

Suspected spy balloon spotted locally

(KNZA)--A suspected spy balloon from China was spotted hovering in Brown County just north of Hiawatha and moving eastward on Friday morning.

U.S. officials announced Friday that Secretary of State Antony Blinken had postponed a planned high-stakes weekend diplomatic trip to China as the Biden administration weighed a broader response to the discovery of the high-altitude Chinese balloon flying over sensitive sites in the western United States.

The Associated Press reported the abrupt decision came despite China's claim that the balloon was a weather research satellite that had blown off course. The U.S. has described it as a surveillance satellite.

The discovery of the balloon was announced on Thursday by Pentagon officials who said one of the places it was spotted was over the state of Montana, which is home to one of America's three nuclear missile silo fields at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

A senior defense official said the U.S. prepared fighter jets, including F-22s, to shoot down the balloon if ordered. The Pentagon ultimately recommended against it, noting that even as the balloon was over a sparsely populated area of Montana, its size would create a debris field large enough that it could have put people at risk.

(The Associated Press contributed to this story)

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