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February 3, 2023

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chairman
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
340 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Peters,

I write to request that you expeditiously convene a hearing on troubling reports that the Chinese government has launched a surveillance balloon over the United States to spy on our nuclear capabilities. As Members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC), we have an obligation to obtain a full understanding of the surveillance that the Chinese government is currently conducting in gross violation of U.S. airspace and to understand the Biden Administration's baffling response thus far.

As confirmed today by the Pentagon, there is currently a Chinese surveillance balloon moving across the United States. It appears that the balloon is in the vicinity of U.S. military installations that host intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear-capable bombers. The Chinese Communist Government claims this is merely a "civilian airship" that has deviated from its course.

But we know that is a lie. The Pentagon has confirmed that the balloon is "maneuverable" and is currently somewhere over the center of the continental United States—in violation of U.S. airspace and international law. Pentagon spokesman U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said the balloon is expected to continue to operate over U.S. airspace "for a few days." Yet rather than shooting down or otherwise disabling this high-altitude balloon, the Biden Administration is merely "monitoring the situation" and referring reporters to the Chinese government for answers.

This is a gross violation of American sovereignty. China's foray into America's sovereign airspace is deeply disturbing and calls for an immediate investigation. This is a matter of homeland security, and we should hear from senior members of the Biden Administration to understand their response, or lack thereof, so far. The American people are demanding answers.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator