

Russian Aircraft Buzz U.S. Warship

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WASHINGTON — Russian naval aircraft repeatedly buzzed a U.S. warship a week ago in a Cold War-style incident that the U.S. Navy's chief of operations has raised with his Russian counterpart.

The USS Taylor did not go on an alert over unusually close encounters on Sept. 10 and Sept. 11 in international waters of the Barents Sea, just off Russia.

"The ship did not take this as hostile," Colonel Dave Lapan said.

The U.S. warship had just completed a port visit to Murmansk to honor World War II veterans of both countries.

The next day, on Sept. 10, a Russian maritime patrol aircraft flew just 45 meters off the USS Taylor and only 30 meters above sea level — extremely close and low. It also flew directly over the ship but at an altitude of about 600 meters.

The next day, a Russian ship in the vicinity had one of its Helix helicopters fly by the USS Taylor, again just 45 meters off the U.S. warship and only 30 meters above sea level.

"Both sides are in discussions now to determine whether the proper protocols were followed," Lapan said. "This is a fairly rare occurrence."

The U.S. Navy's chief of operations, Admiral Gary Roughead, raised the matter with his Russian counterpart, Admiral Vladimir Vysotsky, during a Russian defense delegation visit Wednesday to the Pentagon led by Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov.

"Admiral Roughead was satisfied after having this conversation with his counterpart," Lapan said, without elaboration.

A year ago, two nuclear-powered Russian submarines patrolled off the Eastern Seaboard in what U.S. officials speculated was an effort by Moscow to show a greater military presence.

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