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Russia Sends Its Most Advanced Fighters to U.S. Coast

Kyle Mizokami, Popular Mechanics

2017/6/5



Four Russian aircraft flew near the Alaskan coast last night, including two of Russia's most advanced fighter planes. The flight, which was intercepted by U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor fighters, came a week after Russian military aircraft flew near America's Arctic territory four days in a row.

Wednesday evening's incident involved two Tu-95MS "Bear" strategic bombers and a pair of Su-35 "Flanker-E" or "Super Flanker" heavy fighters. Although the presence of the Bear bombers was not unusual, it was the first time that Super Flankers had been seen off the coast of Alaska. The Super Flanker is an updated version of the 1980s-era Su-27 "Flanker" and Russia's most advanced fighter jet, with an improved radar and powerful, thrust-vectoring engines. The Super Flankers were reportedly unarmed.



According to Fox, the Russian flight was intercepted about 50 miles southwest of Chariot, Alaska by a flight of F-22 Raptor jets already patrolling the area. The Russian jets were unarmed. Although they entered the U.S. Air Defense Identification Zone, which requires them to state intent and destination, the Russians remained outside of U.S. airspace.

The flight comes days after a streak that saw Russian aircraft visit the Alaskan coastline four days in a row. Two of the visits involved a pair of Tu-95MS bombers, while two others involved Il-38 "May" maritime patrol aircraft.



Where the Super Flankers flew from is a bit of a mystery. Bear bombers make the 2,500 mile trip from Ukrainka Air Base in the Russian Far East to Chariot, Alaska with ease, but Super Flankers have a much shorter range. The fighter jets would have had to take off from a base much closer to the U.S. and possibly still have to refuel in midair.

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