

China accuses US of overreaction after it shot down high-altitude balloon

Beijing lodges formal complaint with US embassy over the incident

China has accused the US of “overreaction” and the “indiscriminate use of military force” in shooting down a Chinese balloon that traversed US airspace, saying that the move has damaged bilateral relations.

The Pentagon has described the high-altitude balloon as a surveillance aircraft able to manoeuvre and a US warplane shot it down on Saturday over the Atlantic Ocean after it had crossed the entire US. China said it was a weather balloon that had been blown off course.

The country’s vice-foreign minister, Xie Feng, lodged a formal complaint with the US embassy on Sunday over the incident, accusing Washington of overreacting to an accident “caused by force majeure”, according to a statement posted on the Chinese foreign ministry website.

“The facts are clear ... but the United States turned a deaf ear and insisted on indiscriminate use of force against the civilian airship that was about to leave the United States airspace. It obviously overreacted and seriously violated the spirit of international law and international practice,” Xie was quoted as saying.

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