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NATO Performs 10 Interceptions of Russian Jets in Single Day

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NATO said it intercepted six different groups of Russian military aircraft near its airspace in less than six hours. **Wikicommons**

NATO warplanes performed 10 interceptions of Russian fighter jets and bombers exhibiting "an unusual peak" of flights across Europe, the Western military alliance said in a statement Monday.

NATO shadowed six groups of Russian warplanes in less than six hours as Russia staged large-scale military drills across the country.

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"NATO fighter jets scrambled 10 times on Monday, March 29, 2021, to shadow Russian bombers and fighters during an unusual peak of flights over the North Atlantic, North Sea, Black Sea and Baltic Sea," it said.

Norway and Britain scrambled F-16 fighters while Belgium scrambled Typhoons to track two Russian Tu-95 and two Tu-160 bombers over the North Sea.

Turkish, Romanian and Bulgarian fighters tracked Russian aircraft in the Black Sea, while Italian fighter aircraft intercepted a Russian Il-38 maritime patrol aircraft escorted by fighter jets over the Baltic Sea.

“In all, NATO aircraft intercepted six different groups of Russian military aircraft near Alliance airspace in less than six hours,” NATO said.

The alliance maintained that none of the Russian aircraft entered NATO airspace and the interceptions were “safe and routine.”

The “unusual peak of flights” comes as Russia launched massive Arctic and eastern Siberian maneuvers earlier in the month that expect to include dozens of separate drills.

NATO identified Russia in its 2030 expert report as one of its main threats for the next decade, citing naval build-ups in and around the Barents, Baltic and Black seas among other threats.

NATO suspended relations with Russia following its 2014 annexation of Crimea, while Moscow views the alliance’s eastward expansion as a threat to national security.

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