

RUSSIA – LRA INTERCEPT (JULY 4, 2015)

Background: PA posture RTQ only. Media queries continue in the weeks following the event. N-NC/PA is lead for all communications related to U.S. and Canada aircraft movements, basing/staging of aircraft at non-traditional installations, and any and all Russian LRA activity through the July 4th weekend. Following initial release of information, NORAD regions may answer local queries based on this approved QR. While N-NC does not announce Russian Long Range Aviation (LRA) intercepts, media routinely query for details after they occur – often confusing an ADIZ with sovereign airspace.

RTQ:

- On July 4, 2015 at approximately 10:30 a.m. EDT, Alaskan-based NORAD F-22 fighters intercepted and visually identified two Russian TU-95 “Bear” long-range bomber aircraft flying in the ADIZ around the south coast of Alaska, near the Aleutian Islands.
- In a separate incident July 4, 2015 at approximately 11 a.m. EDT, NORAD F-15 fighters from the Continental NORAD Region intercepted and visually identified two Russian TU-95 “Bear” long-range bomber aircraft flying in the ADIZ, off the central California coast, well away from U.S. sovereign airspace.
- At no time did the Russian bombers enter North American sovereign airspace. As the command designated with the aerospace warning and control mission for North America, NORAD continues to monitor all air activity emanating from within and outside North American airspace.
- We cannot identify the specific distance the aircraft flew from the west coast and Alaska due for operational security reasons.

Messages:

- Over the last five years, NORAD fighters have conducted an average of five intercepts per year of Russian military aircraft in the US or Canadian Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ/CADIZ) in order to identify and deter them. That number doubled to about 10 in 2014.
- The Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) is defined as a zone of airspace which extends out approximately 200 miles from the coastline and is mainly within international airspace. The ADIZ extends well beyond U.S. and Canadian sovereign air space which only extends 12 nautical miles from land.
- Even though state aircraft are not required to file flight plans for flying through an ADIZ, such unannounced operations by strategic bombers near the U.S. and Canada are unwanted, provocative and potentially destabilizing.

- The surveillance and control of North American airspace remains NORAD's primary mission. The command retains robust air defense capabilities to execute the air sovereignty mission over Canada, Alaska and the continental U.S.
- NORAD is responsible for monitoring and identifying all aircraft of interest approaching North America that may enter the sovereign airspace of either Canada or the U.S.

Q & A

Q. Did the Russian bombers communicate with the U.S. fighters?

- Yes. The intercept was a professional encounter with the following communication from Russian pilots: "Good morning American pilots, we are here to greet you on your Fourth of July Independence Day."

Q. Do you consider these flights a threat?

- No. An ADIZ is defined as a zone of airspace which extends out about 200 miles from the coastline and is mainly within international airspace. The outer limits of the ADIZ reach well beyond US sovereign air space which only extends 12 nautical miles from land. While commercial aircraft file flight plans for penetrating an ADIZ and self-identify, state aircraft of sovereign nations are not required to do so. As part of its mission, NORAD tracks and identifies all aircraft flying in the ADIZ in advance of any aircraft entering sovereign airspace.

Q: Must Russian aircraft give notice before entering the ADIZ?

- While commercial aircraft file flight plans for penetrating an ADIZ and self-identify, state aircraft of sovereign nations are not required to do so. As part of its mission, which includes the responsibility to identify all aircraft in its area of operation, NORAD takes steps necessary to properly identify all aircraft and appropriately address any threat on a timely basis.

Q. How frequently do Russian aircraft fly into the US or Canadian ADIZ?

- NORAD aircraft have intercepted and visually identified Russian long range aviation about 25 times over the past five years, or on average about 5 times per year. That number doubled to about 10 in 2014. (Note these are incidences, not number of aircraft – Russia usually flies LRA in groups of two or more aircraft.) It's important to note these Russian aircraft remained in international airspace at all times.

Q. How is an ADIZ different from sovereign airspace?

- The ADIZ is a zone of airspace which extends out approximately 200 miles from the coastline and is mainly within international airspace. It is a zone in which the ready identification, location, and control of aircraft over land or water is required in the interest of national security. Sovereign airspace, however, extends only 12 nautical miles from land. While commercial aircraft file flight plans for penetrating an ADIZ and self-identify, State Aircraft are not required to do so. "State Aircraft" include military aircraft and, provided they maintain due regard for the safety of civil aircraft, may legally operate

over waters outside the stated/recognized sovereign territorial limits of any other State (the 12 nautical mile boundary).

Q. How close did they get to the coast?

- The Russian bombers never entered North American sovereign airspace. We cannot identify the specific distance the aircraft flew from the U.S. or Canada due to operational security concerns.

Q. Is this similar to what the Russians did in 2012?

- On 4 July 2012, there was a single out-of-area patrol by two Russian long range bombers which entered the outer ADIZ and were visually identified by NORAD fighters. The Russian bombers never entered North American sovereign airspace.

Q. We are seeing movement of aircraft (or staging/basing of aircraft at non-traditional locations). Why is this?

- The NORAD regions maintain a constant state of readiness and for operational security reasons we do not discuss the specifics of our aircraft movements.

Q. Was this an unprecedented flight operation by Russian Long Range Aviation?

- While it is too early for us to characterize this/these flight(s), we've seen a variety of flight profiles and Russian aircraft in years past.

Source/Coord: Previous QRs approved by NJ3; N-NC PA ONE PAG A/O: (b)(6) (July 24, 2015)