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‘Erratic’ Russian Spy Ship Spotted Off Southeast U.S.

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The Viktor Leonov has reportedly patrolled international waters off the eastern coast of the U.S. every year since 2014. **Desmond Boylan / AP / TASS**

A Russian spy ship is conducting “unsafe” and “erratic” maneuvers off the coast of the southeastern United States, CNN reported Tuesday.

The Viktor Leonov SSV-175, part of the Vishnya class of intelligence ships, has reportedly patrolled international waters off the eastern coast of the U.S. every year since 2014.

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The Viktor Leonov’s return this year was marked by actions of an “unsafe manner” and “other erratic maneuvers” in waters near South Carolina and Florida, CNN cited two unnamed U.S. officials as saying.

The spy ship isn’t using the navigation lights needed in low-visibility weather and isn’t

responding to commercial vessels that have called for its position to avoid potential accidents, one official reportedly said.

The U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke class destroyer USS Mahan was operating close to the Viktor Leonov, CNN cited a defense official as saying. Another Arleigh Burke class destroyer, the USS Ross, was shadowed by a Russian missile ship in the Black Sea en route to the coast of Romania late last week.

The U.S. Coast Guard warned sailors to "maintain a sharp lookout and use extreme caution when navigating in proximity to this vessel," the U.S. Naval Institute nonprofit reported.

The Viktor Leonov has been spotted in Cuba in 2014, near a U.S. submarine base in Connecticut in 2017 and a U.S. ballistic missile submarine base in Georgia last year.

It was the last of eight intelligence ships built for the Soviet Navy in Poland in 1988 and is currently in service with the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet.

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