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U.S. and Russia Spar Over 'Unsafe' Spy Plane Intercept Near Syria

By Reuters

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P-8A Poseidon **U.S. Navy**

A Russian fighter jet made a dangerous high-speed pass that put a U.S. Navy surveillance aircraft at risk during an intercept over the Mediterranean Sea on Tuesday, the U.S. Sixth Fleet said, but Moscow said its pilot had behaved responsibly.

"While the Russian aircraft was operating in international airspace, this interaction was irresponsible," the Sixth Fleet said in a statement.

"The U.S. aircraft was operating consistent with international law and did not provoke this Russian activity," it said.

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The Sixth Fleet said the Russian jet had made three intercepts, two of which it deemed to be

safe. But it said one of the intercepts of the P-8A Poseidon involved a high-speed pass directly in front of the U.S. aircraft that produced wake turbulence and "put our pilots and crew at risk."

Russia's Defense Ministry said it had scrambled a Sukhoi Su-35 jet from its air base in Syria to intercept the U.S. plane which it said had been approaching Russia's Tartus naval facility on the Syrian coast, Russia's state-run RIA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Moscow denied its aircraft had acted irresponsibly, saying it had stayed at a safe distance and had returned to its base after the U.S. aircraft changed course.

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