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Russia Says Intercepted U.S. Bomber Planes Over Arctic

By AFP

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U.S. Air Force Boeing B-52H Stratofortress **Anna Zvereva from Tallinn, Estonia via Wikimedia Commons**

Russia said Sunday that it scrambled fighter jets to prevent two U.S. strategic bomber planes from crossing its border over the Barents Sea in the Arctic.

The U.S. military routinely carries out flights over international waters, operations that it says are conducted in neutral airspace and in accordance with international law.

But Moscow has responded more aggressively to the exercises in recent months, warning in June that U.S. drone flights over the Black Sea risked leading to a "direct" military clash.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it had scrambled fighter jets to intercept an "air target approaching the state border of the Russian Federation."

"The crews of the Russian fighters identified the aerial target as a pair of U.S. Air Force B-52H strategic bombers," it said.

"As the Russian fighters approached, the American strategic bombers corrected their flight course, moving away and then turning away from Russia's state border," it said.

In June, Moscow accused the United States of using its reconnaissance drone flights over neutral waters in the Black Sea to help Ukraine strike the Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula.

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

It said that the flights increased the risk of a "direct confrontation" between NATO and Russia, and that its army had been instructed to prepare an "operational response."

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