

Japan Lodges Protest With Moscow After Airspace Violation

By [AFP](#)

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A Tupolev Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine aircraft. **Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

Japan lodged a "very serious protest" with Moscow after a Russian patrol plane entered its airspace three times, the Japanese Defense Ministry said Monday, calling it the first confirmed violation since 2019.

Tokyo responded to the incident by scrambling fighter jets and issuing radio and flare warnings, Defense Minister Minoru Kihara told reporters.

"We confirmed today that a Russian Il-38 patrol aircraft has violated our airspace over our territorial waters north of Rebun Island, Hokkaido, on three occasions," he said.

"The airspace violation is extremely regrettable and today we lodged a very serious protest with the Russian government via diplomatic channels and strongly urged them to prevent a

recurrence."

Kihara said it was "the first publicly announced airspace incursion by a Russian aircraft since June 2019," when a Tu-95 bomber entered Japanese airspace in southern Okinawa and around the Izu Islands south of Tokyo.

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In 2023, an aircraft believed but not confirmed to be Russian entered Japanese airspace, according to the Defense Minister.

Top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi also said Monday that "we will refrain from giving any definitive information on the intent and purpose of this action, but the Russian military has been active in the vicinity of our country since the invasion of Ukraine."

Japan scrambled fighter jets earlier this month when Russian aircraft flew around the archipelago for the first time since 2019. The Tu-142 planes did not enter Japanese airspace but flew over an area subject to a territorial dispute between Japan and Russia, Tokyo said at the time.

Russian and Chinese warships recently held joint drills in the Sea of Japan, part of a major naval exercise that President Vladimir Putin said was the largest of its kind in three decades.

Then last week, a Chinese aircraft carrier sailed between two Japanese islands near Taiwan for the first time. Japan called that incident "totally unacceptable from the perspective of the security environment of Japan and the region."

China said the passage complied with international law.

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