

U.S. assessing suspected China spy balloon

A suspected Chinese surveillance balloon shot down off the U.S. coast was comparable to a 20-storey building and carrying a payload similar in size to a commercial plane, U.S. officials say

FEATURES OF HIGH-ALTITUDE SURVEILLANCE BALLOON

Pressure envelope

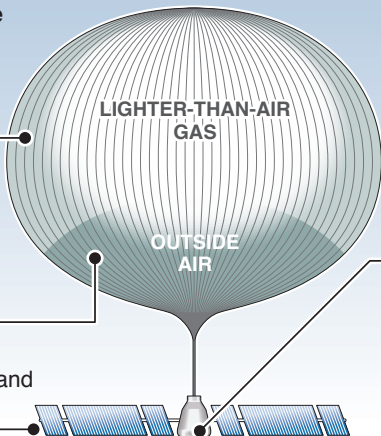
Thin material likely filled with helium, allowing balloon to float with wind

Ballonet

Lower section can be filled with outside air, causing balloon to grow heavier and sink

Solar panels

Power instruments and propulsion system



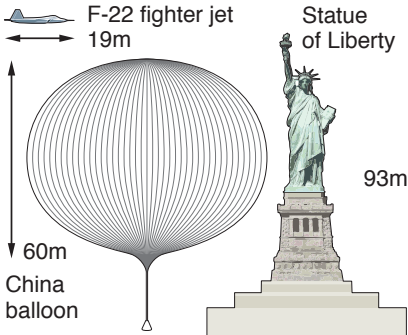
Altitude

Balloon typically operates at 24-37km (80,000-120,000ft), well above where commercial air traffic flies

Instruments

Could include high-resolution cameras, radar, sensors and communications equipment

SIZE COMPARISON



- U.S. says China balloon able to loiter over specific areas

- Craft equipped with propellers and rudder, allowing it to speed up, slow down and turn

- Balloon's payload similar in size to regional airliner and weighs about 900kg

- Remnants of object being recovered from 11km of ocean off South Carolina. U.S. working to determine if debris includes potentially dangerous materials