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Russia-China joint bomber patrol meets Japanese & S. Korean fighters, but missions will go on

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Russian and Chinese strategic bombers have flown their first mission together over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea. Tokyo and Seoul are up in arms, but Moscow points out it's all within international rules and regulations.

Two Russian Tu-95ms and two Chinese Xian H-6 bombers patrolled a pre-planned route above the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea, *"strictly in accordance with international law,"* the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

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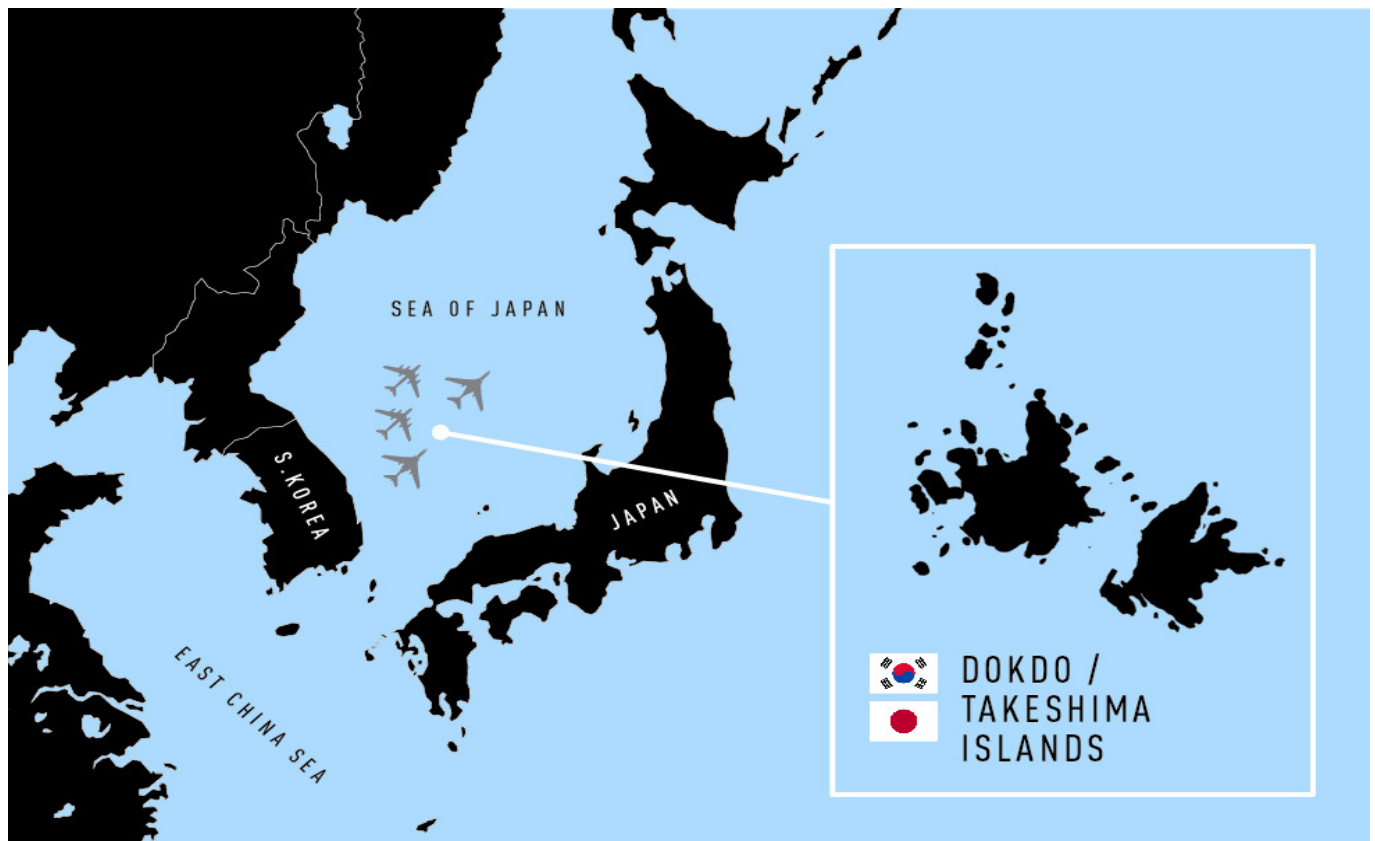
Seoul claims the bombers breached its air defense identification zone (KADIZ), but Moscow insists this designation is not supported by any international rules and that no third country's airspace was violated.

In its own response to the intercept, China reminded South Korea that KADIZ is not recognized as part of a country's airspace and is thus free for other countries' aircraft to pass through. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson also warned Seoul to *"be careful when using the word 'invasion'."*

The route apparently took the aircraft close to a set of tiny islands in the Sea of Japan, known as the Dokdo islands in South Korea and as Takeshima in Japan, and contested by both

nations.

The countries subsequently scrambled its military aircraft to ward off the bombers. South Korea also claimed its jets had to fire "*warning shots*," but Moscow insists these were only flares.



South Korea also claimed its jets had to fire “*warning shots*,” but Moscow insists these were only flares. The latter has accused the South Koreans of acting “*unprofessionally*” and of putting the Russian bombers’ safety at risk by dangerously cutting across their course.

The first-ever joint patrol of the long-range aviation in the Pacific was the beginning of a wider program, which aims to boost the Russian and Chinese militaries' ability to work together, Moscow says. The planned program stretches at least for the remainder of the year and is “*not aimed at against third countries.*”