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Russian Warships Armed With Nuclear Weapons Deployed

February 16, 2023 **newsweek.com** reported: "Warships in the Russian navy's Northern Fleet have been deployed with tactical nuclear weapons, the Norwegian Intelligence Service said in a report released Monday.

The intelligence agency noted the presence of the weapons on the vessels in its annual report. It is believed that this is the first time in 30 years the fleet has gone to sea with the nuclear weapons on board.

"A central part of the nuclear capabilities is located on the North Fleet's submarines and surface vessels," the report said.

Norway's intelligence went on to describe the "particularly serious threat" that Russia's tactical nuclear weapons pose to NATO countries.

"In addition, Russia has, among other things, underwater capabilities, anti-satellite weapons and cyber tools that can threaten Norway and NATO," the report said.

The Soviet Union's Northern Fleet warships often went to sea equipped with nuclear weapons during the Cold War, Politico reported. But the latest development reportedly marks the first time the Russian Federation has deployed the ships with nuclear weapons.

Norway's report also detailed the increased importance of nuclear weapons for Russia now that the nation's defense budget is set to increase by 34 percent in 2023.

"With weakened conventional capability, the importance of nuclear weapons for Russia has increased significantly," the report said. "The Russian strategic and regional deterrent forces have thus become increasingly important for the Russian military power."

The agency's assessment concluded that Russia will continue to maintain and further develop its nuclear arsenal in the coming years." ..."

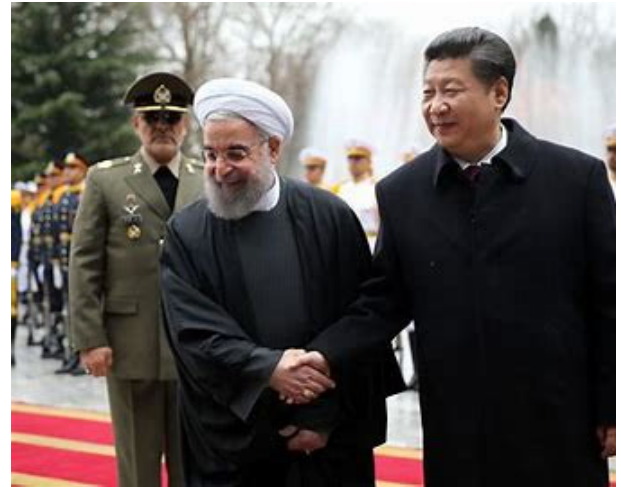
China's Xi To Make State Visit To Iran

February 16, 2023 **barrons.com** reported: "Chinese President Xi Jinping will make a state visit to Iran, Beijing's foreign ministry said Thursday, as a three-day trip to China by the Islamic republic's leader drew to a close.

Xi "gladly accepted the invitation" by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, according to a joint statement by both countries, although no date was given. The trip would be Xi's first visit to Iran since 2016.

Beijing and Tehran have strong economic ties and in 2021 signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact".

Both countries are under pressure from Western nations over their positions on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while Iran is under strict US sanctions due to its nuclear programme." ..."



Philippines' Marcos summons Chinese envoy over laser incident at sea

February 15, 2023 **spacedaily.com** reported: "Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos summoned Beijing's ambassador Tuesday to express "serious concern" after a Chinese security vessel was accused of using a military-grade laser light against a Philippine patrol boat in the disputed South China Sea.

The confrontation marks an escalation in the diplomatic row, after the Philippine foreign ministry earlier filed a protest to the Chinese embassy condemning the "aggressive" actions of the Chinese coastguard vessel that it said left Filipino crew members temporarily blinded.

Marcos confronted Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian on Tuesday "over the increasing frequency and intensity of actions by China against Philippine Coast Guard and our Filipino fishermen", spokeswoman Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil said.

The Chinese embassy said the men had discussed, among other things, how to "properly manage maritime differences between China and the Philippines".

The laser incident happened on February 6 nearly 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands, where Philippine marines are stationed in a derelict navy ship grounded to assert Manila's territorial claim in the waters..."

Russian bomber jets intercepted over Alaska by US air defense systems

February 15, 2023 jpost.com reported: "Multiple Russian military aircraft including fighter jets and strategic bombers were intercepted by North American air defense forces as they flew over international airspace near Alaska, US military said. The aircraft, which were identified on February 13, did not enter United States or Canadian airspace and did not pose a threat, the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) said in a statement dated February 14.

It added that the Russian flights were in no way related to the mysterious spate of airborne objects shot down by the US military over North America in the past few weeks.

'NORAD had anticipated this Russian activity and, as a result of our planning, was prepared to intercept it... Two NORAD F-16 fighters intercepted the Russian aircraft,' it said.

While NORAD said it sometimes escorts aircraft out of the space near Alaska if needed, it did not say whether this was the case this time..."

Israeli lasers can shoot down Iranian drones used in Ukraine

February 14, 2023 jpost.com reported: "Senior Defense Ministry official Brig.-Gen. (res.) Danny Gold on Tuesday said Israel's air defense lasers could shoot down the drones Iran has been sending against Ukraine.

Speaking at the Artificial Intelligence (AI) conference at Tel Aviv University, the Director of MAFAT [Directorate of Defense Research & Development] said his ministry is working on developing 'the next generation of using lasers.'

He talked about multiple successful tests destroying rockets 'with a very sophisticated laser weapons system. We have done the same for mortars, rockets and UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles). The Iranian UAVs they are sending to Ukraine? It's the same concept. We could shoot them down also.'..."

Dutch F-35 intercept, escort away Russian warplanes nearing Polish airspace

February 14, 2023 jpost.com reported: "Dutch F-35 jets intercepted and escorted away three Russian warplanes after they neared Polish airspace on Monday, said Dutch Defense Ministry.

The Russian IL-20M Coot-A reconnaissance and signals plane and two SU-27 Flanker fighter planes were escorted 'from a distance and handed over escort to NATO partners,' said the ministry.

NATO air command said on Monday morning that German Eurofighters shadowed the Russian craft, 'who were posing a danger to other air users by ignoring international air safety rules.'

This was the first scrambling of the Dutch fighters since deployed at the Malbork air base in northern Poland. The jets are tasked with monitoring NATO airspace and 'air policing' until the end of March..."

Speculation grows as US shoots down new mystery object

February 12, 2023 spacewar.com reported: "A US warplane shot down a new flying object near the Canadian border on Sunday, the latest of three mysterious devices spotted since military radar settings were cranked up in the wake of the downing of a suspected Chinese spy balloon.

Jittery Americans have been watching the skies as the mysterious incursions unfolded against a backdrop of acute tensions with China — although only the first object has so far been attributed to Beijing.

On Sunday the Pentagon said that it does not yet know what the other three objects — one shot down Friday over Alaska, one Saturday over Canada's Yukon territory, and the most recent one Sunday over Lake Huron — are.

But it said that the object downed Sunday had been tracked for nearly a day and did not resemble the alleged Chinese surveillance balloon that was destroyed off the Atlantic coast on February 4 after traversing the country. President Joe Biden ordered a F-16 fighter to shoot down the latest object..."



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