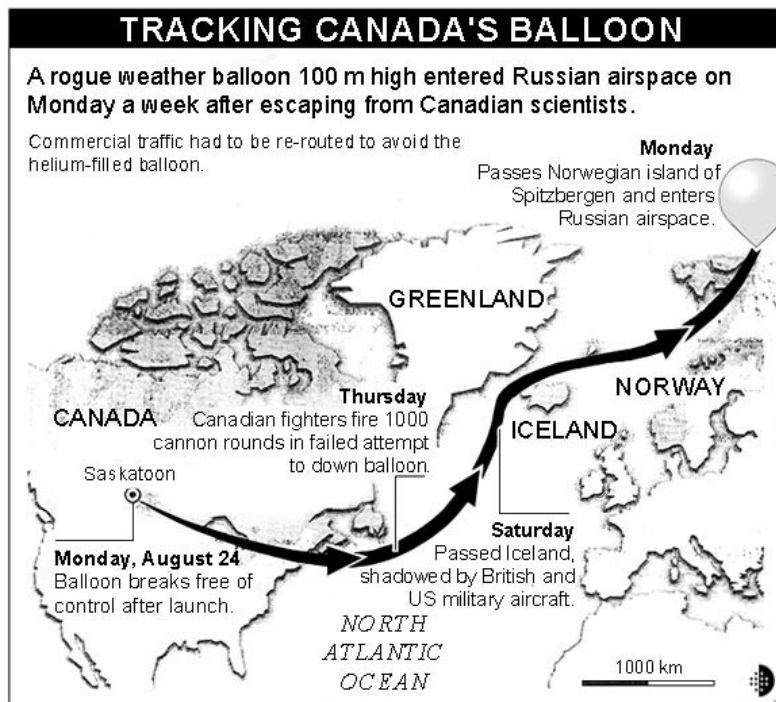


# Runaway weather balloon

This task is about retrieving information and make inferences from a text.



A runaway 25-storey balloon is thought to have finally come down

A huge runaway Canadian weather balloon which stayed aloft for more than a week, forcing disruptions in transatlantic flights is believed to have finally come down in the Arctic, say its owners.

The silver, helium-filled balloon defied the efforts of fighter pilots to shoot it down as it crossed the north Atlantic from Canada into British air-space before moving north. Icelandic air controllers figured it should have entered Russia's air-space today. But Dale Sommerseldt, vice-president of owners Scientific Instrumentation, told BBC radio today: "As there were no reports from aircraft in the area today we believe it's finally down . . . It's no longer a threat to Arctic and transatlantic flights." The balloon is 100 m tall - as high as a 25-storey building - and has a surface area which would cover five football fields if stretched out. Two Canadian CF-18 fighter pilots fired more than 1000 machinegun rounds at the balloon over Newfoundland on Thursday but failed to bring it down.

Canadian military spokesman Lieutenant Steve Willis defended their effort, saying that Canadian CF-18 pilots had won the Top Gun trophy in the United States last year as the world's best fighter pilots, but that hitting a comparatively stationary target from supersonic speed was not easy.

Source: Unknown.

Read the newspaper report to answer the following questions.

- a) Where was the balloon when it was attacked by Canadian fighter planes?
- A. Far out in the North Atlantic Ocean.
  - B. Over Newfoundland.
  - C. Near Iceland's southern coast.
  - D. Entering British air-space.
- b) What effect did the runaway balloon have on aircraft flying across the North Atlantic Ocean?
- A. Flights were cancelled or postponed.
  - B. Pilots were instructed to watch out for the balloon.
  - C. North Atlantic airspace was closed to all commercial aircraft.
  - D. Planes were forced to fly alternative routes.
  - E. Aircraft had to fly higher than usual to avoid the balloon.
- c) What reason did the Canadian Lieutenant give for the failure of the CF-18 fighter pilots to destroy the balloon?
- A. The helium-filled balloon did not ignite when hit.
  - B. The planes were too fast to hit the slow-moving balloon.
  - C. The balloon was too big to shoot down with machinegun fire.
  - D. The movement of the balloon at such a great height made it a difficult target.
- d) Where was the balloon located on Sunday 30 August?
- A. West of Iceland.
  - B. Off the Norwegian coast.
  - C. Near the Russian border.
  - D. Travelling through British air-space.

e) What is the size of the balloon's surface area compared with?

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f) Exactly where was the balloon launched from?

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g) What does "rogue" mean, as used in this article?

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h) What word could replace "shadowed" without changing the meaning in the statement ...  
"shadowed by British and US military aircraft"?

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i) What was the balloon's mission?

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j) Where did the balloon crash eventually?

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