

ABC's *Good Morning America*

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14 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Critical Recovery Efforts; Suspected Spy Balloon Shot Down]

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: Critical recovery efforts. After an F-22 fighter jet shot the Chinese spy balloon out of the sky, this morning the search for debris. What we're learning about the White House's delayed decision to shoot it down. All this with growing tensions between the U.S. and China.

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6 minutes and 10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Developing Story; Spy Balloon Shot Down; Urgent Race to Recover Debris From Suspected Chinese Spy Balloon]

STEPHANOPOULOS: We'll get the latest now on the Chinese spy balloon. Let's take a live look off the coast off South Carolina. Pieces of the balloon have now been recovered after it was shot down Saturday by an F-22 fighter jet, and the White House is facing questions about why they allowed the balloon to cross the U.S. amid new tensions with China. Chief global affairs anchor Martha Raddatz is tracking the story from Washington. Good morning, Martha.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Good morning, George, and this morning as you said, good news. Pieces of the balloon have now been recovered with U.S. Navy vessels swarming that debris field with divers, cranes, whatever they can use to find what is left of that suspected spy vessel to try to solve this deepening mystery. This morning, critical recovery efforts underway for fallen debris from the suspected Chinese spy balloon.

F-22 PILOT: Frank one. Blast one. That is a take kill.

RADDATZ: The Air Force confirming that is the voice of the pilot of that F-22 fighter jet that brought down the balloon craft Saturday just off the coast of South Carolina. In a new statement, U.S. Northern Command saying, the balloon was brought down "within sovereign U.S. air space and over U.S. territorial waters to protect civilians while maximizing our ability to recover the payload." Now the U.S. Navy conducting active recovery operations of the seven-mile long debris field. Experts hoping to analyze the surveillance balloon's sensitive equipment, housing a technology bay roughly the size of three buses. The military operation ending the cross-country drama as Pentagon officials tracked the balloon's every movement as it passed over sensitive military installations. First entering the U.S. air space over Alaska. It then re-entered over Idaho, passing through Montana, Wyoming, Kansas, and Missouri before getting to the Carolinas where it was shot down offshore. President Biden saying he initially wanted to take the balloon down as

soon as possible, but counsel from the Pentagon told him to wait.

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: Without doing damage to anyone on the ground, they decided that the best time to do that was when it got over water.

RADDATZ: But the administration facing political blowback for the decision to hold fire.

SENATOR MARCO RUBIO (R-FL) [on ABC's *This Week*, 02/05/23]: Well, I can assure you that if we fly a balloon over China, they're going to shoot it down and probably a lot sooner than we did.

RADDATZ: China claiming the balloon was a civilian airship and not a spy device, calling the U.S. decision to shoot it down an "excessive reaction" and warning that it "retains the right to respond further." Of course, this was already a tense time with China, a nation we depend on as a major part of our supply chain, but the administration is trying to assure everyone that they are engaged and trying to ratchet down tensions. Rebecca?

REBECCA JARVIS: Martha, an important trading partner, but obviously, big questions remain. Martha Raddatz, thank you. And we turn now to that payload and the race to discover it. Elwyn Lopez is in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Good morning, Elwyn.

ELWYN LOPEZ: Hey, Rebecca. Good morning. Now, the conditions are rough. We were on a fishing vessel yesterday. The captain telling us the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy are up against rough seas and we certainly felt it. At one point, a rough patch lifted us out of our seats. Now conditions are still choppy. We know that the perimeter is pretty far out. I want you to take a look at our drone so you can see exactly how far out this perimeter is. What's left of that massive Chinese balloon that stretches seven miles and is in 47 feet of water. Now, Pentagon officials say that, because the water where it crashes is in fairly shallow water, they expect operations to be quick, and guys, authorities here are asking residents that, if they see debris wash up on the beach, to not pick it up or move it, but instead call police. George?

STEPHANOPOULOS: Okay, Elwyn, thanks very much. Let's get more on this now from our senior White House correspondent Mary Bruce, and our military analyst, Steve Ganyard. And Mary, let me begin with you. How is the White House responding to this various criticism about allowing the spy balloon to cross the U.S.?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Developing Story; Spy Balloon Shot Down; Why White House Waited to Shoot Down Suspected Chinese Spy Balloon]

MARY BRUCE: Yeah, the White House this morning is pushing back hard. They are defending the President's decision to act when he did. They say that he was briefed on this on Tuesday after the aircraft re-entered the U.S., and that he immediately ordered that all sensitive sites be protected. He was then given all possible options and there was real vigorous debate about all of this, but ultimately, the military was recommending that they wait and shoot it down over water to minimize that civilian risk. The next day on Wednesday, the President did just that, ordering

that they shoot it down when it could be done safely in a way that would minimize and limit the risk to the public while also maximizing the ability to recover the payload, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And, Steve, we're starting to get the debris right now being recovered. What exactly are they looking for? What are they hope [sic] to learn from it?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Developing Story; Spy Balloon Shot Down; What Are Officials Looking for From the Remnants?]

STEVE GANYARD: They want to know what's in that payload, George. There was likely an electrical/optical package where they were taking high-fidelity photographs. There could have been a signals and intelligence package where they were doing communication interceptions, but Once they get all the piece parts, they'll be able to do forensic analysis, put it back together and see just what the Chinese were doing, and what they were capable of intercepting in the U.S.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And Mary, we also learned over the weekend this was not the first time that a spy balloon has crossed into U.S. territory.

BRUCE: Yeah. This has happened before, including during the Trump years when it was not made public, and this is something that the White House is pointing out as they are pushing back against their Republican critics who are arguing that they should have acted sooner, and again, they are going really out of their way to insist that the White House acted as safely as possible and acting, they say, in a way that allowed them to better understand this mission and gain the most intelligence from all of this, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And Steve, relatively mild response from the Chinese so far, but tensions are high.

GANYARD: They are, George. It's going to put a chill on an already frosty relationship, and now we're learning that the Chinese are busting Russian sanctions by providing sophisticated jamming gear and aircraft parts to Russia, and so, it's going to be very difficult politically for President Biden to put these high-level Chinese peace talks back on track.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Steve Ganyard and Mary Bruce, thanks very much. Robin.

ROBIN ROBERTS: A story far from over.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mmhmm. Okay, George.

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7:30:55 a.m.
13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Right Now; Suspected Spy Balloon Shot Down]

STEPHANOPOULOS: Also, pieces of the Chinese spy balloon have now been recovered after it was shot down off the coast of South Carolina this weekend. A senior government official says the FBI is expecting to ship the components to its laboratory in Quantico, Virginia for analysis.

JARVIS: A lot of information to come from that.