

Moscow Says U.S. Drones Over Black Sea Risk Direct Clash With NATO

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Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov. **Kristina Kormilitsyna / POOL / TASS**

Russia's Defense Ministry [said](#) Friday that it had seen an increase in the number of U.S. drone flights over the Black Sea and vowed a response, warning they could lead to "direct confrontation" with NATO.

"Such flights multiply the likelihood of airspace incidents with Russian Air and Space Force aircraft, which increases the risk of a direct confrontation between the alliance and Russia," the defense ministry said in a statement.

It also accused Washington of using the flights to help Ukraine strike targets on Russian territory, adding: "This demonstrates the increasing involvement of the United States and NATO countries in the conflict in Ukraine on the side of the Kyiv regime."

The statement comes days after Moscow accused the U.S. military of helping Ukrainian forces guide long-range missiles for an attack against annexed Crimea on Sunday, which killed four people including a child.

The Pentagon said at the time that the Ukrainians “make their own decisions” about where to launch strikes.

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Russia's military said Defense Minister Andrei Belousov had called for measures “to promptly respond to provocations” from U.S. drones over the Black Sea, according to the Defense Ministry statement.

On Tuesday, pro-war Russian bloggers [claimed](#) that a Russian fighter jet shot down a U.S. Global Hawk reconnaissance drone over the Black Sea.

Both the Kremlin and the U.S. military told news outlets that they could not confirm whether the incident took place. Russia's Defense Ministry also did not comment on the reported shoot-down.

The United States routinely carries out drone flights over the Black Sea, operations that it says are conducted in neutral airspace and in accordance with international law.

In March 2023, Russia intercepted a US MQ-9 Reaper drone over the Black Sea, raising fears of direct confrontation between the two nuclear powers at a time of increased tension over the war in Ukraine.

AFP contributed reporting.

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