Origins Remain Uncertain as Recovery Continues

By GORDON LUBOLD AND NATALIE ANDREWS

WASHINGTON—The U.S. hasn't seen any evidence that the three objects shot down since Friday over the U.S. and Canada were part of China's spy balloon program, though searchers have yet to recover debris from any of them, a senior White House official said.

The search for the remnants of the objects is hampered by the remoteness of the search area and frigid conditions there, said John Kirby, the National Security Council's coordinator for strategic communications.

"We don't know of any evidence right now that confirms that they were in fact doing intelligence collection by another government," Mr. Kirby said Tuesday. "But again, don't have the debris."

While U.S. officials have said confidently that the South Carolina coast earlier this month was a Chinese spy balloon, U.S. officials still don't know even how the three other objects were being propelled,

let alone who sent them or what their purpose was. Officials haven't even described them as balloons, instead using the term "objects."

"We're pretty comfortable in ruling out that they were U.S. government objects," Mr. Kirby told reporters. But he said intelligence agencies haven't dismissed the possibility they were commercial or research balloons.

Following a classified briefing Tuesday in the Senate, senators said the objects appeared to have posed no threat. "There are a lot of things that are put up in the air by commercial interests, by governments, by agencies, by universities and so forth and we don't track all of them but we're probably going to do a better job doing it in the future," said Sen. Mitt Romney (R, Utah).

Sen. Chris Murphy (D, Conn.) said he floated over the more objects were suspected over the U.S., "but we don't know that for sure."

Mr. Kirby said intense operations were under way to recover debris from the take-

downs that occurred over Alaska on Friday, Canada's Yukon territory on Saturday and Lake Huron on Sunday.

"We're up against it when it comes to just the weather and the general geographic conditions, but we're going to keep at it," Mr. Kirby said Tuesday.

The remote locations made recovery difficult given the latitude of the debris in some

**Senators said the three objects appeared to have posed no threat.**

cases, as well as the fact some may have fallen into icy, remote bodies of water, he said.

Meanwhile, no significant developments have emerged in the recovery of debris from the suspected Chinese spy balloon the Air Force shot down off the Atlantic coast this month, Mr. Kirby said.

He said divers were able to get into the water over the

weekend and retrieve a significant amount of debris. Those items have been shipped to the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Quantico, Va.

In Brussels, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark Milley acknowledged reports that the first missile fired at the object over Lake Huron missed, requiring a second shot.

The interagency task force created by President Biden to look at policy issues surrounding the balloons and the unidentified flying objects has begun its work, Mr. Kirby said.

That group will review the policy implications of shooting down the objects and determine the best way forward if other objects are discovered.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated the Biden administration's denial that the U.S. had sent balloons over China.

"We do not send spy balloons over China. Period," Mr. Blinken said Tuesday.

—William Mauldin and Lindsay Wise contributed to this article.

# Control of Airspace Is Murky High Up

By DOUG CAMERON

The U.S. says the suspected Chinese spy balloon shot down Feb. 4 violated sovereign U.S. airspace. But when it crossed the U.S. at altitudes as high as 65,000 feet, the balloon floated into the murky zone aloft where no international consensus exists about which, if any, nation wields control.

U.S. allegations that China has operated a fleet of suspected spy balloons over 40 countries have renewed a debate over the governance of airspace above the altitudes traversed by commercial aircraft. And the balloon and other objects of unknown or undisclosed nature and purpose shot down from lower heights have focused attention on a nation's right to eliminate perceived threats at any height.

Legal experts have long been concerned about the safety threats posed by the growing number of aircraft and other airborne objects at high altitudes.

Countries with advanced space programs, including the U.S. and China, have blocked efforts to extend nations' sovereignty to the edge of space, according to meeting minutes of the United Nations body examining the issue. They have opted for the freedom to operate their own craft without restriction. The issue is back on the agenda for next month's meeting of the U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which is helping create regulatory frameworks.

Beijing and Washington have sought to reduce tensions in recent months, with an aim of settling relations between the two nuclear-armed superpowers on a more even keel. However, China on Monday alleged the U.S. had flown balloons over its airspace, a charge denied by Washington.

In the U.S., the Federal Aviation Administration monitors and controls airspace up to

60,000 feet for commercial and military traffic, a level recognized under international agreement and employed by other countries. The three objects downed over the weekend over the U.S. and Canada all fell within that airspace, which also extends to each nation's internationally recognized maritime boundary 12 miles offshore.

"That's clearly part of U.S. sovereignty," said Steven Freeland, an emeritus professor of international law at Westem Sydney University and Bond University in Australia.

International treaties hold that nations have no sovereignty in the reaches of outer space where satellites orbit, typically understood to begin about 330,000 feet. While a handful of countries have laid claim to the heights between 60,000 feet and that boundary, an expense often cited as "near space," those claims aren't recognized by international law.

Regulation of the region is "a matter of licensing and a matter of safety," Stephan Hobe, director of the Institute of Air Law, Space Law and Cyber Law at the University of Cologne, said in 2020.

The U.N. and other international bodies such as the European Union have examined a variety of proposed legal and governance structures for this high airspace.

In 2017, New Zealand became the first country to include oversight of such high altitudes in its space law, requiring users to secure licenses to operate above its territory. A few other countries have followed suit, including the United Arab Emirates, which set a limit of roughly 262,000 feet for its oversight of high altitudes.

But in those cases, other countries haven't accepted the U.A.E.'s claim. "States can say whatever they want," said Prof. Freeland. "But it doesn't mean it's the law."

Ms. Haley has operated as

U.S. NEWS

# Haley to Challenge Trump in GOP Race

By JOHN MCCORMICK

Nikki Haley, the first woman and person of color elected South Carolina's governor, on Tuesday became the first major candidate to commit to challenging former President Donald Trump for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

Ms. Haley, 51 years old, is a former United Nations ambassador in the Trump administration. As of now, she is the only woman in the field as Republicans weigh whether to pick a new standard-bearer who might lure some voters who dislike the former president. South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem also may enter the GOP race this spring.

Ms. Haley's entry extends an already complicated relationship with her former boss, who launched his third consecutive White House bid in November and remains the party's dominant figure even after disappointing GOP results in the past three national elections. In early 2016, Ms. Haley said she was embarrassed by Mr. Trump and criticized his reluctance to condemn white supremacists. Less than a year later, she agreed to join his cabinet and served as a validator for him on both the domestic and global stages.

In her video, released a day before her planned formal campaign announcement speech in Charleston, S.C., Ms. Haley called for a "new generation of leadership." It seemed to be a reference to the age of some of the top candidates expected to be in the race. Mr. Trump is 76, while President Biden, who is expected to make a formal announcement in March or April about seeking the Democratic nomination, is 80.

Ms. Haley has long been mentioned as a potential national candidate, in part because her biography could provide a compelling narrative for a party that has struggled to attract support from minority groups.

Ms. Haley has operated as

both an outsider and an insider. In her first bid for governor, she was a Tea Party-aligned candidate who lost the general election endorsement of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce to a Democrat. The group would have traditionally backed someone like Ms. Haley, who promoted lower taxes and smaller government, but the voting members found her views too confrontational and inflexible.

Once governor, she signed legislation that gave subsidies to Boeing Co., a move in conflict with the Tea Party movement. In the 2016 GOP presidential primary, she initially endorsed Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, before backing Texas Sen. Ted Cruz after Mr. Rubio was out of the race.

After resigning her U.N. post in October 2018, Ms. Haley returned to South Carolina and joined the board of directors at Boeing, which opened a production facility in North Charleston during her administration. She also spent time on the speaking circuit, attracting fees reportedly as high as \$200,000.

More recently, Ms. Haley has traveled the nation to promote Republican candidates, make friends in early nominating states and build her own fundraising network. Ms. Haley, who was elected governor in 2010 and held the office for six years after serving in the state's Legislature, has disagreed with Mr. Trump on the 2020 election, which the former president falsely asserts was stolen from him.

"There was fraud in the election, but I don't think that the numbers were so big that it swayed the vote in the wrong direction," she told The Wall Street Journal in October 2021.

Her approach to navigating Mr. Trump has varied over time. She was sharply critical of him during an appearance before the Republican National Committee just after the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot by a mob of his supporters, saying his actions would be "judged harshly by history."



Nikki Haley with then-President Trump in 2018, above, and with her family, below, in Columbia, S.C., after a primary win in 2010.



## Candidate Field Expected to Grow

South Carolina will be the third state to weigh in on the Republican race, and Nikki Haley could find herself competing there against a fellow state resident, Sen. Tim Scott. He is contemplating his own White House bid and will appear Thursday in his home state at a county GOP dinner celebrating Black History Month, before traveling to Iowa the following week.

A number of other Republicans are also thought to be contemplating entering the race, including former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former Vice President Mike Pence.

Several polls of hypothetical GOP primary contests have shown former President Donald Trump and Mr. DeSantis leading the field. The more candidates in the race, the more likely establishment Republican support may be splintered, potentially helping Mr. Trump.

Those remarks angered some Republicans loyal to Mr. Trump, and Ms. Haley softened her approach. She said in April 2021 that she wouldn't embark on a 2024 bid if he decided to run again, and she hasn't publicly explained the reversal. Ms. Haley praised the former president in an interview with the Journal in the fall of 2021.

After her Charleston event Wednesday, Ms. Haley is set to travel in the coming days to Iowa and New Hampshire, the two states that will start the GOP nomination balloting in about a year.

In a statement shared by his campaign, Mr. Trump said: "Even though Nikki Haley said, 'I would never run against my President, he was a great President, the best President in my lifetime,' I told her she should follow her heart and do what she wants to do. I wish her luck!"

Taylor Budowich, the head of Make America Great Again Inc., a super PAC aligned with Mr. Trump, released a more critical statement, calling her "a career politician whose only fulfilled commitment is to herself."

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