

U.S. threatened to take military action against China over arms race in space

By [Lewis Bazley](#)

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- **WikiLeaks documents reveal battle for supremacy above the Earth in 2007**
- **Both superpowers destroyed their own satellites with missile strikes in show of strength**

The U.S. warned China it could take military action in response to Beijing's use of space missiles, it has emerged.

Leaked diplomatic documents reveal that the U.S. shot down one of its own satellites to demonstrate its ballistic power after China had destroyed its own weather satellite.

And despite being threatened with military action in 2007 by then U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, China carried out another missile test only last year.



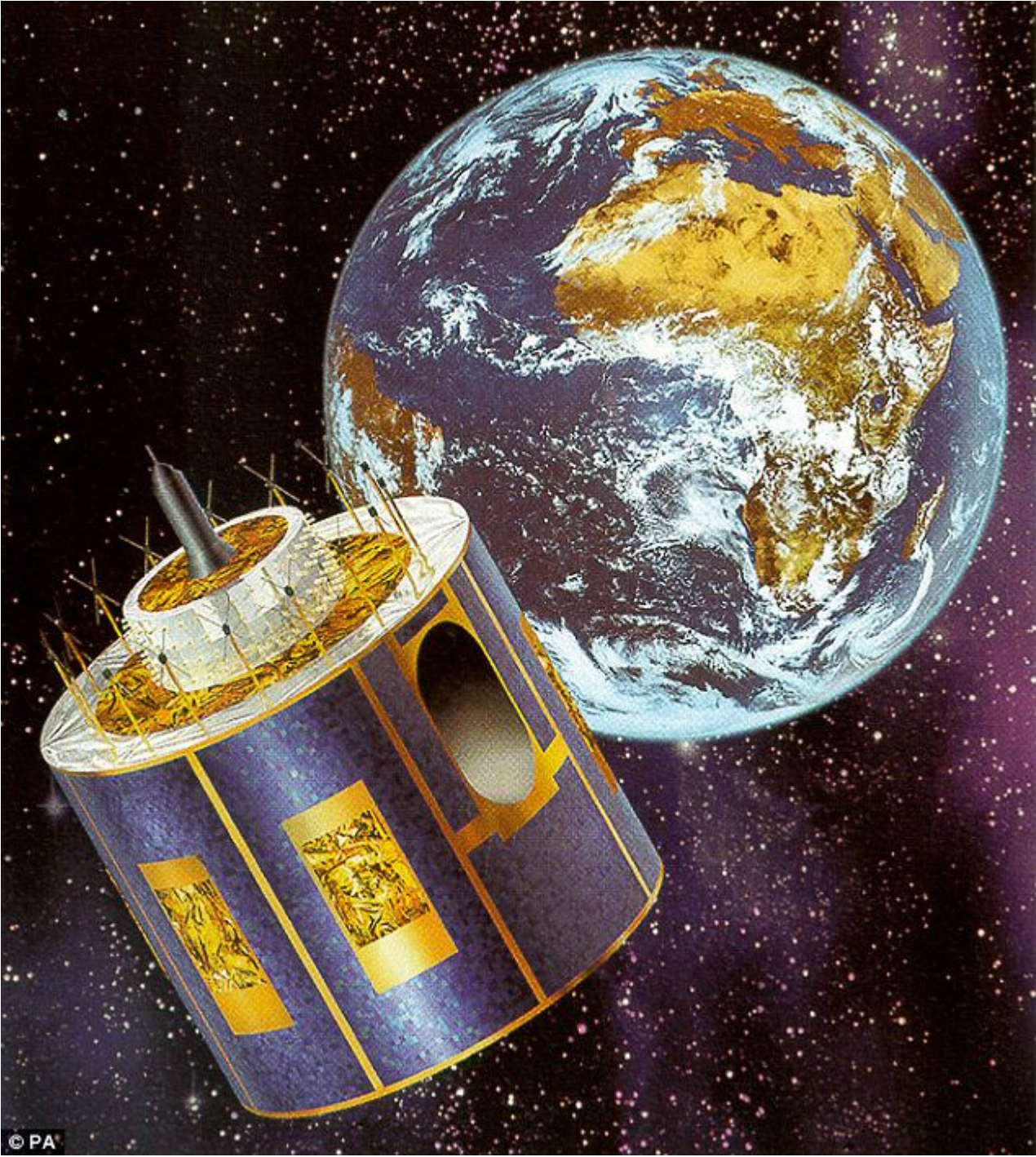
Cause for conflict: China and the U.S. engaged in a military standoff over space missile tests

The military standoff has been likened to the 'star wars' strategic missile plan conceived by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.

According to diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks and published by the Daily Telegraph, China and the U.S. jostled for position behind closed doors over the issue of missile defence.

China shot down a weather satellite stationed 530 miles above the earth in January 2007, sending over 2,000 pieces of space debris into orbit.

The strike was the first anti-satellite test since 1985 but despite widespread international criticism of China's actions, then-Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jinchao stressed: 'There's no need to feel threatened by this.'



The field of conflict: An artist's impression of a weather satellite, similar to that shot out of the sky by China with a missile

The U.S. state department appeared to not agree, with Clark Randt, the American Ambassador in Beijing complaining about the test to Chinese assistant foreign minister He Yefei.

Officials working for Ms Rice later told China: 'A Chinese attack on a satellite using a weapon launched by a ballistic missile threatens to destroy space systems that the United States and other nations use for commerce and national security. Destroying satellites endangers people.'

Officials warned: 'Any purposeful interference with US space systems will be interpreted by the United States as an infringement of its rights and considered an escalation in a crisis or conflict.'



Warning: China's president Hu Jintao (left) angered the U.S. by testing an anti-satellite missile, with officials working for then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice threatening Beijing with military action

'The United States reserves the right, consistent with the UN Charter and international law, to defend and protect its space systems with a wide range of options, from diplomatic to military.'

IRAN 'BOUGHT 747 THROUGH AVIATION FIRM BY USING YOUNG BRITISH POKER FAN'S NAME'

A young Briton who lives with his grandmother and uncle in Kent was used by Iran to buy a Boeing 747, it has been claimed.

Sam David Mahjoobi, a semi-professional poker player, was listed as the director of an aviations company which bought the £200million airliner in June 2008.

The aircraft was shipped to Iran within a week and is part of the national fleet, despite strict U.S. sanctions barring Tehran from buying planes.

Mr Mahjoobi had been working as a secretary for a small aviation firm at the time, but believes Intelligence Aviation Services was set up in his name to buy the 747 from Turkish airline AnkaAir.

Galaxy Aviation Trade Company, for whom Mr Mahjoobi worked, was barred from buying the plane on June 6, 2008, but five days later Intelligence Aviation Services was established, with Mr Mahjoobi listed as its only director.

The firm bought the 747 on June 20 and a week later the plane was in Iran where it remains part of the IranAir fleet.

A diplomatic cable obtained by WikiLeaks said Mr Mahjoobi had been 'described to the MFA [Turkish ministry of Foreign Affairs] as a reputable member of the UK aviation industry... a quick search of the internet revealed no information to support this claim.'

Intelligence Aviation was dissolved in 2009, with Mr Mr Mahjoobi today telling the Telegraph: 'I've never had a business bank account and I've never had anything close to those sort of funds.'

While the U.S. said China's testing of an anti-satellite missile contravened 'the spirit of cooperation' of international space operations in the 21st century, just over a year later Washington launched its own test strike.

A malfunctioning U.S. satellite was shot down in February 2008, with the public explanation that its fuel tank was defective and would be hazardous if the satellite returned to earth.

However, diplomatic missives at the time indicate the strike was militarily-sanctioned, with the American Embassy in China receiving 'direct confirmation of the results of the anti-satellite test' from U.S. military commanders in the Pacific.

Leaked embassy cables reveal the shooting of satellite USA 193 angered Beijing.

A memo sent from the Beijing embassy in February 2008 said the Chinese 'repeatedly emphasised that the United States should provide information on the planned satellite interception prior to releasing the information to CNN'.

Tensions were evident in June 2008 with Chinese delegates at a defence summit claiming the superpowers were 'neither allies nor adversaries'.

However, China carried out a fresh test last year, according to documents sent from the office of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in January 2010.

A diplomatic cable said the Chinese destruction of a CSS-X-11 missile about 150 miles above the earth could be judged to have 'furthered both Chinese ASAT [anti-satellite] and ballistic missile defense technologies'.

The cable also outlined the concern of the 'Obama administration' over China's stance on space weaponry.

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It's extremely irresponsible for China to endanger the GPS satellites that the whole world depends on for air, sea, and land navigation. Of course, I'm sure the Chinese would be happy to put up their own system and charge the world for it.

- steve, USA, 03/2/2011 13:17

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You've got to laugh about Iran getting that 747 though. As IF political sanctions are going to stop big business from doing exactly as it pleases. Until some high ranking business people are tired and executed, political sanctions will be ignored in the West. Now, compare that to China. One of their ministers got caught with his nose in the trough and was executed for it. China is the world's only super power and when they feel like it they will wipe the USA off the face of the Earth, economically and militarily.

- z.phillips, wolverhampton, 03/2/2011 13:16

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The US gov. are the biggest hypocritical war mongers, and they're telling another nation not to have weapons ? I think the US are looking for every possible excuse to attack another nation to plunder their resources, having failed dramatically in the middle east.

- silly-mungo, brum, 03/2/2011 12:44

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China's action was selfish and inconsiderate. Those 2000 pieces of debris may go on to damage or destroy other people's satellites, especially given that it was in such a high orbit and hence it will take far longer for the pieces to re-enter the atmosphere.

- Dirk Bruere, Bedford, England, 03/2/2011 12:23

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What is Obama going to do about it? Nothing! If he does China will say, no more credit for you!

- Maxwell, Princeton, NJ USA, 03/2/2011 12:22

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its all going very wrong is'nt it

- Giles, Seychelles Islands, 03/2/2011 12:04

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