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Kremlin Brushes Off U.S. Criticism of Bombers Dispatch to Venezuela

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Tu-160 / mil.ru

The Kremlin on Tuesday rejected U.S. criticism of Russian military flights to Venezuela, saying it had been inappropriate and wrong for U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to condemn the flight of two nuclear-capable strategic bombers to Caracas.

Two Russian TU-160 strategic bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons landed in Venezuela on Monday in a symbolic show of support for the government there.

Pompeo condemned the deployment on Twitter.

"The Russian and Venezuelan people should see this for what it is: two corrupt governments squandering public funds, and squelching liberty and freedom while their people suffer," Pompeo wrote.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call that Pompeo's comments were undiplomatic and wrong.

"We consider it completely inappropriate," said Peskov.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russia's Defense Ministry-run Zvezda television channel published a video of the planes' landing.

Embed:

"Two Tu-160 strategic bombers, an An-124 heavy military transport plane and an Il-62 long-haul plane... have landed at the Maiqueta 'Simon Bolivar' International Airport of the Venezuelan capital city," Zvezda reported, citing the Defense Ministry.

The Russian aircraft were escorted by F-16 fighters of the Norwegian Air Force at certain stages of the route, Russia's Defense Ministry was cited as saying by the RBC news website.

Last week, Moscow and Caracas reportedly signed investment contracts worth billions of dollars during Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's three-day visit to Russia. The leader called Russia a "brother country" with which Venezuela had "raised the flag for the creation of a multipolar and multicentric world."

Related article: Russia Signs $6 Billion Investment Deals With Venezuela, Maduro Says

Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency on Thursday that he hoped that military cooperation between the two countries would continue as it "benefits both Venezuela and Russia."

Shoigu added that Russia's military flights to Venezuela would help pilots gain long-range

flight experience.

Reuters contributed reporting.

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