

Japan Scrambles Jets as Russian Aircraft Circle Country

By [AFP](#)

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Russian Tu-142 aircraft. **Okras (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Japan scrambled fighter jets after Russian aircraft flew around the island nation for the first time in five years, Tokyo said Friday.

The Japanese Defense Ministry said Russian Tu-142 reconnaissance planes flew from the sea between Japan and South Korea toward the southern Okinawa region from Thursday morning to afternoon. The aircraft then traveled north over the Pacific Ocean and finished their journey off the northern island of Hokkaido.

The Russian planes did not enter Japanese airspace but flew over an area subject to a territorial dispute between Tokyo and Moscow, a defense ministry official told AFP on Friday.

The last time Russian military aircraft circled Japan was in 2019, the official said, but that incident involved bombers that did enter the nation's airspace.

Earlier this week, Russian and Chinese warships began joint drills in the Sea of Japan. The drills are part of a major naval exercise that Russian President Vladimir Putin described as the largest of its kind in three decades.

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