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U.S.: China missile a danger to modern life

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24 January, 2007

THE ARTICLE

U.S.: China missile a danger to modern life

China has reopened the Star Wars debate by testing an anti-satellite missile. China's destruction of a defunct weather satellite using a medium-range, land-based rocket has caused quite a stir in Washington. The missile intercepted the satellite and struck with sufficient force to obliterate it without any need for explosive warheads. It is a relatively low-tech solution to targeting satellites and one which the US has had the know-how of for several decades. Regardless, a clearly irked U.S. State Department reminded the world that "modern life as we know it" depends on the security of satellites and other technologies in space and plainly stated it was opposed to "any militarization of space". These comments are likely to confuse many of the world's politicians and commentators who view the USA as the chief protagonist in pursuing space-based military capabilities.

Washington also expressed concerns about the danger of debris following the destruction of the satellite. State Department spokesman Tom Casey said the explosion would: "produce extensive amounts of space debris, [which] have the potential for disturbing or accidentally disrupting communication satellites or other kinds of space vehicles that are out there." The US Union of Concerned Scientists estimated the Chinese test produced over 40,000 fragments up to 10cm in length. Another US advisory panel warned the Chinese could launch a small-scale attack without warning, which could have "catastrophic" consequences for America. Casey acknowledged this, emphasizing the importance of space technology on everyday life. He also said satellites were vital for military communications. During the last Iraq war, 83% of communications between US forces were sent via satellites.

WARM-UPS

1. STAR WARS: What do you know about star wars? Find out as much as you can from your partner. Change partners often to build up your information.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Star wars / debates / weather satellites / missiles / modern life / being irked / space debris / space vehicles / out there / communication / panels / US forces

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. MODERN LIFE: Talk to your partner(s) about which of these would most affect your life if they were not there. Rank three in order of most needed. Discuss what would happen without these things.

- Weather forecasts
- MTV
- The Internet
- Missile guidance during wars
- Airplane radar
- GPS in cars
- Live sport
- International telephone calls
- Space research
- Other _____

4. QUICK DEBATE: Students A believe we should stop making space a junkyard, full of defunct and obsolete technology. Students B believe more money should be spent on space exploration, militarization and satellites. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

5. HEADLINES: In pairs / groups, discuss these future (or not so future headlines). Imagine they are real – you have just seen them. Change partners and headlines often.

- a) Aliens to invade at 6.38 PM
- b) First condominium and technology park opens on the moon
- c) The US White House moves to US space station
- d) China attacks 250 US satellites
- e) New York to Tokyo in 23 minutes via new space rocket airplane
- f) Space debris blocks 90% of suns rays

After you finish imagining, talk about how possible it might be these headlines come true one day.

6. SPACE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with space. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. China destroyed one of its own weather satellites in a missile test. T / F
- b. The missile contained a large amount of explosive warheads. T / F
- c. It will take the USA a decade to acquire similar know-how. T / F
- d. The USA is the chief protagonist in the race for an arsenal in space. T / F
- e. The US is worried about space debris from the destroyed satellite. T / F
- f. The satellite broke up into 40,000 parts up to 10 inches in length. T / F
- g. The US is concerned China is able to attack American satellites. T / F
- h. In the Iraq War, the US relied heavily on satellites to communicate. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. defunct | annoyed |
| b. stir | essential |
| c. obliterate | proponent |
| d. irked | commotion |
| e. protagonist | junk |
| f. debris | bits |
| g. extensive | obsolete |
| h. fragments | dire |
| i. catastrophic | destroy |
| j. vital | substantial |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. China has reopened | any militarization of space |
| b. ... has caused quite | amounts of space debris |
| c. a clearly | protagonist |
| d. opposed to | consequences for America |
| e. the USA as the chief | the Star Wars debate |
| f. produce extensive | for military communications |
| g. disrupting | irked U.S. State Department |
| h. Another US advisory | communication |
| i. could have "catastrophic" | a stir in Washington |
| j. satellites were vital | panel |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

U.S.: China missile a danger to modern life

China has _____ the Star Wars debate by testing an anti-satellite missile. China's destruction of a _____ weather satellite using a medium-range, land-based rocket has caused quite a stir in Washington. The missile _____ the satellite and struck with sufficient force to obliterate it without any need for explosive warheads. It is a _____ low-tech solution to targeting satellites and one which the US has had the _____ of for several decades. Regardless, a clearly _____ U.S. State Department reminded the world that "modern life as we know it" depends on the security of satellites and other technologies in space and _____ stated it was opposed to "any militarization of space". These comments are likely to confuse many of the world's politicians and commentators who view the USA as the chief protagonist in pursuing space-based military _____.

irked
intercepted
plainly
defunct
know-how
reopened
capabilities
relatively

Washington also expressed concerns about the danger of _____ following the destruction of the satellite. State Department spokesman Tom Casey said the explosion would: "produce _____ amounts of space debris, [which] have the _____ for disturbing or accidentally _____ communication satellites or other kinds of space vehicles that are _____ there." The US Union of Concerned Scientists estimated the Chinese test produced over 40,000 fragments up to 10cm in length. Another US _____ panel warned the Chinese could launch a small-scale attack without _____, which could have "catastrophic" consequences for America. Casey acknowledged this, emphasizing the importance of space technology on everyday life. He also said satellites were _____ for military communications. During the last Iraq war, 83% of communications between US forces were sent via satellites.

disrupting
advisory
extensive
vital
potential
out
warning
debris

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

U.S.: China missile a danger to modern life

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**weather**' and '**satellite**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "STAR WARS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about future wars in space.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| • debate | • expressed |
| • stir | • extensive |
| • solution | • disrupting |
| • irked | • 40,000 |
| • opposed | • panel |
| • capabilities | • 83% |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Did anything in the article surprise you?
- c. What do you know about China's launch of a missile to destroy one of its weather satellites?
- d. Do you think China's act is innocuous or aggressive?
- e. What do you think China's neighbors will think of the missile launch – especially Japan and India?
- f. Taiwan said China might be preparing to knock out Taiwanese satellites in preparation of an invasion of Taiwan. What do you think?
- g. Would world headlines be different if the USA had knocked out one of its satellites?
- h. What do you think of the idea of star wars?
- i. Do you think there should be international regulations on how to dispose of defunct satellites, space stations, etc?
- j. Have you seen any of the *Star Wars* movies?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think China has plans to take over the world?
- d. Do you think China's launch might escalate an arms race in space?
- e. What would (your) life be like without satellites?
- f. Do you agree with the US that the missile launch is a "threat" to modern life?
- g. Why don't you think other countries use satellites to get rid of their unwanted satellites?
- h. What do you think of space debris and pollution in our galaxy?
- i. Do you worry about the militarization of space?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY:

A discussion between different countries about space and arms.

Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players. Discuss your roles after the role play ends.

Role A – Chinese leader

You are fed up with the West thinking you want to destroy the world. Your destruction of the satellite was a test to see how you can tidy up space. You think the US is more dangerous.

- *Think of more reasons why the launch was OK and the US is bad.*

Role B – American leader

You believe the future and safety of the planet is in danger. If China attacks American satellites, the US army will be useless. The whole world will stop – except China. There MUST be an end to this.

- *Think of more reasons why China’s actions are very dangerous.*

Role C – Swiss leader

Your country has been against war for centuries. You believe all countries should disarm immediately. Crazy leaders will start WWIII. All satellites should be shared by ALL world countries – but paid for by the US, China and Europe.

- *Think of more reasons why the world should get rid of all weapons.*

Role D – Alien leader

You live on a distant planet. You are fed up with the way Earth people destroy space, polluting it with space debris. You want them to stop immediately. You know many horror stories of real star wars – you have seen many planets destroyed.

- *Think of more reasons Earthlings should vacate space.*

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Choose the correct words from a–d below and write them in the article.

U.S.: China missile a danger to modern life

China has reopened the Star Wars debate by testing an anti-satellite missile. China's destruction of a (1) _____ weather satellite using a medium-range, land-based rocket has caused quite a (2) _____ in Washington. The missile intercepted the satellite and struck with sufficient force to (3) _____ it without any need for explosive warheads. It is a relatively low-tech solution to targeting satellites and one which the US has had the know-how of for several decades. Regardless, a clearly (4) _____ U.S. State Department reminded the world that "modern life as we know it" depends on the security of satellites and other technologies in space and plainly stated it was opposed to "any militarization of space". These comments are likely to confuse many of the world's politicians and commentators who view the USA as the (5) _____ protagonist in pursuing space-based military (6) _____.

Washington also expressed concerns about the danger of debris following the destruction of the satellite. State Department spokesman Tom Casey said the explosion would: "produce (7) _____ amounts of space debris, [which] have the potential (8) _____ disturbing or accidentally disrupting communication satellites or other kinds of space vehicles that are out there." The US Union of Concerned Scientists estimated the Chinese test produced over 40,000 (9) _____ up to 10cm in length. Another US advisory (10) _____ warned the Chinese could launch a small-scale attack (11) _____ warning, which could have "catastrophic" consequences for America. Casey acknowledged this, emphasizing the importance of space technology on everyday life. He also said satellites were (12) _____ for military communications. During the last Iraq war, 83% of communications between US forces were sent via satellites.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) defunct | (b) funky | (c) dethroned | (d) defused |
| 2. | (a) star | (b) stir | (c) store | (d) spurt |
| 3. | (a) obliterate | (b) oblivious | (c) oblique | (d) obligate |
| 4. | (a) harked | (b) barked | (c) irksome | (d) irked |
| 5. | (a) chief of staff | (b) chiefly | (c) chief | (d) chieftain |
| 6. | (a) capably | (b) capacitors | (c) capabilities | (d) capacity |
| 7. | (a) extensive | (b) expensive | (c) expansive | (d) extremity |
| 8. | (a) for | (b) to | (c) at | (d) in |
| 9. | (a) fragrances | (b) fragments | (c) flagships | (d) flagpoles |
| 10. | (a) jury | (b) console | (c) panel | (d) pane |
| 11. | (a) wither | (b) within | (c) without | (d) with |
| 12. | (a) vitally | (b) vitals | (c) vitality | (d) vital |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. STAR WARS: Search the Internet and find more information about the possibility of a real star wars – not the movie. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. ARTICLE: America and China have threatened to launch missiles at each other's satellites. There are three days before this catastrophe might take place. Write a newspaper article about the crisis. Read your article to your classmates in your next lesson. Ask each other questions about what you hear.

4. LETTER: Write a letter from an Alien to China's leader. Tell him your thoughts on why space should be left empty. Ask him three questions. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions. Which letter did you like best and why?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. F d. T e. T f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. defunct	obsolete
b. stir	commotion
c. obliterate	destroy
d. irked	annoyed
e. protagonist	proponent
f. debris	junk
g. extensive	substantial
h. fragments	bits
i. catastrophic	dire
j. vital	essential

PHRASE MATCH:

a. China has reopened	the Star Wars debate
b. ... has caused quite	a stir in Washington
c. a clearly	irked U.S. State Department
d. opposed to	any militarization of space
e. the USA as the chief	protagonist
f. produce extensive	amounts of space debris
g. disrupting	communication
h. Another US advisory	panel
i. could have "catastrophic"	consequences for America
j. satellites were vital	for military communications

GAP FILL:

U.S.: China missile a danger to modern life

China has **reopened** the Star Wars debate by testing an anti-satellite missile. China's destruction of a **defunct** weather satellite using a medium-range, land-based rocket has caused quite a stir in Washington. The missile **intercepted** the satellite and struck with sufficient force to obliterate it without any need for explosive warheads. It is a **relatively** low-tech solution to targeting satellites and one which the US has had the **know-how** of for several decades. Regardless, a clearly **irked** U.S. State Department reminded the world that "modern life as we know it" depends on the security of satellites and other technologies in space and **plainly** stated it was opposed to "any militarization of space". These comments are likely to confuse many of the world's politicians and commentators who view the USA as the chief protagonist in pursuing space-based military **capabilities**.

Washington also expressed concerns about the danger of **debris** following the destruction of the satellite. State Department spokesman Tom Casey said the explosion would: "produce **extensive** amounts of space debris, [which] have the **potential** for disturbing or accidentally **disrupting** communication satellites or other kinds of space vehicles that are **out** there." The US Union of Concerned Scientists estimated the Chinese test produced over 40,000 fragments up to 10cm in length. Another US **advisory** panel warned the Chinese could launch a small-scale attack without **warning**, which could have "catastrophic" consequences for America. Casey acknowledged this, emphasizing the importance of space technology on everyday life. He also said satellites were **vital** for military communications. During the last Iraq war, 83% of communications between US forces were sent via satellites.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - a 2 - b 3 - a 4 - d 5 - c 6 - c 7 - a 8 - a 9 - b 10 - c 11 - c 12 - d