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US Military Intercepts Russian Military Aircraft Near Alaska for Second Time in a Week

May 18, 2023 [voanews.com](#) reported: "The U.S. military has confirmed another Russian military aircraft was tracked while operating near the U.S. state of Alaska on Monday, the second such incident in less than a week.

North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) said that it had 'detected and tracked' one Russian military aircraft while it was operating in the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). The Russian aircraft remained in international airspace and did not enter U.S. or Canadian sovereign airspace, according to a NORAD press release.

Speaking to VOA on Wednesday, a NORAD official declined to identify the type of Russian military aircraft, adding that U.S. fighter jets did not fly out and intercept the aircraft in this instance. The flight occurred as several planned large-scale military training exercises are underway in and around Alaska..."

Household Debt Cracks \$17 Trillion for First Time Ever

May 18, 2023 [thehill.com](#) reported: "The rise in debt was spurred on by a \$121 billion climb in mortgage balances in the U.S., bringing total mortgage debt to just over \$12 trillion. It was the most substantial growth in any category.

Auto loans increased by \$10 billion over last quarter, totaling \$1.56 trillion. Student loan debt increased moderately, to \$1.6 trillion. Credit card debt remained flat, however, staying at \$986 billion.

The rise in household debt comes as federal officials have continued raising interest rates as part of their fight to tame inflation. This month, the Federal Reserve again hiked interest rates by 0.25 percentage points despite fears of a recession, bringing rates to between 5 and 5.25 percent..."



Iran justifies seizure of foreign vessels in the Persian Gulf

May 17, 2023 [israelnationalnews.com](#) reported: "Iran has justified its recent seizure of two foreign vessels in the Persian Gulf, claiming the seizures were 'aimed at countering behaviors and actions in violation of international maritime law', the *Xinhua* news agency reported.

In a statement responding to US accusations that Iran has been carrying out increased attacks on commercial shipping, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said Iran plays the 'most effective' role in ensuring maritime security in regional and international waters and has always been a 'guarantor' of the 'harmless and safe' passage of ships and vessels across the Strait of Hormuz.

The spokesman condemned the US government for 'compromising maritime security by breaking maritime law and seizing certain Iranian oil shipments in international waters and high seas.'

Iran seized the Marshall Islands-flagged Advantage Sweet on April 27 as it traveled in the Gulf of Oman. Six days later, it seized a second ship, the Niovi, a Panama-flagged tanker as it left a dry dock in Dubai..."

AFRL conducts Swarm technology demonstration

May 17, 2023 [spacewar.com](#) reported: "The Air Force Research Laboratory, or AFRL, conducted a demonstration, April 5, 2023, of its high-power microwave counter drone weapon, the Tactical High-power Operational Responder, or THOR, as it engaged a swarm of multiple targets at the Chestnut Test Site, Kirtland Air Force Base.

'The THOR team flew numerous drones at the THOR system to simulate a real-world swarm attack,' said Adrian Lucero, THOR program manager at AFRL's Directed Energy Directorate. 'THOR has never been tested against these types of drones before, but this did not stop the system from dropping the targets out of the sky with its non-kinetic, speed-of-light High-Power Microwave, or HPM pulses,' he said...

'THOR was exceptionally effective at disabling the swarm with its wide beam, high peak powers and fast-moving gimbal to track and disable the targets,' said Lucero..."

China courts Central Asia as Russia's influence wanes

May 16, 2023 [spacewar.com](#) reported: "China is renewing its push for massive infrastructure projects in Central Asia as Beijing aims to fill the vacuum left in former Soviet states by Russia, which is ensnared in a widening net of Western sanctions over the Ukraine war.

Central Asia has become key to China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, a defining geopolitical project for President Xi Jinping.

Around 150 countries have received Chinese funds to build roads, ports, railways or hydroelectric dams. Beijing says trade with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan reached \$70 billion in 2022 and expanded 22 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2023.

Analysts say Russia's war in Ukraine has further shifted the dynamic in Beijing's favour — leading many in the region to question their long-standing ties with Moscow and seek economic, diplomatic and strategic assurances elsewhere.

'After the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the Central Asian republics started to fear for their sovereignty,' Ayjaz Wani, a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in Mumbai, told *AFP*...

US Says Iran, Russia Are Expanding Military Ties

May 16, 2023 voanews.com reported: "The United States said Monday there are signs that Russia and Iran are expanding their military cooperation.

State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel told reporters that Iran 'remains Russia's top military backer, and Iran has already provided Russia with artillery and tank rounds for use in Ukraine.'

Patel said that since August, 'Iran has provided Russia with more than 400 UAVs, primarily of the Shahed variety, and Russia has expended most of these UAVs using them to target Ukrainian critical infrastructure inside Ukraine.'

'The deepening of this cooperation is a threat and a danger to not just Ukraine; it's a threat and a danger to Russia's neighbors, Iran's neighbors, and the international community broadly,' Patel told reporters...

Palestinians prefer Russia, China to mediate with Israel, don't trust US

May 15, 2023 ynetnews.com reported: "A new survey published on Monday showed that Palestinians prefer Russia and China as potential peace mediators with Israel, while the U.S. is seen as the least favorable option.

The majority of respondents to the survey, conducted this month by YouGov at the request of Arab News, said that they would like Moscow to be a potential peace broker. In the meantime, 80% pointed to China – which has strengthened its position in the region after mediating the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement in March.

Later in April, Beijing offered to facilitate peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians amid tensions in Jerusalem during the holy month of Ramadan. The third possible option, according to the survey, is the European Union.

Meanwhile, nearly 60% of respondents said they did not trust the U.S. to mediate negotiations, with 86% claiming that Washington has significant influence over Jerusalem..."

Russia says UK long-range missiles for Kyiv 'extremely hostile' act

May 15, 2023 spacewar.com reported: "Russia said Friday a decision by the UK to deliver Storm Shadow long-range missiles to Ukraine was an extremely hostile move.

By announcing it would deliver the air-launched deep-strike weapon, Britain became the first country to provide longer-range armament to Kyiv.

Storm Shadow is a highly capable long-range missile system that has been utilized by British and French forces in various military operations, including deployments in the Gulf, Iraq, and Libya. It is a precision-guided, air-launched missile designed for deep-strike missions against high-value targets.



*UK Storm Shadow
Long-Range Missile*

Developed by the European defense consortium MBDA, Storm Shadow, also known as SCALP EG (Système de Croisière Autonome à Longue Portée, Emploi Général), possesses advanced features and capabilities. It is designed to operate in extreme conditions and can be deployed from a range of aircraft, including fighter jets and strategic bombers.

With a range of approximately 560 kilometers (350 miles), the missile provides a significant reach and can strike targets with great precision. It incorporates advanced navigation systems, including inertial navigation, global positioning system (GPS), and terrain reference navigation, ensuring accurate and reliable targeting.

Storm Shadow's warhead is capable of delivering a substantial explosive payload, making it effective against a wide range of targets, including bunkers, command and control centers, and hardened structures. The missile's stealth characteristics, low observability, and ability to fly at very low altitudes contribute to its effectiveness in penetrating enemy air defenses..."

Compiled by L. Jim Tuck

UCG Minister

<ljt5053@sbcglobal.net>