

February 2, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Austin,

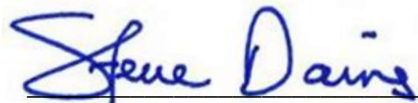
I write regarding the concerning event of a high altitude surveillance balloon detected in Montana which has resulted in national security concerns as well as disruptions in civilian air traffic in Billings, Montana.

The fact that this balloon was occupying Montana airspace creates significant concern that Malmstrom Air Force Base (AFB) and the United States' intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) fields are the target of this intelligence gathering mission. Given the serious nature of the event, I am requesting a full security briefing from the administration on this situation. It is vital to establish the flight path of this balloon, any compromised U.S. national security assets, and all telecom or IT infrastructure on the ground within the U.S. that this spy-balloon was utilizing.

As you know, Montana plays a vital national security role by housing nuclear missile silos at Malmstrom AFB. Given the increased hostility and destabilization around the globe aimed at the United States and our allies, I am alarmed by the fact that this spy balloon was able to infiltrate the airspace of our country and Montana.

There is no higher priority for your administration than the safety and security of the American people and it is imperative that your administration reassure them of that fact at this time.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator