

Full of hot air

Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 02.09.23

On Oct. 15, 2009 Americans were transfixed by a bright, shiny object: a UFO-shaped aluminum foil balloon over Fort Collins, Colorado. Fears were stoked when Richard Heene claimed his six-year-old son Falcon was trapped inside. Helicopters pursued it while anxious Americans held their breath. “Balloon Boy” became the No. 1 search on Google. Fear became anger when Falcon was found hiding in the attic. The fear was manufactured as a publicity stunt the Heenes hoped would help promote their reality TV show.

Last week was déjà vu all over again. Breathless wall-to-wall media coverage of a real Chinese surveillance balloon promoted blustery fear mongering by irresponsible, politically motivated Republicans. Together, they seized common sense and wrestled it to the ground.

The Pentagon briefed President Biden and advised him that the balloon was “traveling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground.” Biden ordered the balloon brought down as soon as possible without risking American lives. Our military jammed its signals then shot it down over open ocean six miles from Grand Strand beaches.

China and the US maintain numerous surveillance satellites that routinely gather intelligence on each other. Nevertheless, irresponsible Republicans clutched their pearls, abandoned common sense and mongered their fear. Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) demanded Biden resign. Trump, in all caps, yelled “SHOOT DOWN THE BALLOON!” (Apparently, the voice inside his head is constantly screaming.) Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) said Trump “would have never allowed China to fly a spy balloon over our country.”

Then the Pentagon revealed that at least three Chinese balloons infiltrated the U.S. under Trump without being shot down and Trump’s defense secretary said no one told him! Which proves, as Ann Coulter said, that Trump ran a “lazy and incompetent” administration, and that Republican hyperventilation about balloons is nothing but hypocrisy and hot air.

Ron Veronese
Holden Beach