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Russia

Russian strategic bombers to conduct exercises Oct. 16-30

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MOSCOW, October 15 (RIA Novosti) - Russian strategic bombers will conduct October 16-30 a series of long-range training flights, with simulated bomber raids and missile launches, an Air Force spokesman said on Monday.

"Russian strategic bombers Tu-160, Tu-95 and Tu-22M3, and Il-78 aerial tankers will conduct flights over the Arctic region, the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, and the Black Sea, with simulated bombing raids and firing of cruise missiles at testing grounds in northern and southern Russia," Colonel Alexander Drobyshevsky said.

Colonel General Alexander Zelin, the commander of the Russian Air Force, will supervise the exercises.

Moscow announced in mid-August that regular patrol flights by strategic bombers had been resumed, and would continue on a permanent basis, with patrol areas including commercial shipping and economic production zones.

The U.S. administration expressed concern about the resumption of patrol flights by Russian strategic bombers.

"I think the rapid growth in Russian military spending definitely bears watching," U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in an interview with ABC News on October 14.

"And frankly, some of the efforts - for instance, Bear flights in areas that we haven't seen for a while - are really not helpful to security."

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Russian strategic bombers

More than 50 strategic and long-range bombers are involved in a major exercise that began Tuesday. Tu-160 Blackjacks, Tu-95MS Bears and Tu-22M3 Backfires would fly above the Arctic and Pacific oceans and the Black and Caspian seas.



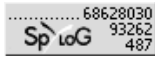
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