

A \$40 MILLION “COMEDIC GOLD” PISSING CONTEST WITH THE CHINESE

Yesterday, Danger Room reported that the Administration's rationale for shooting down the rogue spy satellite is laughingly bogus.

The Pentagon says it has to shoot down a malfunctioning spy satellite because of the threat of a toxic gas cloud. Space security experts are calling the rationale highly unlikely. **"Having the US government spend millions of dollars to destroy a billion-dollar failure to save zero lives is comedic gold,"** one tells DANGER ROOM.

[snip]

So what could that other reason be?

Our veteran space security specialist believes there are several. To him, the satellite shot is a chance for the military to try out its missile defense capabilities; a way to keep secret material out of the wrong hands; and a warning to the Chinese, after they destroyed a satellite about a year ago. He shared some educated guesses:

My first thought is that MDA [Missile Defense Agency] is always looking for ways to pimp their systems and provide further justification that they work. The upcoming change in Administration is almost guaranteed to result in missile defense losing the top-level advocacy that it has enjoyed for the last several years. Any additional missions and

justifications that the missile defense community can provide would increase the likelihood of their systems (and budgetary power) surviving.

An additional reason could be that destroying the satellite would prevent any chance of another nation getting access to any of the potentially sensitive technology on board. However, I have heard from other sources that supposedly the NRO [National Reconnaissance Office – the country's spy satellite shop] is actually against the "shootdown" (and I hate that term – the satellite is not flying and is coming down regardless of whether or not it gets hit by a missile). Their absence at the press briefing could lend some weight to this rumor, although it could also be explained by the nature of the satellite and its still classified link to the NRO.

My real concern is that this is simply a knee-jerk reaction made by the Administration in response to the purported threat by the Chinese. **Since the April 2007 ASAT [anti-satellite] test, there have been rumors and whispers going around that the Administration and like-minded individuals are looking for more sticks (instead of carrots) to use against China. While this "shoot down" is not a direct action against China, it would be a clear signal that the US can possess an active ASAT capability at any time if it so desires. That is a serious**

*development as the previous US
ASAT system using F-15s was
mothballed in the 1980's.*

[my emphasis]

Today, Danger Room attaches a price tag to this
"comedic gold."

Big bucks. "The attempt by the U.S. Navy
to use an anti-missile missile to shoot
down a potentially hazardous satellite
will cost between \$40 million and \$60
million, Pentagon officials told CNN.
"The missile alone costs almost \$10
million."

This is basically a \$40 million "comedic gold"
pissing contest with the Chinese. Instead of
paying for this pissing contest, we could buy 40
MRAP vehicle and save real lives of real Marines
stuck in Iraq. But given the Bush
Administration's priorities, I can see why they
chose the pissing contest instead.