

## Thirty Russian aircraft take part in exercises over two oceans

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Over 30 Russian strategic bombers and long-range interceptors are participating in joint exercises with a naval task group in the Atlantic and Arctic, an Air Force spokesman said on Friday.

“Two Tu-160 Blackjack, two Tu-95MS Bear and eight Tu-22M3 Backfire-C strategic bombers, two A-50 Mainstay airborne early warning aircraft, four MiG-31 Foxhound and 12 Su-27 Flanker fighters and two Il-78 Midas aerial tankers have been conducting drills since 9.00 a.m. Moscow time [6.a.m. GMT] over the Atlantic and the Arctic oceans,” Colonel Alexander Drobyshevsky said.

During the exercises, which will run until February 2, Russian pilots are practicing reconnaissance, missile and bomb strikes on an “aggressor force”, and are flying simulated air combat and air patrolling missions.

Drobyshevsky said that all flights by Russian aircraft were performed in strict compliance with international laws on the use of air space over neutral waters, without violating the borders of other states.

Russia’s naval task force, comprising the Admiral Kuznetsov aircraft carrier, the Udaloy-Class destroyers Admiral Levchenko and Admiral Chabanenko, as well as auxiliary vessels, is currently on a two-month tour of duty in the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic.

The flagship of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, the Moskva guided missile cruiser, joined up with Russian naval warships in the Mediterranean on January 18 to participate in the current maneuvers.

The current operation is the first large-scale Russian Navy exercise in the Atlantic in 15 years. All combat ships and aircraft involved carry full combat ammunition loads.

Commander of Russia’s Northern Fleet Vice-Admiral Nikolai Maksimov, who is heading the task force, earlier said that the current tour of duty in the Mediterranean, which started on December 5, was aimed at ensuring Russia’s naval presence “in key operational areas of the world’s oceans” and establishing conditions for secure Russian maritime navigation.

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