

Venezuela Offers Russia Island For Strategic Bombers

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Chavez open to Russian strategic bombers using Venezuelan island

MOSCOW – Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has proposed to Russia using a Venezuelan island for temporary hosting of Russian long-range aviation, a top-ranking Russian Air Force official said Saturday.

“There is such a proposal on the part of the Venezuelan president. Chavez proposed to us a whole island with an airfield that we can use for temporary basing of strategic bombers,” said Maj.-Gen. Anatoly Zhikharev, the chief of the long-range aviation staff.

“If there is the relevant political decision, the island ... could be used by the Russian Air Force,” Zhikharev told journalists.

He said the temporary basing opportunity could be used for air patrol missions.

In September 2008 two Russian Tu-160 Blackjack multi-mission strategic bombers arrived in Venezuela after a 13-hour flight over the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. There were no nuclear weapons on board the aircraft. After that, they carried out a patrol mission over the Caribbean.

The Tu-160 Blackjack is a supersonic, variable-geometry heavy bomber, designed to strike strategic targets with nuclear and conventional weapons deep in continental theaters of operation

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