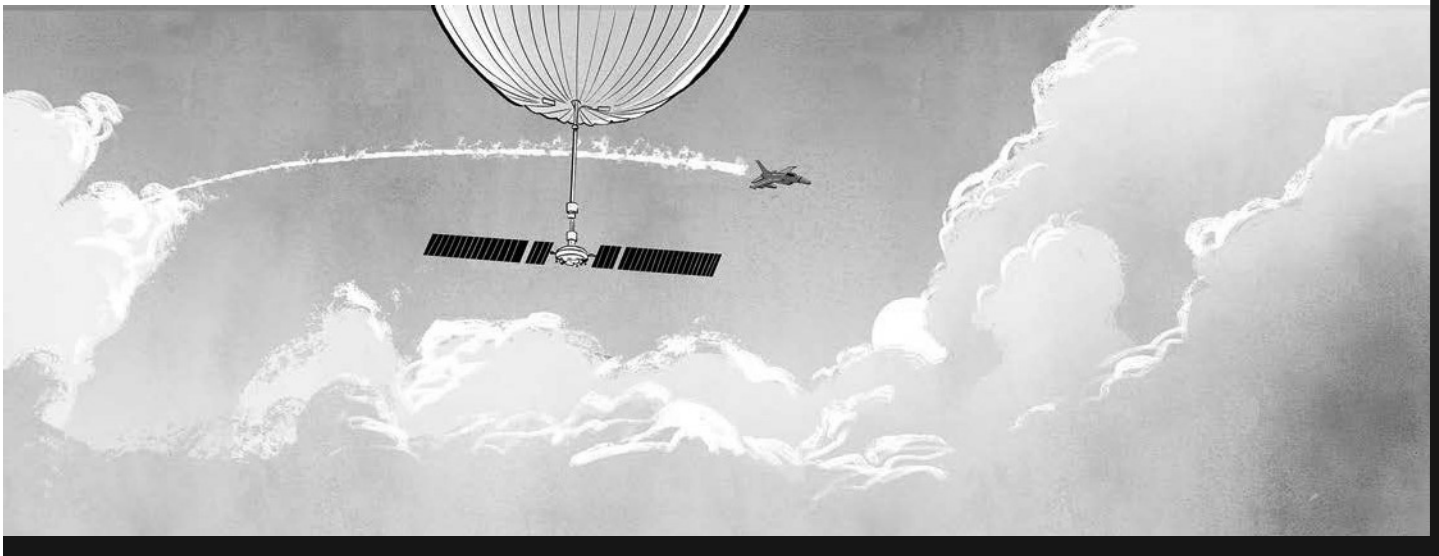




NATIONAL

# MYSTERIOUS OBJECTS IN THE SKY

– NORAD SHOOTS DOWN FOUR UFOs



It sounded like a scary sci-fi thriller. On February 10, Canadian authorities noticed a strange cylindrical object sailing over Alaska. The next day, it floated over the Yukon. It posed a risk to **commercial** aviation, so Canada responded decisively.

“I ordered the takedown of an unidentified object that violated Canadian airspace,” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted shortly afterwards.

The **North American Aerospace Defense Command** (NORAD) used an F22 fighter jet to hit the object with a missile. That sent **debris** into harsh, remote territory outside of Dawson City.

## MORE WEIRD OBJECTS

This wasn't an isolated incident. A day earlier, U.S. fighter jets had shot down a different suspicious flying object. It was about the size of a small car, floating above Alaska. And on February 12, the U.S. military downed another odd contraption. This one was octagonal. It was drifting over Lake Huron on the border between Michigan and Ontario.

In each case, the objects were brought down in areas where people wouldn't be hit with debris.

Three UFOs in or near Canada in the space of 24 hours? What was going on? Were we being invaded by extraterrestrials?

## WHAT IS A UFO?

Unidentified flying objects (UFO) have been renamed by U.S. officials as an unidentified **anomalous phenomenon** (UAP). A UAP is any perceived aerial phenomenon that can't be immediately identified or explained. On investigation, most UFOs turn out to be known objects or atmospheric phenomena. A few remain unexplained.

## ALIENS? NOT THIS TIME

The reassuring news: All the devices were unmanned and made by humans, analysts said.

“I don't think... people need to worry about aliens with respect to these craft. Period,” said U.S. security spokesman John Kirby.

## DEFINITIONS

**ANOMALOUS:** unusual or unexpected

**COMMERCIAL:** relating to buying and selling things

**DEBRIS:** pieces of wood, metal, brick, etc., that are left after something has been destroyed

**NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND**

**(NORAD):** a combined organization of the United States and Canada that provides aerospace warning, air sovereignty, and protection for Canada and the continental United States

**PHENOMENON:** a rare or significant fact or event



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He added that the crafts weren't sending signals. They weren't propelled by anything, and weren't capable of maneuvering. They posed no threat, he said.

Beyond that, though, very little was known about these objects.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

Spy balloons go back as far as 1794, when the French used them in a battle against Austrian and Dutch troops during the French revolutionary wars.

## A 'SPY BALLOON' BURSTS

One theory was that these objects might have been spycraft sent by China or Russia to conduct **surveillance** on North America.

What was the basis for this theory? On February 4, the U.S. had shot down a balloon off the South Carolina coast. It had been drifting across the continent for a week. It was flying at an altitude of about 20,000 metres, well out of range of jet aircraft.

This flying machine was nothing like a birthday party toy balloon. The airship was about 60 metres

tall. It carried a **payload** the size of a commercial jet.

Divers are still collecting debris that spread across six **nautical miles** off the U.S. coast after the balloon was shot down. They want to analyze it.

China has already admitted the craft was theirs. However, the Chinese government claimed that it was just a weather balloon that had glided into U.S. airspace in error.

That's highly unlikely, the U.S. says. This balloon had propellers for steering. It had an antenna that could intercept communications. And it flew over several U.S. military bases.

## LET'S WAIT AND SEE

But perhaps the other three objects *were* just weather balloons that had drifted off course. Until enough debris is collected, it's impossible to know.

The RCMP was leading the hunt for the wreckage in the Yukon, helped by the Canadian army. But finding pieces was expected to be a big challenge, said the RCMP's Sean McGillis. Parts could have fallen anywhere

within an area of about 3000 square kilometres.

Meanwhile, the RCMP and the Canadian **Coast Guard** were searching for pieces of the craft downed in Lake Huron.

## WHY SO MANY NOW?

We'll learn more soon if pieces are found. But one question we can partially answer now? Why we're suddenly seeing so many UFOs.

It's not necessarily that there are more of them. It's just that in the past, NORAD was focused on detecting missiles, bombers, and fighter jets. With all eyes on those threats, it was easy to miss slow objects like balloons.

But after the Chinese balloon was spotted, NORAD **recalibrated** its radar and surveillance detection system. Now it can better identify slow-moving targets.

"We think we're seeing more because we're looking for more," Mr. Kirby said. "If you set the **parameters...** to look for something, it's more likely that you're going to find a certain something." ★

## DEFINITIONS

**COAST GUARD:** an official organization whose job is to watch the sea near a coast to help ships and people in trouble, and to stop people from breaking the law

**NAUTICAL MILE:** a unit for measuring distance at sea; 1852 metres

**PARAMETER:** something that decides or limits the way in which something can be done

**PAYLOAD:** the equipment carried by a spacecraft or satellite

**RECALIBRATE:** to readjust precisely for a particular function

**SURVEILLANCE:** continuous observation of a place, person, group, or ongoing activity in order to gather information